
The Lyceum

*May Brotherly
Love Prevail...*

A Publication of
The Committee on Masonic Education



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Robert H. Johnson - Editor-In-Chief, Darin A. Lahners -
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FROM THE EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

Dear Brothers,

Warm greetings to you all as we embrace another enriching issue of The Lyceum, the official Masonic Education magazine from the Grand Lodge of Illinois. It's with immense pleasure and profound fraternal spirit that I address you in this season devoted to one of the fundamental tenets of our divine brotherhood: Brotherly Love.

The very essence of our Masonic journey is interwoven with the threads of love, understanding, and the genial embrace of our Brothers. This month, we delve deep into the core of Brotherly Love—a tenet that inspires us to transcend everyday distinctions and embody the highest ideals of acceptance and fraternity. Our issue opens with a compelling piece from WB Dr. Bernard Davis Jr., Chairman of Masonic Education for the Grand Lodge of Illinois. His “Living Ritual: Brotherly Love in Action” captures the quintessence of our theme this month, underscoring the transformative power of Brotherly Love in our rituals and daily interactions.

“Leveling Distinctions: Acceptance in the Masonic Tradition” is an invitation to reflect on how Masonry encourages leveling the superficial distinctions that so often divide us. It is a call to truly live our values and embrace every brother with love and equality. In “The Oration: 1939,” George A. Hillier, takes us on a historical journey, reflecting the judgement of man, by his character or by his material possessions and positions in life.

RW Luciano Azevedo's reflection on “A Masonic Reflexion about Civil Rights, Diversity & Equality” is a poignant reminder of our duty as Masons to champion justice and equality. Our featured article, “The Charity of Thoughtfulness” by RWB Chad M. Lacek, is an introspective guide to nurturing a charitable spirit within our minds and actions. It's sure to give us some tools to become masters of thoughtfulness.

“The Power of Brotherly Love,” penned by RW Wayne Spooner, Chairman of the Membership Committee, captures the essence of how love among brothers fortifies our beloved fraternity.

Our thoughtful discourse concludes with “Brotherly Love Must Prevail Over Social Apathy,” by WB Darin A. Lahners, who implores us to let Brotherly Love shine as a beacon in an often apathetic world, especially in these uncertain times.

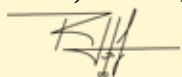
As you explore this issue's diverse offerings, may you feel invigorated by the myriad expressions of Brotherly Love, and let it guide you in every endeavor within and beyond our hallowed Lodge.

In fraternal love and solidarity, I wish you continued enlightenment in your Masonic journey. Let the lessons enclosed strengthen our collective resolve to embody the virtues we hold dear.

Fraternally yours,

Fraternally yours,

R.H. Johnson,



Editor-In-Chief

The Lyceum

The Grand Lodge of Illinois



From the Chairman's Desk

by WB: Dr. Bernard Davis Jr., Chairman- Masonic Education Committee

Living the Ritual - Brotherly Love in Action



As Masons, we are charged with practicing the cardinal virtues of Faith, Hope, and Charity - yet it is Charity or Brotherly Love that truly breathes life into our ritual and cements us as a band of brothers. In each degree we are reminded not only of the moral imperative to aid those in need, but also of the deeper spiritual bond that compels us to act without hesitation or expectation.

Brotherly Love is more than offering help when convenient. It's the quiet act of checking in on a Brother facing hardship, the extra mile walked to comfort a grieving widow, and the steady hand extended without judgment. It is, in essence, the living testimony of our obligations - performed not under compulsion, but out of love rooted in shared light.

We have a clear explanation that Charity extends not just to one another, but to all mankind. In a world that often prizes the individual over the communal, the teachings of Freemasonry offer a vital counterbalance. When we live our values openly, we become beacons not only within our lodges but in our communities.

This month, I challenge each of us to ask: **How am I embodying Brotherly Love** - not just in Lodge, but **beyond the tiled walls**, Am I, by word and deed, a true craftsman of compassion?

The best ritual is not recited, but reflected in our daily lives. Let us be the living expression of the principles we solemnly profess.

Fraternally,

Dr. Bernard Davis Jr.

WB Dr. Bernard Davis Jr,
Chairman - Committee on Masonic Education
Grand Lodge of the State of Illinois



LEVELING DISTINCTIONS: ACCEPTANCE IN THE MASONIC TRADITION”

by RWB. R.H. Johnson, Committee on Masonic Education, IL

As seasoned Masons, you understand that Freemasonry transcends the individual experience to weave a tapestry of universal brotherhood. At the core of our Craft lies the powerful triad of Brotherly Love, Relief, and Truth, principles that guide us to create a world illuminated by the bonds of fraternity and shared moral purpose.

And while we must understand that, as philosophers, morality is a somewhat objective term, comprised of the subjective viewpoints of a given society’s accepted norms. What is moral for some may not be for others. This notwithstanding, it’s generally accepted that there may be some ideas that are as close to Absolute Truths as you can get—one of them might be to live and let live, to love our neighbors as we love ourselves, to be Brothers. The teachings and rituals of Freemasonry serve as timeless conduits of these ideals, inviting each brother to rise above the banalities of division and embrace a shared humanity.

The cement of Brotherly Love, taught through our degrees, is not merely a metaphorical cliché but a potent call to action. It is reflected in the selfless acts of kindness and the unyielding support we render to one another within the lodge and beyond. As Master Masons, we have imbibed the lessons of the trowel, not as a mere symbol, but as a tool to spread unity and camaraderie across our Masonic communities, and if we’re doing it right, we’re affecting the profane world as well.

In our lodges, social distinctions dissolve, illustrating the appetite for true equality and acceptance. Freemasonry does not ask us to abandon our personal beliefs but rather insists on the allowance of diverse convictions while fostering a universal respect and understanding. This philosophy of acceptance is crucial, allowing men from varied paths to gather “on the level,” cultivating mutual respect and

broader horizons for personal growth.

