

Chaplains & Confrères

✠ **MANUAL** ✠

Topics

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How the Templars Order will be of Service to You and Your Parish

You are about to discover one of the most powerful and useful movements in the Church today. The Order of Templars - Knights of the Holy Temple (Templars) can address many issues relevant to the life of a parish. First, Templars invites the 14 to 18-year-old male teenagers in your parish to assume a role designed for their spiritual and developmental needs. As you know, contemporary society has pushed young men aside, often considering them with contempt. Templars takes a different approach, inviting young men to fulfill vital roles in service to the life and mission of the Church. In return, Templars will offer your parish a well-trained group of young men who will accomplish work in the sanctuary, sacristy, and in your parish community.

Consider the stress and endless tasks that must be accomplished during the Sacred Triduum in your parish. A quick 30-minute review of the day's liturgy will engage a troupe of experienced brother templars whose professionalism will take pressure off you as a celebrant. Likewise, the young men can significantly raise the quality and mystical nature of your liturgy. Your parishioners will be amazed at the dedication, piety, and care of your templars as they serve the liturgy and will respond to what they witness in kind. At the inaugural Mass served by the templars, an elderly gentleman approached with tears dripping from his cheeks and declared, "I thought I would never see this again!"

Templars are trained to serve the parish, not only in the sanctuary where they are readily seen, but also outside the physical church building as they provide manpower for charitable work, labor for parish upkeep, and service in a multitude of different ways. If formed properly and openly encouraged, there is little the brothers will not do for the good of your parish or for the community in which they live.

The templars are eager to serve the Church and to please their pastor. They will bring a youthful enthusiasm to your parish liturgy and will inspire the young as well as the old in your congregation. True, you will be required to invest some time and effort in your local Templars Chapter, but the fruit will be abundant. The brother templars have the power, if you will, to transform your parish. In the presence of the templars, good things are guaranteed to happen.



How to Establish a Chapter in your Parish

As chaplain, you will first recruit at least two confrères, lay adult men who will serve as mentors in the chapter and for the young men. Your Templars Chapter Success Coach will assist you with a guide for best practices in selecting worthy confrères for service. As a rule, these are men of the parish of solid reputation who will be good men to model after. A mix of men in their twenties or thirties provides effective mentors for the brother templars. Men in their sixties and seventies have proven to be great mentors and grandfatherly figures to the templars as well. These men must advocate for the templars and not be intimidated or hesitant while engaging them. The bond that can form between brother templars and these men can be very inspirational. We will say it here and again later: the Templars chapter belongs to the members. Confrères and chaplains should never assume they will run the meetings or the business of the chapter. They are to mentor, form, support, and encourage the members.

Each confrère is expected to rigorously adhere to diocesan protocols for contact with minors in the name of the Church; this includes but may not be limited to attendance at or fulfillment of safe environment or other diocesan training. Your Templars coach will consistently enforce this mandate; it is of utmost importance.

It is necessary to recruit the best young men of your parish. You may experience pressure from within your community to admit anyone and everyone into the chapter. This, some will maintain, is “fair.” They believe it a grievous error to exclude anyone for any reason. Nonetheless, a fraternity, by definition, is an exclusive group. Too many of the wrong type and the chapter will simply cease to exist. The men who make a fraternity are to be strong and potent enough to “sharpen the mind of another” (Proverbs 27:17). This is the purpose that a true fraternity serves: to make men better. Your first recruits should be mature, respectable, and of good reputation (but not stuffy or jaded by the current societal conditions). **Be willing to look beyond those who already possess altar serving experience.**

No, it is not easy to approach young men with a personal invitation to join a fraternity they know little about. Your chapter success coach will work with you in creating the strategy that best suits you, your parish, and the young men to be invited. Past chaplains have successfully sent invitation letters in the mail, hosted win events—dinners, bonfires, etc.—to cast a vision for Templars, and simply approached young men with an invitation after Sunday Mass. Even so, you will be told “No, thank you” more than once or twice. But if you persevere and invite the young men with enthusiasm and respect, you will find the needed recruits. Once you have a core of young men gathered, enthusiasm will grow as the chapter develops. You will share with them the vision for the Templars Order, their important role in the parish, and the great things they will accomplish. Thereafter, you may encourage them to recruit their peers to fill out their

ranks. (By this point, members will fill out the formal application and be interviewed as described in the Rule of the Order, par. 45.)

