RITE OF  
CIRCUMAMBULATION

May 5, 2003

My Brethren,

This evening’s lecture concerns the Rite of Circumambulation. To circumambulate means to “circle walk”. We might ask, "Just why is it a Rite?" I might just answer ... and I may surprise you with something.

The Rite of Circumambulation is the name given by sacred archeologists to that religious rite in ancient Initiations which consisted of a formal procession around the altar or other holy and consecrated object. We kinda figured that part out, didn’t we? When we are Initiated, we are conducted, once, regularly around the Lodge. But now for some interesting insight into the Rite.

The ancient Greeks, Romans, Hindus, and Druids all performed this Rite. They traveled from East to West by way of the South and from West to East by way of the North. In essence, they followed the Sun’s path - and let me emphasize, they followed the Sun’s REGULAR path.

    The Greeks called it: Ek ouiea ev ouiea - from the right to the right.

    The Romans called it: dextrovorsum, turning to the right hand.

    The Druids (in this case the Scottish) called it: Deasal, where Deas is the right, or understanding hand, and Soil being one of

    the ancient names of the sun.

In circumambulating along the Sun's path, they all necessarily kept the altar to their right, or BY the RIGHT hand. Do you remember how we learned that the right hand is the seat of Fidelity in man? Here is a direct link: Our continuing Fidelity to God is expressed by the right hand being presented toward the altar in the Rite of Circumambulation.

Beyond walking in a circle, two other reminders of the Rite of Circumambulation appear in Freemasonry

    - the position of the officers of the Lodge in the East, South, and West

    - and the symbol of the point within a circle.

So, you may now see, the Rite of Circumambulation is more than just a walk; it ties us to ancient traditions of reverence and it reaffirms our Fidelity towards the Supreme Architect of the Universe.

Br. Stephen C. Harrington