This personal growth is an indispensable element of our Craft. While we hold our personal beliefs and convictions, Freemasonry demands that we wear our neighbors’ shoe, and for a moment, imagine ourselves in their place, to examine the world from their perspective, which should then give us a more objective view of the reality in which we exist. What makes God omniscient and powerful? One may argue that God is all-knowing and thus has the best perspective. What better emulation may we, as humble men, exhibit to grow? To emulate that quality so intrinsic in our Creator.

We celebrate the Brotherhood of Man under the Fatherhood of God, recognizing that all humanity is interconnected and lays claim to the Supreme Architect’s love and guidance. This foundational belief reinforces our collective responsibility to practice charity and to act benevolently, transcending divisions and championing a unified goal for a harmonious existence.

In conclusion, as we continue our Masonic journeys, let us forever remain steadfast in practicing and promoting these virtues of brotherly love, acceptance, and universal brotherhood. Through our actions and shared commitment, we ensure that the Light of Freemasonry not only warms the hearts of our brethren but also illuminates the world around us, striving ceaselessly for a society imbued with peace and understanding.



The Oration: Given at the Grand Lodge of Illinois Annual Communication in 1939

by George A. Hillier, Grand Orator 1939
Introduction by R.H. Johnson, Committee on Education,
Grand Lodge Illinois

Introduction: In 1939, the Grand Lodge of Illinois was a focal point for reflecting on the values and principles foundational to Freemasonry, especially during a time of global turmoil and societal transformation. The oration delivered by Bro. George A. Hillier stands as a testament to the enduring relevance of Masonic principles, advocating for a return to humanism and community in the face of overwhelming materialism and industrial progress.

At this juncture, much like today, society grappled with the paradox of progress—where technological advancements, although remarkable, led to a detachment from values that emphasize humanity and genuine interpersonal relationships. The orator highlighted the societal malady of valuing individuals by their economic output rather than their intrinsic human qualities, reflecting a world where material prosperity was prioritized over moral and spiritual growth.

The oration argued robustly for the Masonic vision of equality and fraternity, principles that, if adopted broadly, could ameliorate international discord and enhance social cohesiveness. In Masonry, there is no hierarchy; every member is equal, and this egalitarian spirit was proposed as a cure for the inequities that were prevalent both among individuals and between nations.

Moreover, the message underscored the importance of cooperation and mutual respect, not only within the Masonic community but as a guiding tenet in broader society. Through cooperation and the recognition of every individual's value, true progress—spiritual, moral, and mental—can be achieved. This reflects an aspiration that is as relevant in today's world as it was in 1939, reinforcing the idea that while times change, the foundational truths of human interaction and equality remain constant.

Thus, this oration serves not only as a historical document but as a timeless call to action, encouraging a re-emphasis on humanity, equality, and cooperation as keys to overcoming societal and global challenges. It invites us to reflect and act upon these enduring principles in both personal and collective endeavors.

RHJ

Most Worshipful Grand Master, Distinguished Visiting Brethren, and Brethren of the Grand Lodge:

Contemporary civilization is a challenge to our social institutions. The most important problem confronting this civilization is the valuation of man in terms of humanity and in his relations to his fellow man.

We estimate man in terms of materialism instead of in terms of humanity. We think of man as man-hours, miles per hour, an average, above or below a point on a scale, a consumer, and a producer of so many units. We are wont to call this an age of progress. In a material sense, how true, but to apply the term to humanity is questionable.

Inventive genius and scientific discovery have produced results that are almost miraculous. We live in houses with every possible device for our convenience; we travel on trains with the utmost speed and in luxurious ease; we breakfast in Los Angeles and dine in New York; we steer ships from land; we run factories without men; we bring the musical artists of the world to our home; the President speaks to us while we sit at our fireside. We have made progress far beyond even the dreams of our forefathers.

And yet, everywhere we turn—the pages of our newspaper, magazine articles, conversation on the train, in the hotel lobby, on the streets of our villages, over the farm fence, in the factory—we detect a tone of discord, uncertainty, confusion, bewilderment.

I do not condemn invention or science, nor material progress. I would not blight inventive genius, nor stay scientific discovery, but I would make invention the slave and not the master; I would humanize science; I would build our civilization on the principles of humanity and human relations.

The paradox of the age is that the inventions and scientific applications which have brought us so close in a physical sense have separated us in our human relations. The intimacy of the relationship of pastor and layman, of merchant and customer, of employer and employee, of teacher and pupil, of governor and governed, of neighbor with neighbor—those fine expressions of the inner man have given way to more material relationships. The warmth of the handclasp has given way to hand grasping; the satisfaction of work well done to a desire for mass production; the quiet and grace of beautiful scenery to a desire for speed. Greed and face-saving are present everywhere, not only among individuals but among nations.

The measure of a community is no longer its citizens but its dollars; we no longer gauge men by the softening light of friendship, the warmth of the handclasp, nor by our knowledge of the inner man.

The emphasis upon material things has so paralyzed our relations that we see men only as pawns to be moved, aids to our material progress. We want more and more dollars instead of more and more friends. Nor is it confined to individuals. The nations of the world are but following the examples of individuals. The dictator who seeks power and wealth and hesitates not to use unscrupulous methods has his example in the individuals who have sought the same things and used the same methods. We wage relentless war upon each other for power and wealth, and nations do the same thing on a wider scale. The violation of international law has its example in the violation of statutory and common law. The scrapping of treaties in the breaking of contracts, the dominance of powerful nations over the weaker in the dominance of the wealthy over the poor.

However, there is a way out if we have the courage to assert and live the principles upon which Masonry is founded. Now, as never before, we must show the world what an institution means, which is founded upon the idea of man's relation to man.

Masonry is a human institution, dealing only with man in his relation to his fellow man.

We are not primarily concerned with man's relation to God, nor with man's relation to his environment. We do not ignore nor minimize these relations. Our first inquiry of the candidate is an expression of his belief in God. We lift our voices to God in invocation and benediction.

