

The Significance of the Cross of Malta

The original cross of eight points became the battle standard for the liberation of all who suffered oppression

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When I graduated from seminary, I received a cross in the form of a lapel pin to prominently wear on my suit coat. When I was assigned to a new unit as their chaplain, I received the unit crest to wear on my uniform. When I joined my VFW Post, I was presented with a VFW membership lapel pin and a cap to wear with the VFW emblem, the Cross of Malta.

Whatever name you use – an emblem, crest, insignia, or pin – many individuals, companies and organizations have one. But why? Maybe the answer is in the meaning and purpose for which it represents.

The Cross of Malta is VFW's emblem. The cross can trace its lineage back to the Crusades and the first brotherhood of warriors called the Knights of St. John. The knights represented all walks of life, but were united by a solemn pledge of unwavering courage and compassion. While they fought in numerous battles, they continued ministering to the sick, needy and poor.

The original cross of eight points also was adopted as an insignia by the knights because it represented the eight Beatitudes prescribed in the Sermon on the Mount. Even though the cross had a religious significance, it became the battle standard for the liberation of all who suffered oppression.

Today the image of the cross still has eight points. In its center is superimposed the Great Seal of the United States, encircled by the name, Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States.

The American eagle, is the emblem of a proud nation of many generations of warriors who fought and sacrificed to preserve the freedom each of us enjoys today, is the very center of the cross. Finally added between the four arms of the cross are the rays of the sun, to

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emphasize the warmth and vigor with which we defend our ideals.

When each of us joined the Veterans of Foreign Wars, we pledged to preserve and advance the principles of our organization. Principles entrusted to us by our departed comrades and the same principles we will entrust to the next generation who follow us.

When you accept the cap placed on your head with the Cross of Malta embroidered on the right side and your VFW member pin, do it with pride, because each represents who we are, what we do and why we do it. Perhaps this is the reason many individuals, companies and organizations have them.