GRAND PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE
December '20 – January '21

Happy Holidays!, Merry Christmas! Happy New Year! Yes, it's the holiday season, it's the same time of year as in years past, it's the same holidays and it's the same reasons we celebrate. But this year we are experiencing more challenges and difficult times than we've had in recent memory. This is the era of the COVID-19 pandemic, along with the impact this deadly virus has had on our economy, our employment and our way of life.

No matter what you may personally think about this health crisis, all you need to do is look at the numbers. On December 16th, California set a single day record of 53,711 COVID cases in one day putting the Golden State over 1.6 million COVID cases reported over the year. This holiday season has seen a sharp increase in reported cases, and this is expected to continue on an elevated level throughout the winter season especially when cold, rainy and snowy weather takes a greater toll on all of us.

Unless you were around for the Spanish Flu in 1919, you probably haven't experienced anything like this. Hospitals filled with COVID-19 patients, businesses shut down and unable to provide customers with goods and services, churches closed to indoor services, schools shuttered to teachers and students for onsite teaching and even families being asked to not gather.

These are unprecedented times but even with a vaccine being approved and distributed, we still have many challenges and unknown hurdles ahead of us. So, my Christmas Message to you is let's all do our part to be responsible during this pandemic crisis. Please be aware of the Federal, State, County and City COVID-19 guidance which impacts you during this time. Do the simple things like wearing a mask, frequently washing your hands, staying six feet away from others, and refrain from gatherings. These are just a few of the simple things we can do but by working together we can defeat this virus.

One day we'll win the battle and will return to our previous ways of life but for now we need to act responsibly and do our part in bringing this virus under control. This isn't about politics, it's not about being fearlessness, it's not about being indifferent, it's about you being able to make a difference in protecting yourself and those you come in contact with.

Throughout this whole ordeal we've been told what we can't do..... we can't gather, we can't eat indoors, we can't go into a market without a mask, etc. But during this Christmas Season, we need to ask what can we do. In this time of joy, hope, giving, cheer, family and love, we need to remember that we are all a member of the family of mankind.

I ask that you or even your parlor find someway to give back to your community and those in need. Donate items to a food bank, volunteer to serve meals, help the homeless, donate to a Veteran's home or just be kind to a lonely senior or someone who's going through a rough period. Trust me, not only will you feel good about helping someone in need but the persons you help will appreciate it more than you could ever know.

I recently went into a market and a lady was ringing the bell for the Salvation Army kettle. I put a couple of dollars into the small slot, and then the lady turned to me asked "Do you think you can get me some.....". I thought for sure she was going to ask for some money for herself as I had just made a monetary donation to the Salvation Army. But instead, she asked for a bunch of bananas, that she was unable to afford to buy them herself. When I returned with some bananas, she was overly grateful and emotionally thanked me for the gift. It was just a simple act on my part, but it meant the world to her.

In this Christmas Season, no matter what you've been through, no matter what the challenges are all around us in this pandemic year, you can still make a difference in this world by bringing joy, cheer, hope and love to those around us. Our spirits may be dampened but our hearts are still strong.

During this Christmas Season, let's remember our oath including friendship, loyalty and charity.

I sincerely wish you and your family a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year!....