We recognize the supremacy of the Supreme Architect of the Universe in our daily lives. Nor are we concerned primarily with man's economic relations. We do lay emphasis upon industry, upon the building process, and our symbols are the builder's tools. But ours is not primarily an economic relation. The very essence of our institution is man's relation to man.

I cannot here enumerate all the principles upon which we base our institution. Many of them we hear often in our Lodge. But I do wish to enumerate those broad fundamentals which are not so often brought to our attention, but are the bases upon which the institution was founded and which should guide us today in our effort to escape from our confusion and bewilderment, out of our slavery to material things, to a world of progress, enlightened and enriched by humanity.

We recognize that man cannot live alone, apart from his fellow man.

Deprive a man of his human contacts, and he loses all sense of value and, in many cases, becomes insane. He needs companionship. He may supply his own physical needs, but there is no substitute for human companionship.

Without these, there is no life but mere existence. We are organized upon the principle of bringing man into a closer and more intimate relation with his fellow man. For man to make the highest form of progress, mentally, morally, and spiritually, he must regard his fellow man as his equal and act on that principle. In Masonry, there is no superior and inferior. We meet on the level of equality. One man may have a keener intellect than another, be more skilled in the intricacies of business, be a better mechanic, be a more inspiring teacher, but in the great humanities, we are all equal.

The idea of equality must pervade and animate all social organizations, from the smallest community organization to the nation itself. Much of our international discord could be avoided if the nations of the world could only

meet on this basis. The League of Nations had many excellent qualities, but one outstanding defect-it was based upon an idea of inequality among nations.

On the basis of equality, we have the right to be respected in our opinions, to equality before the law, to an equal opportunity in life. Our ceremony of initiation is intended to impress upon the mind of the candidate the principle of equality.

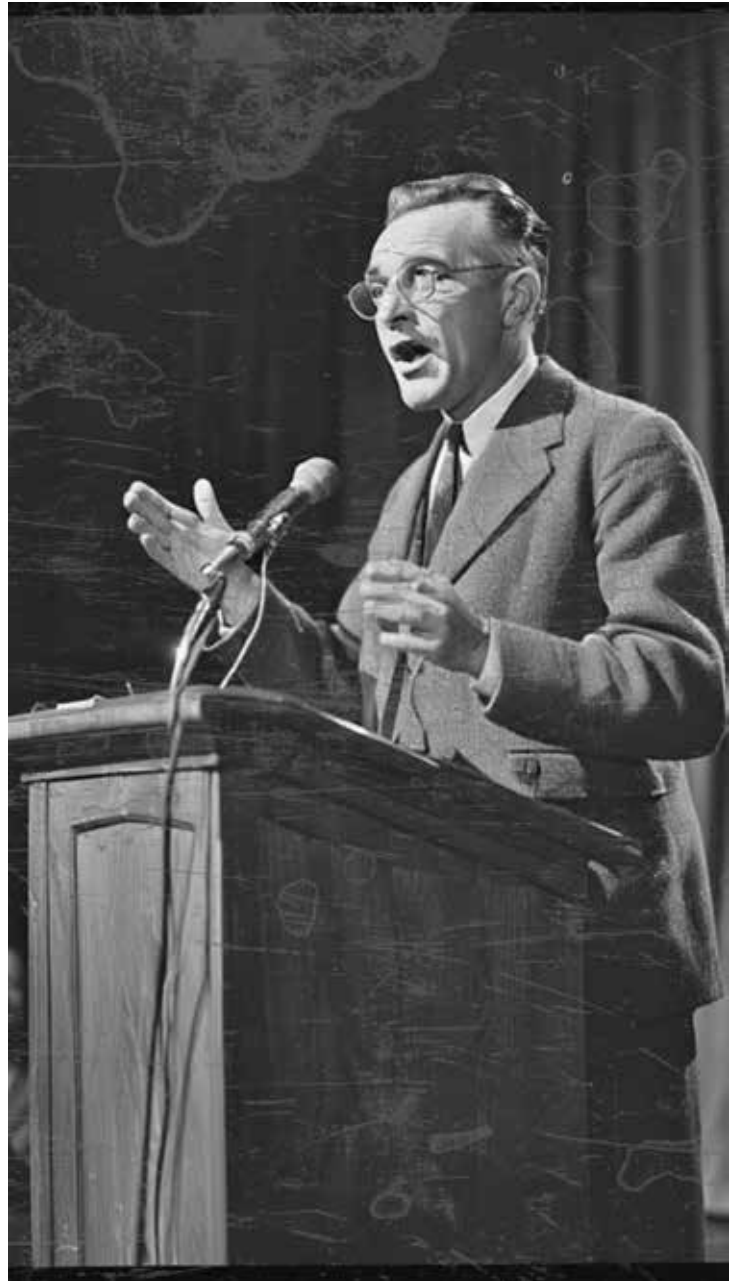
Faith in our fellow man is another of our great principles. Faith in man leads to human relations of the noblest type. Our candidates come to us because of their faith in us. By that faith, they are able to make their progress through our degrees. Faith in each other leads to harmonious relations and enables us to see the inner man. Through this faith, we may reach beyond the man that is to the man that would be.

To reach the highest type of human relations, we must also be imbued with a sense of symmetry and order. In chaos, there is no progress, there is no stability. At every step in Masonry, members are impressed with this idea and its application to man's life.

Masonry has, through the years of its history, given the world a most beautiful example of cooperation. We have learned to work together. We see the need for cooperation in everyday life, and it should be our aim to carry our example to the world at large. The success of any social institution depends in a great measure upon the cooperative efforts of its individual members. To cooperate successfully, we must have a thorough knowledge of each other, a genuine respect for our neighbor's point of view, and a willingness to measure our neighbor by his yardstick and not by our own. The world today needs a new spirit of cooperative effort. The great accomplishments of all ages do not come from individuals, but only to the degree with which those who make up the group are able to work together for the good of all.

If we as Masons do our part in the cooperative efforts of everyday life, we shall have given the world at large a beautiful example of our fundamental principles.