You will need to build a team that other young men will want to join. An effective principle to employ in member recruitment is a frank assessment: “Does this young man have something to offer?” Perhaps he does not. Unfortunately, there are those who may not qualify at a particular time: the uninspired and lazy, in particular, or the under-developed in general. They ought to be encouraged to return later and apply again (with no guarantees) after a period of self-reflection and growth.

The size of the chapter must be discerned prudently. Larger parishes may need a larger chapter. Ten active templars is the minimum recommendation for a high-functioning chapter; however, in most cases, a fraternity of about 15 men proves ideal. This allows for more intimate friendships and more manageable membership. Larger numbers of brothers require more attention and run the risk of losing brothers and their active participation.

It can be advantageous to invite a 14-year-old eighth grader to be a part of the parish Templars chapter, especially where numbers may be slim. It is appropriate to allow them to attend chapter meetings and serve at the Mass but not to allow them the privilege of chapter socials until they reach their freshman year of high school. Boys in eighth grade are far more willing to be a part of something “big” than older high school students who may be adversely affected by their high school and/or cultural experience.

Once these tasks are accomplished, refer to paragraphs 61-81 in the Rule of the Order for a list of chapter offices and individual responsibilities. Contrary to what one may think, the young men are typically eager to learn their position and take responsibility on behalf of the chapter. They will need more assistance and direction in the beginning. When preparing to select chapter officers, the chaplain or confrère should press upon the brothers the need for men who are capable of leading and who they would want to follow. Otherwise, the chapter will fall into disrepair and disunity and become obsolete.

Finally, the Templars Order provides a Rite of Initiation found in Part III of the Rule of the Order. The Rite is not secret, but only brothers, chaplain, and confrères are present for the event, which is often held in conjunction with the annual retreat. Experience has shown that the brothers are deeply moved by their initiation, even as it may seem trite to an older adult. We would suggest you approach the Rite of Initiation with solemnity.





The Role of the Chaplain

When Templars is working well, the brothers will be present at assigned Masses and will be eager to please you and your associates, as their pastor(s). As described above, you, as chaplain, have the credibility to invite good young men into the Order, and you should do so.

As chaplain, you are encouraged to study the *General Instruction of the Roman Missal* as well as local parish customs to ensure the brother templars are properly trained. Vesting the brothers in cassock and surplice is a necessary accouterment that will set the brother templars apart from children serving in albs. For some in the parish, the cassock may be controversial. The young men will see it simply as handsome vesture. They are not likely to carry the baggage common to older parishioners. Regardless, solid training in liturgical service is necessary if your chapter is to be successful.

In addition to leading the initial liturgical training, your attendance at monthly chapter meetings is highly encouraged. Again, the young men run their meetings, but they will call on you for formation talks, to negotiate disputes, offer evaluations of past events, provide feedback, and will always welcome encouragement. Attending quarterly socials will also build your relationship/familiarity with the brothers.

Remember that the confrères exist to support you. There will be times when you cannot be present to your Templars chapter. That is okay. Lean on your confrères in delegating tasks and in attending chapter gatherings at which you cannot be present.



The Role of the Confrères

As a confrère, you are a necessary support to the brothers as well as to the work of the chaplain. You will provide a good example to the brother templars. You may be called upon to be present in the absence of the chaplain and help guide the chapter with practical advice and counsel.

It is absolutely essential that you fulfill diocesan protocol requirements for work with minors before you engage in support of the chapter.

Resist the urge to run the chapter or its business, but be quick to respond to questions or to offer occasional cautions. You will help the chaplain hold the brothers of the Order accountable for commitments and promises they make as a chapter.

It is not recommended to have fathers of the brother templars serve as confrères. Philosophically, the young men benefit from belonging to a fraternity that reinforces what their fathers are teaching them at home. In many cases, fathers become confrères after their own sons graduate and are no longer active templars.

Avoid inappropriate jokes, sexual references, encouragement of behavior contrary to the Honor Code, and over-vulnerability in sharing your own struggles with sin. Affirm the young men of the Order as often as their work is worthy of recognition, and avoid extreme criticism or “tongue lashings.” Negative things said to a young person in an unfitting way can damage a soul for life.

