History of the Maltese Cross

The Badge of a Fire Fighter is the Maltese Cross. The Maltese Cross is a symbol of protection and a badge of honor. Its story is hundreds of years old.

When a courageous band of crusaders known as The Knights of St. John fought the Saracens for possession of the holy land, they encountered a new weapon unknown to European warriors. It was a simple, but horrible device of war. It brought excruciating pain and agonizing death upon the brave fighters for the cross.

As the crusaders advanced on the walls of the city, they were struck by glass bombs containing naphtha. When they became saturated with the highly flammable liquid, the Saracens would hurl a flaming torch into their midst. Hundreds of the knights were burned alive; others risked their lives to save their brothers-in-arms from dying painful, fiery deaths.

Thus, these men became our first Fire Fighters and the first of a long list of courageous men. Their heroic efforts were recognized by fellow crusaders who awarded each hero a badge of honor - a cross similar to the one fire fighters wear today. Since the Knights of St. John lived for close to four centuries on a little island in the Mediterranean Sea named Malta, the cross came to be known as the Maltese Cross.

The Maltese Cross is our symbol of protection. It means that the Fire Fighter who wears this cross is willing to lay down his life for you just as the crusaders sacrificed their lives for their fellow man so many years ago. The Maltese Cross is a Fire Fighter's badge of honor, signifying that he works in courage - a ladder's rung away from death.