

## THE MALTESE CROSS



**The definition of a Maltese Cross is one which conforms to a strict definition - a cross made from four straight lined pointed arrowheads, meeting at their points, with the ends of the arms consisting of indented 'V's. The cross is also described as a white eight pointed cross.**

**The Maltese cross, used as an identifying insignia on the habit of the Knights of Malta, served the purpose of identifying themselves from their enemies. The Knights of Malta, also known as the Knights of St. John or the "Hospitalers" was a religious order founded by Amalfitian merchants around the year 1070. The purpose of the order was to aid and care for pilgrims making the journey to the Holy Land. In 1136 the knights became a fully militarized order. The Knights driven out of Syria had been fleeing years of persecution by Islamic forces acquired Malta as their Sovereign Land from Charles V of Spain in 1530. This is the time that the Maltese Cross evolved into the present day form.**

**The four arms of the cross signify the cardinal virtues: Prudence, Temperance, Justice and Fortitude.**

**The emblem is significant in that the eight points that span off into the four arms were to put the wearers in mind of always bearing in their hearts the cross of Jesus. The Knights of Malta were bound by the Augustinian rule which involved monastic vows of chastity, poverty and obedience. They were also expected to observe the eight obligations represented by the symbol of the eight-pointed cross.**

- 1) Live in truth;**
- 2) Have faith;**
- 3) Repent of sins;**
- 4) Give proof of humility;**
- 5) Love justice;**
- 6) Be merciful;**
- 7) Be sincere and wholehearted;**
- 8) Endure persecution.**

**Prior to the council of the order in England, the meaning of each point was basically religious. But since then, the meanings have been changed.**

**The 8 points of the Cross were said to represent the Knightly virtues. These Virtues (or the Virtues of a Knight) were part of a medieval chivalric code of honor they tried to adhere to in their daily living and interactions with others.**

- 1) Tact**
- 2) Perseverance**
- 3) Gallantry**
- 4) Loyalty**
- 5) Dexterity**
- 6) Explicitness**
- 7) Observation**
- 8) Sympathy**

**The eight points of the Maltese cross also symbolize the eight Beatitudes of Christ's Sermon on the Mount (Matt 5.3-10):**

**Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven.**

**Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted.**

**Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the Earth.**

**Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be filled.**

**Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy.**

**Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.**

**Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called children of God.**

**Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven.**

**An additional list of Eight Knightly Virtues is found in the Priory of Dacia, in the tradition of the Russian Grand Priory, a list of Knightly Virtues is used not to replace the Beatitudes but to be used in addition;**

**Loyalty.**

**Care for the Church.**

**Helpfulness to the Sick and the Poor.**

**Contempt for Death.**

**Honor and Glory.**

**Courage.**

**Generosity.**

**Piety.**

**With time, the eight points also came to represent the eight “langue’s” (literally “tongues”, but in effect national groupings) of the noblemen who were admitted to the famed order, namely those of Auvergne, Provence, Aragon,(France) Castille (Spain) and Portugal, Italy, Bavaria (Germany), and England (with Scotland and Ireland).**

**Although many countries and organizations throughout the world use crosses that are similar if not exact in shape to the Maltese Cross, the fact remains that the Maltese Cross has its own specific purpose and should not be confused with other decorations or medals that have their own purpose.**

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