Contemporary civilization, with its major emphasis upon material progress, challenges our social institutions. Let us meet the challenge boldly, and give to the world living illustrations of those fundamentals of Masonry which have served in the past to give our institution a leading place in the social forces of the world.



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

South Pasadena Masonic Lodge #290 F&AM
Masonic Con Weekend Arrives In California

~ Get Your Rest Now ~

The biggest Masonic Conference returns this July exploring Myth, Legends and Subculture.

June 29, 2025 — SOUTH PASADENA, California — The Masons of South Pasadena Masonic Lodge No. 290 F&AM cordially invite you to the 3rd SPML Masonic Con weekend. Learn more details on speakers, panels, and screening, you may also purchase your tickets all on our website at www.MasonicCon.com. The weekend long Masonic conference with speakers, panels, screenings, vendors and big pop culture festive board takes place July 25 – 27, 2025. Be part of this historic experience.

Pre-sale ticket options are now open through July 7, 2025, then regular price after: Virtual Pass \$25 (reg. \$50), General Admission \$110 (reg. \$140) and Executive Pass \$155 (\$170). And for the first time, we will also offer single day passes. Visit our website: www.MasonicCon.com for ticket information. This event will have a limited capacity. We strongly encourage you to purchase your tickets early. No tickets will be sold at the door.

This weekend long, **fully immersive Masonic conference**, will bring together over a dozen notable Masonic and Non-Masonic scholars from seven jurisdictions that span the entire Country, who will be speaking on various topics geared to enlighten the listener on the far reaching impact Freemasonry has and continues to have in our society, along with discussions on best practices and philosophies the novice or seasoned Mason can apply to enrich and grow the Craft.

Screenings this year will include: HOTSHOTS with producer Phil Donlon; MYSTERIES OF THE KNIGHT'S TEMPLARS by host and producer Timothy Hogan, and HARRY POTTER AND THE SORCERE'S STONE with a talk by Masonic scholar Darin Lahners, and maybe one or two last minute surprise screening!

If you would like to be a vendor, please contact our Asst. Secretary for further details. Vendor registration deadline is July 20th or until our limited vendor spaces fill.



Join us this summer (July 25 – 27) as we make history, again, when Masonic Con arrives in Southern California.

About South Pasadena Masonic Lodge No. 290

South Pasadena Masonic Lodge was chartered by the Grand Lodge of California in 1888, the same year the city was born. Our Lodge has been serving the community and its surrounding cities for the past 134 years! The building we currently occupy, which we built in 1930, is our fourth home. Mayors, doctors, actors, scientists, mechanics, police chiefs, lawyers, school administrators, filmmakers, engineers and the like, have been raised in our lodge, all helping build its eclectic identity that we admire and cherish.

About the Masons of California

Freemasonry—the world's first and largest fraternal organization—is based on the belief that a man who strives to improve himself can thereby improve his community and our society at large. The Masons of California have more than 45,000 members in over 340 lodges located throughout the state. The California Masonic Foundation is committed to making a profound difference for our communities, and touches the lives of thousands of Californians each year.

If you have further questions please contact us at the number or email below:

Dago Rodriguez, PM – Lodge Asst. Secretary

818-209-4440

Spml290info@gmail.com

www.SouthPasadena290.org

www.MasonicCon.com





MASONIC RESTORATION FOUNDATION

FOURTEENTH ANNUAL SYMPOSIUM • AUGUST 15-17, 2025 • HAMILTON, ONTARIO

Welcome to the Fourteenth Annual MRF Symposium!

The Masonic Restoration Foundation Symposium is the largest gathering of Masons in North America who are expressly committed to observing the highest standards of excellence in the Craft. This year, for only the second time, we are returning to Canada, to one of the most majestic Masonic locations in Canada: the Hamilton Scottish Rite Temple, in Hamilton, Ontario.

The Symposium will take place from August 15-17, 2025, and will be hosted by Templum Lucis Lodge No. 747.

As usual, the event will begin with a Harmony [Festive Board] held in the Lower Level Dining Room on Friday evening, conducted by the MRF Board, and featuring comments from our Keynote Speaker, WB Ric Berman, Past Master of the Quatuor Coronati Lodge No. 2076 in London, England. Along with our usual lineup of interesting speakers, brothers will have the opportunity to witness a Fellow Craft Degree conferred by Heredom Lodge No. 749 on Saturday afternoon. Registration for the Symposium is \$125.00 USD/\$175.00 CAD, and \$75.00 USD/\$100 CAD for the Saturday session only.

We are hoping that this year's Symposium will be an opportunity for an exchange of different perspectives and methods of Masonic practice in North America, and one that will especially bring in brothers from across Canada. All the information you need to participate is found here on this web site. We look forward to seeing you at the Symposium!

Andrew Hammer
President, MRF

What is the MRF Symposium?

The MRF Symposium is a meeting place for Masons who are seeking the highest form of Masonic experience they can attain within their lodges, while strictly conforming to the laws, resolutions, and edicts of their respective grand lodges. It is a gathering for those who pursue quality in the Craft to share ideas and discuss their work. The Symposium begins on Friday evening at 7:30 PM, with a Harmony in the Lower Level Dining Room, and concludes before noon on Sunday. As always, we have assembled an excellent program of speakers and presenters to share their light with you.

Who May Attend the Symposium?

Any Mason in good standing may register for the Symposium, provided he is a member of a Grand Lodge which is a member of, or is recognized by any one of the Grand Lodges which are members of, the Conference of Grand Masters of North America, or the United Grand Lodge of England, the Grand Lodge of Ireland, or the Grand Lodge of Scotland. Full Registration for the Symposium is \$175 CAD/\$125 USD.

