

A BRIEF HISTORY THE ORDER OF THE RED CROSS OF CONSTANTINE



As a Royal Arch Mason, you are now entitled to seek membership of the Order of the Red Cross of Constantine.

Since the establishment of Grand Imperial Conclave in 1865, the order has steadily grown with Conclaves formed throughout the English speaking world.

Why Constantine? Candidates in this degree recognise how Christianity can be embraced by seeing how the legend of Constantine's conversion is set within Masonic ritual that is linked with the history of the Roman Empire.

THE HISTORY OF THE DEGREE

Constantine, a Roman, was destined for the college of Emperors but following the death of his father, he was hailed by the Legions in York as Augustus and became the Governor of Britain and Gaul. After several successful battles across the Alps and Italy he eventually established himself as the lawful Emperor of both the East and West and transferred the capital of the empire from Rome to Byzantium, later to be named after him.

He was the first Roman Emperor to openly encourage Christianity. His conversion began one evening after a long day's march with his army when, in what he believed was a sign from heaven, he and his army saw in the sky, and by the rays of the setting sun, a pillar of light in the form of a special cross. To sanctify the minds of his pagan army, he had made a standard bearing a Cross like that seen and ordered it to be carried before him in the wars. Several Christians in his army came forward and avowed their faith following which Constantine directed that they should wear on their armour a red cross.

Having been successful in battle it is said that Constantine with the help of his chief bishop, Eusebius, opened a Conclave of the Knights of the Order whose members became the bodyguard of their Sovereign.

THE CEREMONIES

The Christian Order is in two parts. The first ceremony consists of the candidate's admission, obligation, and then the installation as a Knight-Companion of the Red Cross of Constantine, in which the historical basis of the Order is also detailed.

In separate ceremonies the Knight-Companion builds on what he has already been taught, and in the ceremony of the Knights of the Holy Sepulchre and St. John the Evangelist this knowledge is further expanded and the ultimate aims of Freemasonry are revealed. These, together with the two Installation ceremonies leading to the principal Chairs in the Red Cross of Constantine, are undoubtedly among the most impressive ceremonies in the whole of Masonry.