Along with at least one other confrère, you will offer the brother templars support, encouragement, and valuable direction. You are to provide an example of mature Christ-centered manhood for the brothers to strive toward. You are a gentleman and ought to act as such. Never attempt to emulate the youth of the parish. The brother templars in your charge ought to see in you a man they want to emulate, not the other way around.



How to Lead Young Men

Start with respect. If you treat a young man as a boy, you will be left with a boy. However, if you show respect and even admiration for the brother templars, they will exert great effort to be the men you expect them to be. Talk to them as you would a man; have reachable but challenging expectations; hold them accountable and to a much higher standard than they will be given at a local school.

At times, don't take them seriously. Laugh with them. Allow them to see you are real. Apologize when you need to apologize. Be angry when that is necessary. Praise them publicly but correct them in private. By your positive, disinterested affirmation, you can heal wounds and build a man for the—or his—future. Even more, all of your templars will benefit from a culture of positive affirmation and support. As pastor and chaplain, congratulate them and thank them occasionally before the final blessing of the Mass.

You must form a cadre of good and amicable young men. Templars is, by nature, an exclusive group; that is what makes a fraternity, good men with whom a man desires to grow. There may be an occasion of receiving a troubled or marginalized young man into your chapter. This can be very formative and even healing for the recipient, but the chapter must be strong enough to accept such a young man into its ranks. The last thing you will need is for that young man to be a source of division or trouble among the other brothers. We recommend that you be sparing and limit such membership for the good of the fraternity.

The Rule of Order governs the life of the chapter. Part II of the Rule contains sections dedicated to assisting young men in their personal growth. These sections are ideal for discussions focused on forming mature young men. Many chaplains have worked through these sections as a part of formation periods during chapter meetings.

Keep parents informed as to serving expectations, formation work, and other commitments made by the brothers.



Cautionary Issues when Working with Young Men

Male teenagers can fall victim to a plethora of challenges and difficulties. First and foremost, chastity is nearly guaranteed to be a problem for them all. As you know, everyone struggles with unchaste temptations, but not everyone succumbs to them. Keeping within proper boundaries is imperative, even as the brother templars are typically eager to discuss the issue. You are a trusted authority figure in the lives of the templars; willingness to address the realities of pornography, masturbation, and sexual sins may create the only path to freedom the young men will encounter. Do not avoid this topic.

Care should be given not to discuss specific unchaste behavior in the presence of younger brothers; you do not want to inadvertently introduce behavior hitherto unknown to them. Do not take for granted that your templars know the teachings of the Church surrounding human sexuality. Where interest is demonstrated, share the beauty and freedom of God's plan for human sexuality and do not avoid sharing the consequences of sin in this area. Many adults would rather not discuss these matters at all, which is acceptable only if you are comfortable with TikTok and Snapchat teaching the young men.

Drugs and alcohol remain issues for the youth of our communities. In this case, solid and dependable information is necessary. This pressure is real, and the young men deserve appropriate advice. To say, for example, "I know you are going to drink, so at least do so responsibly" is utterly negligent. Teaching that "the day will come" when they can engage legally and properly with alcohol is much more constructive. The young are drawn to authenticity: "I never attempted drugs because I was afraid I would like them" is more real and instructive.

Most of the male teenagers we encounter these days have a profound lack of self-respect or proper self-love. There are many reasons for this circumstance, but it seems widespread. The narcissistic young man is not so much overly self-confident as he is searching for acceptance and affirmation. The same can be said of those struggling with same-sex attraction, gender confusion, etc.

Arguing against the use of social media or gaming is a quick way to lose an argument. However, you, as chaplain or confrère may be the one person who can convince a young man to temper or even abandon such pursuits. Encouraging the brothers to read and to enjoy reading is of great value to them. Share with them the books that you have read—history, sports, astronomy, physics, war, to name a few, are all capable of capturing a young man's attention. Don't forget reading in philosophy, theology, and spirituality. Your encouragement may be all that is required to change a young man's life. Know that your interests and life pursuits will oftentimes quickly become theirs.



What the Templars Order can Provide a Young Man

The Templars Order affords a young man a place in a fraternity—a place where he can belong, meaningfully contribute, and grow. Experience has shown that brothers place a great amount of stress on the fraternal benefits of the Order. They are loathe to do anything that will reflect negatively upon the Templars Order. Thus, the Honor Code (Rule, paras. 39-42) has proven very effective in reminding members of their obligations and the character of a brother templar.