Topics and Panels

- Origins, Allegory, and Enlightenment: From the Horn Tavern to Solomon's Temple
- Why Do We Bother?
- Dealing With Diversity in the Lodge
- Tragedies and Triumphs in a New Observant Lodge
- Living Life as an Observant Mason
- Victory Through Harmony: Transforming an Existing Lodge
- The Observant Lodge In Canada
- Happiness: The Chief Aim of Masonry
- Kipling, Burns, and Observant Masonry

Featured Speakers and Panelists:

Ric Berman . Ed BurrIDGE . David Cameron
Donald Carducci . Jean-Frédéric Dicaire Philip
Durell Dan Graham . Andrew Hammer
Chad M. Lacek



A MASONIC REFLEXION ABOUT CIVIL RIGHTS, DIVERSITY AND EQUALITY.

by RW. Bro. Luciano M. Azevedo, IL



The diversity of our existence is beautiful, but people today are still entangled in a predicament, one that has plagued mankind since the beginning of time. Yet, at a basic level, we are all of the same human species. We experience highs and lows in life and strive to be happy and fulfilled. Our common pains and joys are what bring us together, but our diversity makes us unique. It is what deems you or I our own special person, one who has never existed and will never exist again.

The human race is extraordinarily diverse in so many ways. Gender, ethnicity, race, class, religion, nationality, philosophy, lifestyle. The areas in which we differ are endless and that is exactly where the beauty resides. However the civil rights struggle is and has always been something extremely controversial in the United States. For us Freemasons, equality and freedom, according to our bylaws is a non-negotiable topic. It is intrinsically part who we are, it is our very essence! So why we try to avoid this so important topic?

Freemasons have historically fought against racism and inequality and traveled for “foreign countries” embracing every culture, every race and we still are the most diverse fraternity in the world with hundreds of thousands lodges spread all over. We are in every continent of the earth teaching our craft that we are all equals. Freemasons are well known for their tolerance, prudence and understanding. During a time when knowledge was considered a privilege of just a few “special and chosen” people, Masons fought and stand for the Enlightenment. So many people have died or

have been deprived of basic rights because of a lack of understanding — an understanding that difference in appearance, belief, or way of life does not make one person better than another.

As we all know our system of Speculative Masonry developed from Operative Masonry (Stone Masons and Guild workers) which was completed when four lodges of London assembled in St. Paul Church yard in June 24, 1717 and organized the first Grand Lodge of England. Nevertheless, one should not mistake the date of 1717, as being the historical or symbolic origin of Masonry. We have been adopting symbolisms from many ancient and diverse cultures. It has been proven that black people in ancient Egypt had developed a sophisticated system of initiation called by historians as the Egyptian Mystery System that is partially adopted by our rites. (Reference: Fahim A. Knight article titled, “Freemasonry and Islam: What do They Share?”).

It is also believed that Socrates, Plato, Aristotle and Pythagoras, the called “philosophical fathers of masonry” were educated in astronomy, music, geometry, arithmetic, logic, rhetoric and grammar in Egypt at the helm of African wise men. It is a hypocritical and contradictory for white Masons to deny black Masons their right to legitimacy and at the same time have borrowed their own Masonic rituals, philosophy and regalia from black Egyptian and Arabic culture. (Reference: George G.M. James, “Stolen Legacy”).

We have found that true masonry is an expression of justice, prudence, temperance, and fortitude and at the

basis of these virtues lays friendship and brotherly love. We who believe in justice must challenge Masons in the United States to abolish any racist, segregationist and xenophobic views.

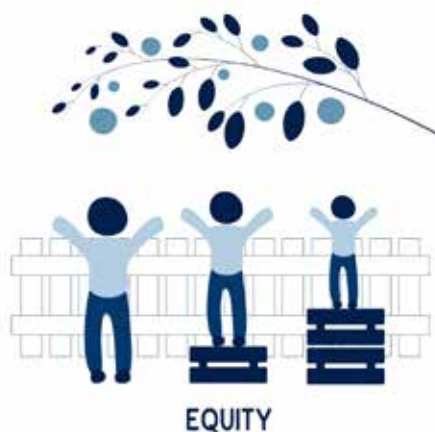
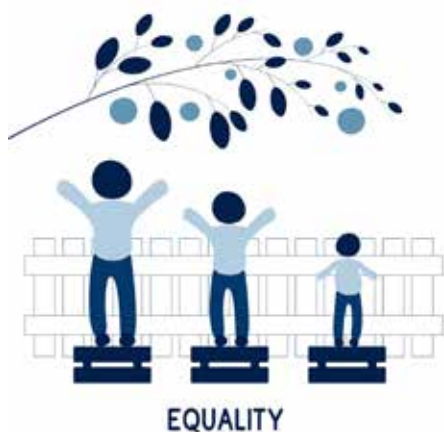
Understanding and accepting people from all walks of life is key to finding peace in our lives. But beyond that, it is of the utmost importance to making the world a place where all can live freely and without fear.

Let's practice empathy, let's not be quick to judge, and envision life in another's shoes before we end up treating them unfairly. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. said that it is impossible to love without knowing each other's pains. Let's live with compassion! Compassion refers to the love for and desire to help ALL people. Only through compassion we can find lasting joy. Compassion allows us to walk down the street and see only the faces of our brothers, of other humans living the same life as us.

Compassion allows us to realize our role in something much larger than ourselves. It allows us to forget our selfish desires and to strive to better the lives of the less fortunate. Truly caring for others fills us with purpose and peace.

I would like to suggest to you a pledge my brother:

"Every human being is an image bearer of The Great Architect of the Universe. Therefore, I joyfully extend my love to each and every person regardless of color, culture, ethnicity or religion. As a serious minded freemason I will use the influence entrusted to me to change any structure or system that perpetuates injustice. As a parent I pledge to raise my children and grandchildren with values that lead to a true celebration of diversity. Today I rededicate myself to a lifestyle of radical tolerance and all encompassing inclusion."



THE CHARITY OF THOUGHTFULNESS

by Chad M. Lacek, 33°



I thought I knew how to make good chili until I was invited to be a judge at a CASI-sanctioned chili cookoff. After the second spoonful, I realized I had absolutely no idea how to make it. My perspective changed forever.

