

**Grand Commandery
Inspection Protocol
October 29, 2022
Grand Commandery Annual Conclave
Dunes Manor Hotel
Ocean City, Maryland**

Right Eminent Grand Commander Austin, Distinguished Guests, Sir Knights All—

I am excited by and looking forward to serving the Grand Commandery of Maryland after a six- year hiatus. Grand Commander Austin—I appreciate the opportunity to again serve. And, I am further looking forward to the challenge of serving as Grand Inspector General for this jurisdiction.

To my predecessor, Right Eminent Past Grand Commander Fred Spicer, I thank you for your years of service in this capacity and hope that I can, in some measure, show the diligence and facility that you have in performing in this very important position.

This is an important position because the one thing that separates Freemasonry in general and Templary in particular from other fraternal organizations is our ritual and ensuring that it is properly executed. We owe it to our candidates to provide them with the best possible ritual we can provide. From my perspective, the position of Grand Inspector General is not only to evaluate and critique, but more importantly, to instruct, support and guide the ritual of the jurisdiction on a path of continual improvement.

To that end, I am going to propose revisions to the inspection protocol. But before we get to that, I want to provide some background from seven years ago, particularly for those Sir Knights who perhaps were not involved in Commandery at that time or were unaware of the driving forces that precipitated changes at that time.

Up until 2015, it was a requirement of the Grand Commandery that Sir Knights aspiring to serve as Eminent Commanders exemplify the three Orders as a prerequisite to being elected to office. In Maryland, this was consistent with the practices of the Grand Lodge, Grand Chapter and Grand Council. In fact, it was only during the term of MIPGM Coker that the exemplification process was reinstated because fewer and fewer Companions were learning the work.

On March 25, 2016, then-Grand Master Duane Vaught officially issued his critical *“Vaught Decision 8—Additional Requirements for Templar Office”*.

Grand Master Vaught rendered this decision at the request of:

“a Grand Commandery that requires a certification in the Orders for a Sir Knight prior to installation. The purpose of the certification it seems is to ensure the officer installed is competent to confer the Orders”.

With this prelude, Grand Master Vaught concluded:

“Grand, Constituent or Subordinate Commanderies have no authority to add or remove eligibility requirements. They may, however, operate according to a custom or goal in officer selection so long as such practice does not deprive a member of a right of office.”

Sir Knights, this decision effectively ended the certification process in this jurisdiction. It also created a continual drain on the talent pool in this jurisdiction. Currently, there is absolutely no incentive for a Sir Knight to learn any of the Orders save for his own initiative and interest.

The saddest outcome of this situation is that we will, at some point, be electing Grand Commanders who cannot confer any of the Orders. We will—actually we already are—heading down the same path that Grand Council took prior to the actions taken by MIPGM Coker. Think for a moment about how many Sir Knights there are in the State that can confer an Order of the Temple.

That, Sir Knights, is the background to the untenable situation in which our jurisdiction’s rich ritual history finds itself.

Therefore, in an effort to reverse this negative trend and strengthen ritual in a manner that is consistent both with Templar Law and the Vaught Decision, the following inspection protocol is being proposed.

This will require Eminent Commanders and their line of officers to be inspected in one of the three Orders on an annual, rotating basis. The advantage of inspecting the Orders on a rotating basis enables line officers to know well in advance in which of the three they will be inspected.

The inspection cycle will extend from March to March so that the incoming Commander, at the time of the inspection, would already have been elected to office. It cannot be too strongly emphasized that this is NOT an exemplification upon which election to office is dependent. This will not prevent a Generalissimo or any other officer from advancing in rank.

The only requirement is that the sitting Eminent Commander, as with his line of officers, learn and execute his part of the ritual. It is the expectation that the Commander will learn his Order to show leadership as the presiding officer of a Masonic organization, make his contribution to a successful inspection and show pride in his ritual work and more importantly his Commandery.

This is a huge change in direction, but I must point out that this approach is used in other jurisdictions, most notably the Grand Commandery of Ohio.

Each inspection cycle will:

- include inspection in one of the three Orders on a rotating annual basis (see attached schedule for 2023-2025).
- Each dais officer will know well in advance of his election to Commander in which Order he will be inspected and should, therefore, be prepared.
- All work will be delivered from memory.
- Stand-ins are rigorously discouraged.

Other Inspection Elements:

The other elements of the inspection protocol are:

- 10-Man Full form Opening
- Reception of the Right Eminent Grand Commander
- Sword Drill

All work will be delivered from memory.

The other factor which must be considered is that there are Commanderies in the State which do not have the critical mass to perform a full inspection. In these instances, those Commanderies can exercise two options:

- Team up with another Commandery and conduct a joint inspection. This would be my preference, as I'd rather see a full inspection. If you represent one of these Commanderies, think about this and work with a Commandery near you to exercise this option.
- undergo a School of Instruction in the Order being inspected as well as the other elements of the inspection protocol.

All work, as best as possible, will be delivered from memory.

The Inspector General will exhibit flexibility with regard to the circumstances inherent to a particular Commandery.

In this manner, all Commanderies will have some type of ritual instruction and observation, the goal being a positive learning and growing experience for the Sir Knights of the Commandery as well as the Inspector General. Ultimately, the goal is to increase the number of Commanderies which can undergo full inspections.

Now, I would like to discuss the objectives of the first year of this program.

As of March, 2023, the process will commence. I will be asking subordinate Commanderies to provide a date for their inspection. In the meantime, I will attempt to visit as many Commanderies as I can to discuss the program and field questions.

The Order of Malta will be the Order in which inspection will take place in 2023. Subsequent years will be the Order of the Red Cross in 2024 and the Order of the Temple in 2025.

The Order of Malta was selected as it is the least complicated Order and will permit experimentation with this new protocol as we move forward.

The Order upon which Commanderies will be inspected upon in 2024 will be the Order of the Red Cross. In 2025, it will be the Order of the Temple. Therefore, a Sir Knight sitting as Captain General in March 2023 will have over two years to learn the Order of the Temple.

If there are dais officers who have taken the initiative to learn an Order other than the Malta, don't stop learning! I applaud your efforts and desire to improve your ritual knowledge and acumen and support your efforts 100 per cent.

Sir Knights, I hope you will join with me, see the importance and support this program. The Grand Encampment often describes Templary as the premier Masonic organization. If that is true, how can we, in good conscience, neglect our ritual? Sir Knights, we can't. A good Masonic leader champions the ritual and demonstrates this by example—learning his part and competently performing it. It is part and parcel to the position.

Our ritual is what sets us apart from other organizations. Further, executing it in a competent manner is the best avenue to retaining and inspiring interest among newly created Sir Knights.

To conclude, I am very enthusiastic about this new position and appreciate the opportunity to again serve the Grand Commandery and the subordinate Commanderies of the jurisdiction. Even beyond the inspection process, I stand ready to work with any Commandery to improve any aspect of their ritual performance. I'm a phone call away.

Thank you, Sir Knights.