

MEETING SPEECH

I am so pleased to be in attendance here this morning and to renew some old friendships and make many new ones. This is part of what masonry offers us, the opportunity to visit to be in the company of like-minded men, that share in the values we all hold dear.

Interaction is an important act in any Fraternal Organization and the fellowship I have experienced since I arrived in St. John has added greatly to why we do this. It brings us together as Brothers, as Christian Knights and helps cement the bonds we hold as Masons and Knight Templars.

You will have heard some of this before... some of it has become rather cliched and we say it without really doing it, but I'd like to focus for a few minutes on how can we make things more rewarding for our members, the Sir Knights who make up our Great Priory.

The human animal must get something out of the Templar experience or he will not attend, will not be active and he will just become a name on the Preceptory roll.

Sovereign Great Priory and the Preceptories that make up its ranks have been in existence for an extensive period of time. For bodies to exist for that long a period of time, they must have been doing something right.

But Society changes and we now live in some extremely turbulent times; so, the challenge to meet the needs of our members has changed and the NEED is greater than ever.

There is an extremely old and somewhat overused statement, but nevertheless true ... "you get out of it what you put in". The challenge now, is how do we encourage, and even demand, our members "to put something in"? I believe it's a really simple answer, we have to make it worthwhile for the member, we have to make him WANT to give, to be

engaged, to be active. And while I believe the answer is simple, it is the achieving of this, that is the hard part.

If the member is not engaged, is not active, is not part of the team, does not get anything out of membership, then it's no wonder they take demits or do not attend. Putting it crudely, we are selling something to our membership and it is incumbent upon all of us to do the good sell, to make our product the best it can be.

So how do we do this.... lots have been written on this, we read it, we talk about it, but often, we actually do not do much of it.

The Sovereign Great Priory of Canada is a unique organization; it draws on the chivalric qualities of the Knights Templar of old and the deep and intriguing history that goes with it. This is a facet of our "sell" and people are interested in joining because of it. We need to promote this more and reach out to those looking for these elements.

Without doubt, membership is extremely important for any organization and of this there are two elements: THE JOINING and THE STAYING JOINED. While we mostly focus on the recruitment side we often do not do enough on the retention side and not just keeping them as members, but more importantly, keeping them as ACTIVE MEMBERS.

We all need to be part of the solution, we need to be active, to volunteer for the hard tasks, to each lead in our own way, to be an example to others. If we can do this collectively, then anything is possible, we win as a team and the team gets better.

Memory work is crucial ...raise the bar, reading it well is only ok in limited situations, due to a last-minute cancellation or other reasonable cause. The target should always be to do the ritual from memory.

I mentioned membership earlier; we need new blood and potential members are out there; we just need to expend the effort to approach them and show what being a Knight Templar has to offer. Once admitted the next step is to get them involved. The stalwarts of yesterday and today, may not be the

stalwarts of tomorrow, we need good people to replace them and keep our organization strong and vibrant.

We as Masons talk about the privilege of visiting, but visitation is not what it used to be. That being said, it warms my heart to see the turnout here today. Visitation speaks to respect, to the bonds that bind us as Knights.

I'd like to recognize and appreciate the invitation to attend in beautiful New Brunswick. This is my first visit and hopefully not my last. To all that have made this visit possible, my heartfelt thanks and to these knights and those in attendance this morning, my deepest appreciation for all you do for our beloved Sovereign Great Priory.

On closing Sir Knights, I want to remind each and every one of you to remember that you are Knight Templars and that you belong to a Christian organization of long standing. Be proud of this, spread the good word, fight the good fight and do your best in everything you do and say. Each one of you are Ambassadors of Sovereign Great Priory so remember this in all you do.

Thank you for your attention and hopefully I'll see some of you in Toronto in August.