I'm embarrassed to admit that I feel the same about thoughtfulness. I am the kind of person who will hasten toward a closed door when I see someone approaching it with their arms full. If I see a coworker who's having a bad day, I will pay them a compliment or say something friendly to lighten their mood. I wouldn't say that I'm thoughtful, but I was at least mindful. When I began to learn what real thoughtfulness looks like, I felt like a chili judge again.

Real thoughtfulness is a superpower. It can change someone's life. I stumbled across the following story, and my eyes widened with surprise and a little shame. "I heard my mom asking our neighbor for some salt. We had salt at home, so I asked her why she was asking. She told me, 'They don't have much money, and they sometimes ask us for things. So, I asked for something small that wouldn't burden them. I want them to feel as if we needed them, too. That way, it will be much easier for them to ask us for anything they need.'"

That is a Grandmaster chess player's level of forethought and strategy. Now that--is Thoughtfulness. I never would have thought of that. Would you? Then again, I've never been any good at chess. I'm so impressed with people who have a mind like that. I want to be more thoughtful and have compiled these examples in hopes that both of

us might benefit.

Have you ever felt a rush of anxiety when a casual acquaintance approaches to greet you, and you cannot recall their name? It's awful, and it happens to everyone. What if you were the kind of person who never allows that to happen? If I said, "Hi, I'm Chad. We met at the Lodge holiday party last year. It's nice to see you again, and you remember my wife, Yulia." They are totally off the hook. Anxiety vanished. I've given them permission to pretend that they did remember us (if they did not), and I've given them the context of when and where we met, so that they can effortlessly pick up a conversation from there. I LOVE people who do that for me. I am trying to make a habit of it myself.

If you believe that someone is dealing with a hardship, rather than asking them directly, you can share a time when you were suffering. Allow yourself to be a little vulnerable, which gives them permission and an opening to share their own struggles.

Get caught talking about someone behind their back. Paying someone a deserving compliment is nice. Spreading that 'rumor' around in a way that you are sure will get back to them is even better. Speak favorably about them to people who are in their social circle. The impact it will have will be multiplied compared to hearing it directly from you.

There is a story in the Hebrew Bible, in the Book of Ruth. In it, a widow named Ruth went to glean grain

from a field belonging to Boaz. She followed behind the workers who were reaping the harvest, collecting what they dropped or neglected. Boaz, seeing this, spoke to his foreman during their midday break. He told him to direct the reapers to leave extra sheaves of grain behind deliberately. This allowed her to have the food she desperately needed without asking for charity, and without the shame of theft. If he gave her the grain, she would feel in his debt, no matter how Boaz considered it. Let's be mindful of methods to help others in a way that allows them to preserve their dignity.

The Stoic philosopher Seneca wrote extensively on how to give charity. He emphasized that gifts should be offered in a way that doesn't shame the recipient. "It is not enough to do a kindness; one must do it in the right way. A benefit given harshly or arrogantly, or in a way that makes the receiver feel indebted or ashamed, loses all its value. The best benefits are those given freely, with cheerfulness, and in such a way that the recipient feels not oppressed by the obligation, but grateful for the goodwill." Ideally, we want to express gratitude to the receiver of the gift we are giving. They are giving us as much joy in the giving as they are in the receiving. We're even.

We can invite a struggling acquaintance for dinner under the pretense of a celebration, so they feel included rather than pitied. In this way, they are helping with the celebration, not benefiting from it. We can usually squeeze at least one extra chair up to our table. Who could you invite to sit in it?

I mentioned earlier that thoughtfulness can change someone's life. I know that firsthand. I helped an old lady carry her groceries home one evening. When we arrived, she broke down in tears, explaining to me that her daughter recently died of a drug overdose. She was convinced that her daughter sent me to help her with her groceries. This was proof to her that her daughter was happy and peaceful in heaven, looking down on her mother, waiting to be reunited one day soon. That is the power of a simple act of thoughtfulness.



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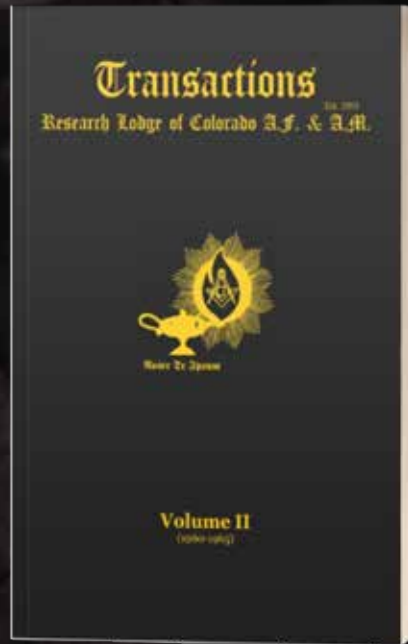
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The Power Of Brotherly Love

by RWB.: Wayne Spooner



In this Digital Age, people have access to significant volumes of information and hundreds of contacts via social media. Yet, why are so many people feeling isolated and alone? The answer is grounded in a need and search for a deeper connection with quality people. They seek mutually beneficial relationships. We've heard this resounding message (especially from men under 40 years old). These men are looking for opportunities to fellowship and create genuine connections with quality men. Illinois Freemasonry is a viable solution; as a fraternity, we are first and foremost a brotherhood of men.

Across the ages and around the world, good men have cherished the feeling of belonging and social attachment available through an active Masonic life. Think about the quiet comfort and "peace of mind" derived from knowing that wherever your travels take you around the world, you can find Brothers and friends. The Mystic Tie that connects the millions of Freemasons around the world is real! It is an unbreakable chain of Brotherly Love and affection which is stronger than anything that could be constructed with human hands. That chain is built from the many daily and weekly experiences that Brothers share talking to, listening to, and learning from one another. In these conversations, we share our personal thoughts, aspirations, joys and challenges in life; we also learn from more experienced Brothers who are eager to pay-it-forward to pass along their valuable life experience.

