

**An Oration given by Right Distinguished Companion Charles J Aspinell, RD, JP, VI, PAGS,
Grand Episcopus, at the Consecration of Warlingham Consistory No 134
at Nutfield Masonic Centre on Wednesday 30th October 2019.**

Most Distinguished Grand Summus and Companions

Today we meet to Consecrate a new Scarlet Cord Consistory, the Warlingham Consistory No 134, in this the Province of Surrey. This traditional name follows on from Warlingham Conclave No 291 but is also used for a Craft Lodge and Chapter No 7977, and a Mark Lodge and RAM Lodge No 1321.

The Scarlet Cord is synonymous to the story of Rehab and the spies which we recount in the First Grade of our Order. However, spies were very important to events before the Israelites crossed into the Promised Land and arrived at the city of Jericho.

In the two years since leaving Egypt God had led the Israelites south across the Sinai Peninsula and then north again to the Desert of Paran just south of modern-day Palestine and Israel. They were now poised to enter the land God had promised to them.

At God's instruction Moses chose one man from each tribe to spy out the land. For forty days they travelled through the land from south to north observing people and buildings and even collecting specimens of the bountiful produce. When the twelve spies reported back to Moses and the people, ten of them painted a picture of a people and land that was too formidable to conquer. Only two of them, Caleb and Joshua, had confidence that God would lead them into battle and overcome.

On the continued negative word of the ten spies the people lost confidence in God's ability to lead, protect and save them and so returned to their old ways of rebelling and grumbling. They went so far as to begin forming plans to return to Egypt and even talked about stoning Moses and Aaron. Joshua and Caleb were the only spies who challenged the people's rebellion and attempted to inspire them to trust in God.

In this context it was only Joshua and Caleb who were allowed to lead the people into the Promised Land after forty years of wandering, all the others of that generation dying in the desert.

Only two spies had the belief that the Promised Land could be taken despite what the other ten spies recounted. They had the Faith in the Word of God. This then leads us to the story of Rehab and the spies in the First Grade of our Order.

My spies tell me Warlingham is an attractive village and is home to just under eight thousand people. It is surrounded by rich beautiful countryside, woodland, gentle hills, and the North Downs. It has an interesting history which dates as far back in time as the Anglo Saxons who first settled here. At one stage in centuries past it was on an important Coaching Route, a legacy of which remains with the ancient Coaching Inns which continue to welcome travellers and visitors. Peace is unbroken today, unlike the heart stopping spectacle of the Dog Fights that were fought in the skies above the village during the Battle of Britain in WWII. It is for many, their Promised Land.

It was only by fidelity, assiduity and devotion to duty that the spies succeeded in their mission, and in the same way can we ourselves advance in our Order and in our lives. We are all Doorkeepers or Ostiarii, a term first referred to in a letter of Pope Cornelius to Bishop Fabius of Antioch written in 251 AD, where it is said that there were then at Rome 46 priests, 7 deacons, 7 sub deacons, 42 acolytes, and 52 exorcists, lectors, and ostiarii, or doorkeepers. An Ostiarius named Romanus suffered martyrdom in 258 at the same time as St. Lawrence, whom I am sure is a familiar name to most of you. Remember the jewel of the First Grade, a golden key suspended from the neck by a scarlet cord. It is a symbol of silence and circumspection and to speak naught but good.

May you as Petitioners go forth in Faith, Hope and Charity and by the practice of our proven virtues, strengthen the foundation and establishment of the Warlingham Consistory No 134 in this and succeeding years, so that it may grow and prosper, for the benefit of those that follow and indeed that of the Order of the Scarlet Cord.