By allowing the brothers to operate and direct the business of their own chapter, you begin to teach them responsibility, initiative, accountability, and stick-to-itiveness. Tenacity is a great virtue that many young people lack today. The brothers will not disappoint if they understand the fraternity is theirs and the Church needs them in day-to-day tasks as well as in the cosmic battle of good and evil.

The Rule of the Order provides a description of offices and responsibilities within the chapter (paras. 61-87). These paragraphs ought to be read and reviewed in a chapter meeting and the officers held accountable. Again, allow the men the right to run their own chapter. For example, if a parish events committee would like help setting up tables for an event, the proper response would be, “I will ask the chapter if they are available.” This will instill, in the brothers, pride in their chapter and will teach them ownership and responsibility for the parish and the Church at large.

It is not uncommon for a young man to return to the parish years after graduation and express a sincere gratitude for his time in the Templars Order. A young married father of two recently returned to his chaplain and, with tears clouding his eyes, offered that his time in Templars was the “most important time of his life.”



Opportunities within the Templars Order

Templars provides a fantastic opportunity for leadership development. Expecting the men to run their own chapter with its business teaches them to be leaders, something largely needed within the Church. But again, this will not happen without a decent amount of formation and encouragement. To date, the Church has asked little of the younger generation, and it shows. Leadership in Templars is an opportunity to develop future parish council members and active volunteers in the Church. We must trust them, be patient with them, and allow them the satisfaction of completing projects and assisting others in their work.

Creativity is required here. Formative opportunities—which have the capacity to change lives—are endless: hiking, camping, canoeing, paintball, museums, seminary visits, chapter retreats, March for Life, Eucharistic Adoration, professional sports events, poker nights, astronomy, reading/discussion of *Lord of the Rings* or *The Lord of the World* (Robert Hugh Benson), Bible studies...the list is endless. These activities have the capacity to build friendships and provide life-changing experiences.



Templars will Cause Problems in your Parish

The notion that a group of young men would organize and fulfill a role in the church can be very threatening to some. Some will be highly critical of the movement and are likely to condemn the presence of Templars in the parish. To that, we say these men have every right to contribute to the life of the parish. Many, to be sure, are easily won over as they see the benefits of Templars. To the question of female participation, invite those who complain to organize a leadership group of high school-aged young ladies.

As will be discussed below, the experience gained by young men in the Templars Order opens them to the possibility of priestly vocation. Most parishioners will readily recognize this benefit and will respect what you are doing.

Failures will occur, and mistakes will be made. You may find that parishioners are highly critical of the brother templars. Some will be resentful that they are “in the sanctuary” as if to gain notoriety. This is among the many reasons why work outside the liturgy is important. Others may provide a list of sins allegedly committed by the brothers. These people need to be reminded that the templars are in formation, that they are young, and that they are learning to be good men.

A discipline policy may prove necessary for the good of the chapter. Guidance can be found in paragraphs 113-115 within the Rule. Rather than instituting a uniform policy for all chapters, it has proven important to call upon the brother templars to form their own policy supported by their own convictions. Here the rubber hits the road on the chapter being “theirs.” They will seek your guidance and approval in proposing the policy to the chapter. Once the policy is approved, chapter officers should ensure that it is well communicated to all brothers of the chapter.

In other words, when the templars of your parish are attacked, do not allow such deprecation. The men in your charge are in formation and ought to be afforded the possibility of making mistakes, repenting, and moving forward.



The Possibility of Dedicated Priests, Husbands, and Fathers

By all means, we should avoid any notion that Templars exists for the purpose of recruiting seminarians even though nearly all Templars chapters can boast of a seminarian or two. In one diocese, nearly 80 percent of seminarians have been either members or confrères of the Order. That said, Templars is not a vocation club. **A quick way to unravel the work of the chapter and lose its members would be to refer to the Order as a vocation club.** The young men need to be encouraged to be the best men possible. Focus is better placed on creating an environment favorable to growth, formation, and maturity. After that, allow God to inspire the men to his own design.

We speak of the priest as standing “in persona Christi” but the templar stands “in persona presbyterium” or in the person of the priest. Sunday after Sunday, as the men accomplish the work of the liturgy, they are more open to whatever God may be asking of them.

Organized trips to seminaries can be very profitable, not to pressure the men into considering a priestly vocation, but rather to learn the mechanics of formation and experience an aspect of the Church that is rarely seen by the laity.