Through our connections as Brothers, we expand our circle of friends and personal networks within our communities. Fundamentally, "good men and true, knowing each other to be such, do always love the more, as they be the more good." As Masons, we look pass what others typically target to divide men and focus on what is most important, the value of

a man's character. Upon this foundation, we gather together men whom would otherwise not cross paths on life's journey. We are a blending of men from various backgrounds (i.e. social, financial, ethnic, religious, geographic, etc.) who call each other Brother. An example of that sentiment is exemplified in the joint celebration of the 20th anniversary of mutual fraternal recognition with the Brethren of the Most Worshipful Prince Hall Grand Lodge of Illinois.

In Illinois Freemasonry, Brotherly Love is demonstrated by many acts of caring. We want every Brother to know that we care about him, meaning that we value and embrace his unique abilities, strengths and talents. Also, it means that we care about his welfare including the progress being made with his work / career, finances and personal health. Not done yet, we extend that same sentiment to the welfare of his family (i.e. wife, partner, significant other, widow and children). For example, the Illinois Masonic Outreach Services (IMOS) charitable program is living proof of how we care for our members and their families in our grand jurisdiction.

Looking forward, as we continue on that journey to "become the best version of ourselves", it is Brotherly Love that connects us, unites us, and let's us know that we do not travel alone.

RWB.: Wayne Spooner,
Chairman, Committee on Membership



Justice:

One of the Four Cardinal Virtues

by Greg Knott, 33°

The Entered Apprentice learns in the first degree lecture about the four cardinal virtues; Temperance, Fortitude, Prudence and Justice. Some brethren and I recently have been having a discussion about the topic of Justice, so I wanted to explore what it means in the Masonic sense. In Duncan's Masonic Ritual the EA lecture states:

"Justice is that standard or boundary of right which enables us to render to every man without distinction his just due. This virtue is not only consistent with Divine and human laws, but is the very cement and support of civil society; and as Justice in a great measure constitutes the real good man, so should it be the invariable practice of every Mason never to deviate from the minutest principles thereof. The charge you received while standing in the northeast corner of the Lodge, your feet forming a right angle, was an allusion to the pedal."

So what does this mean in the Masonic Lodge? Our ritual frequently uses the phrase *"in every well governed lodge"*. This makes reference to a set of principles of how lodges conduct their business, how the brethren interact with each other and how problems that arise within the lodge are ultimately dealt with.

A lodge is created with the granting of a charter from a Grand Lodge. The Grand Lodge has issued this charter based upon the rules of its own constitution and by-laws. This constitution and by-laws were created by a group of men – Masons, who agreed to utilize these common principles in the execution of the fraternal business.

Men become Masons through a process outlined within this constitution and by-laws via the ritual of our fraternity. The ritual illustrates through an allegorical story the important principals and lessons that serve as the basis for masonry.

Justice thus forms the very basis of our organization, it guides how we conduct our business, how we deal with issues that face us and provide the guidance in carrying out the actions necessary to keep peace and harmony within the institution.



The obligations outline a code of conduct in how we strive to live and interact with our brethren. The Charge in the Fellowcraft degree further explains to us:

"Our laws and regulations you are strenuously to support, and be always ready to assist in seeing them duly executed. You are not to palliate, or aggravate, the offences of your brethren; but, in the decision of every trespass against our rules, you are to judge with candor, admonish with friendship, and reprehend with justice."

We are thus taught not only the importance of our obligation, but also an approach to which it should be carried out.

What does this mean within the local lodge? As brethren we have an obligation, a responsibility and a duty to help each other in the seeing that our common goals, rules and high standards are maintained.

This can lead to some difficult choices at times, especially when you must *"in the decision of every trespass against our rules, you are to judge with candor, admonish with friendship, and reprehend with justice"*.

These tasks are not to be taken lightly, but are often necessary to maintain harmony within the lodge, sustain our high moral standards and ultimately fulfill our obligations to each other.



Brotherly Love Must Prevail Over Societal Apathy

by WB.: Darin A. Lahners, Committee on Masonic Education, IL



Robert Putnam's seminal work, "Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community," was first published in the year 2000. Bowling Alone essentially states that the glue that holds communities together comes not from the formal institutions of local government, but rather from the social ties formed in churches, bowling leagues, and community organizations such as the Elks, PTA, or the Freemasons. These social ties are what Putnam calls "Social Capital".

However, no one wants to address the elephant in the room. The fact of the matter is that Freemasonry and other community organizations do not appeal to modern society because of social apathy. Social apathy is defined as a pervasive phenomenon in contemporary societies that refers to the lack of interest, concern, or empathy regarding social issues and the well-being of others.

Examining Freemasonry and what it has to offer, it is clear to see why we are having issues getting men to join the lodge and getting members to be engaged in our lodges. While we have been told that Freemasonry is a peculiar system of morality, veiled in allegory and illustrated by Symbols, isn't it something more? I would argue that Freemasonry is a philosophical system that teaches a system of egalitarian governance within the lodge and stresses moral, spiritual, and intellectual self-improvement for its members, in service to God, which in turn enables them to contribute to the better-

ment of their communities.

What happens when a majority of our members and potential members are bombarded with narratives in the media that tell them that the values that we hold are contrary to what they should believe? Allow me to explain.

When we look at the three graces: Faith, Hope, and Charity, we must understand that Charity does not mean being charitable. It has the profound meaning of agape. Agape is a Greek word, and equates to "the highest form of love, charity". Agape is Brotherly Love. Due to a mistranslation in the KJV Bible from the Greek, in 1 Corinthians 13, we have substituted "charity" in place of "brotherly love". Reading the passage, however, which should be familiar to Freemasons, we see what happens when we replace charity with Brotherly Love. "So, faith, hope, brotherly love remain, these three; but the greatest of these is brotherly love."

How nicely this ties in with our tenets of Brotherly Love, Relief, and Truth. Brotherly Love does not just apply to your Masonic Brothers. We are taught in the first degree that Brotherly Love applies to everyone, that we should regard the whole Human species as one family, as created by the Great Architect, that as we are inhabitants of one planet, we should aid, support, and protect each other. Masonic relief should apply to everyone less fortunate than us. The Truth we seek should be derived

from the Volumes of Sacred Law.