In addition to the possibility of priestly vocations, emphasis should be placed on forming young men to be active and dependable members of the Church as well as to become good husbands, fathers, and citizens. So often, we see young people complete a semester or two in formation for the Sacrament of Confirmation and, following the reception of the Sacrament, are never heard from again. Experience in the Templars Order is different. Typically, Templar alumni are more attentive to their place in the Church and are far less likely to vacate the Church as they grow older.

Stress should be placed on a man’s role in the Church and his need for the Sacraments. Presentations by the chaplain or a confrère on the Sacrament of Marriage are of great interest to the brothers. Chapter meetings also provide great opportunities to discuss the theology of the Mass, the other Sacraments, and personal spirituality. It may be hard to imagine that young men would be interested in such things, but if you are enthused about the topic, they are more likely to be receptive as well.



The Possiblity of Service in the Community

Perhaps the reason young people are not interested in service of the Church or in volunteering lies in the fact that we have such low expectations of them. You may tell your templars that they have a privileged place at the altar, where everyone can see them, but that service when no one is watching can be even more beneficial to the soul.

The chaplain's lively gratitude for services provided by the chapter will encourage the brothers in future endeavors. Projects of greater difficulty and larger responsibility will communicate to the brothers your confidence in them. They begin to see their own importance in the life of the Church. Hopefully, this orientation will go with them when they graduate high school and leave the Templars Order.



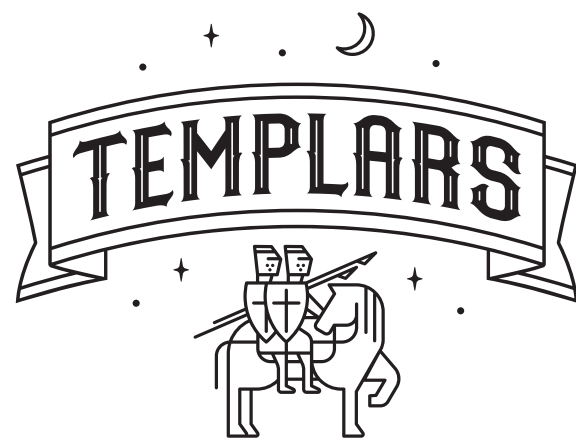
Dangers to be Avoided

We close on a sobering note. The obvious issue of great concern when ministering to youth is the appropriate interaction between the male teenagers and the chaplain and/or confrères. If this is of concern to you, all the better. The adult not aware or negligent in youth protocol is placing the youth, himself, and the parish in a dangerous position, and he should be immediately corrected or dismissed from involvement in the Order. To avoid harm or scandal to a young person, diocesan protocol must be strictly observed. A dangerous signal is given when anyone involved in youth ministry disregards protocols or appropriate boundaries.

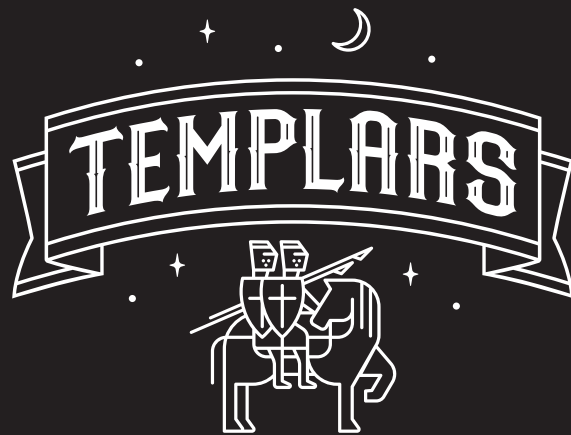
Every member of the chapter, including the chaplain and confrères, must live above reproach. You will find that, once the chapter is established and work begins, the brothers often seek more personal relationships with chaplains and confrères. With the correct boundaries in place, these personal relationships are the seeds of tremendous fruit in the life of the Church. Your Templars coach will keep diocesan protocol top of mind for you as a chaplain or confrère; it is, however, your responsibility as a chaplain or confrère to familiarize yourself with protocols and to ensure rigorous adherence to them.

In some regard, any priest in the United States today involved in youth ministry is aware of the risks and the need for proper protocol. Confrères, do your pastor a favor and prioritize this element of participation in the Templars Order.

Follow your instincts. If a situation makes you uncomfortable, even in the most remote fashion, take appropriate action.



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