We can see how contrary the above tenets are to societal narratives. It is fair to say that a substantial percentage of society does not care about anything outside of themselves. This social apathy is the result of a widespread narcissism that has taken hold in modern society. We live in a society that promotes preoccupation with the self, where individuals feed their need for excessive admiration and approval from others via social media.

Combine the narcissistic tendencies of modern society with the social media algorithms or other media that are consumed, and that media reinforce the values of that individual's echo chamber.

We can see that many of these values are antithetical to our tenets, and the common narrative of these values are:

- That sectarian tribalism is to be embraced.
- That we are to be divided against each other.
- That the other is not my friend; they are my enemy.
- That the human species is not one family.
- That the planet should serve humanity, instead of humanity serving the planet.
- That the truth is what we tell you it is.
- That the golden rule can be broken.
- That the God I worship is better than the one that you worship.

Make no mistake that the above narratives are being pushed because they divide society and allow the darkness of ignorance to gain footholds. Those pushing the division are doing so to keep the majority in society from uniting against them, a minority that controls and hoards power and wealth, like King Croesus. A name that should be familiar to NMJ Scottish Rite Masons.

It is my sincerest belief that as we see technology further isolate us from one another, Freemasonry must be at the forefront of uniting communities. That we must disperse our light through both our actions and words to fight against division. That we must not only act with Brotherly Love in the world of the profane, but that we must actively promote it. That we must idealize those six words at the end of the Pledge of Allegiance, we use to open our meetings: "With Liberty and Justice for all." That the "All" applies to all of humanity. That Brotherly Love must prevail against Social Apathy.

The only way that Brotherly Love will prevail is for each Freemason to embrace it as a core concept. That every moral and social cementing us means that we are inculcating ourselves with Masonic lessons, and we are

exemplifying these lessons with not just the brothers in our lodges, but the world in general. We must labor in the quarries of our communities. We must show our communities why Freemasonry is important. We must use Masonic Education as a tool to improve not only ourselves, but the profane world. We must not fall into the traps of sectarian division.

Now more than ever, Freemasonry must show the world a better way to think and act. We must disperse Masonic Light because we are willing to rise above the madness of this world and to exemplify the way to behave with brotherly love and relief towards our neighbor, regardless of how they differ from us. We must show the world what "Truth" is, in being true to the lessons imparted by Volumes of Sacred Law. That we must treat others as we ourselves would want to be treated.

We must realize that we all have the Logos inside of us, reinforced when we were brought to light in our degrees. That the breath of God, the Word, the essence of God's being, was put inside of each of us, becoming our immortal souls. That each of us is tasked with a noble and glorious purpose to love and serve God and each other. That our mission as Freemasons is to show the world how to act with Brotherly Love, Relief, and Truth. That Brotherly Love is not just a Masonic catch phrase, but it is a state of being. That Relief is not just something we write a check for; it is Brotherly Love in action. That Truth is not what the media tells us it is, but rather that it is the divine truth of God.

I leave you with the words of Worshipful Brother Benjamin Franklin:

"Here is my Creed. I believe in one God, Creator of the Universe. That he governs the World by his Providence. That he ought to be worshiped. That the most acceptable Service we can render Him, is doing good to his other Children. That the Soul of Man is immortal, and will be treated with Justice in another life, respecting its Conduct in this. These I take to be fundamental Principles of all sound Religion, and I regard them as you do, in whatever sect I meet them."

Take due notice and govern yourselves accordingly.



Masonic Educational Conferences

Masonicon Kansas – July 18th & 19th 2025 – Kansas
www.MasonicConKansas.com (Free Event!)



South Pasadena Masonic Con (SPML) – July 25th, 2025 – California
www.MasonicCon.com



Central Illinois All-State Fall AMD In-Gathering - October 18th, 2025 - Bloomington-Normal Masonic Lodge
Open to all members of the Allied Masonic Degrees



Masonic Con South – October 18 & 19th, 2025 – North Carolina
www.MasonicConSouth.com



Midwest Conference on Masonic Education – April 24-26 - 2026, Omaha, NE,
www.MCME1949.org



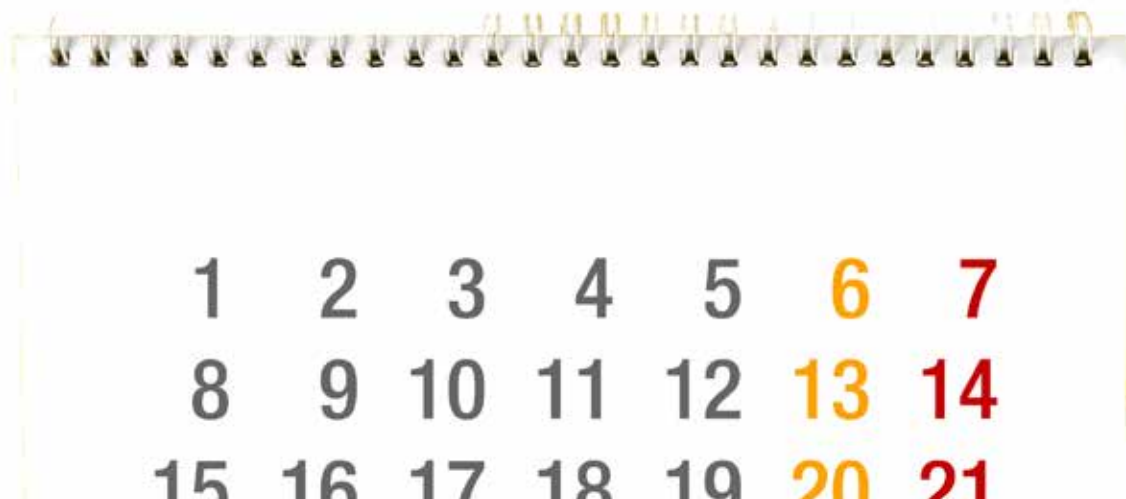
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