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**"OUR MISSION" - FROM EXAMPLE AND THROUGH LEADERSHIP**

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**"OUR MISSION"- FROM EXAMPLE AND THROUGH LEADERSHIP**

Our mission and responsibilities within the Craft and how we relate to them in our daily affairs, is very indicative to the principles of sound leadership and the high standard of moral tolerance we project by our examples.

Freemasonry is an organization of men who are banded together in a dignified common purpose of making this a better world by which to live in, becoming better men, men of character, men of courage, men of conviction, men who follow Masonry and its teachings, men who in their daily lives are projecting by their leadership and example true brotherly love, relief and truth.

Our mission appears at times to get sidetracked, particularly in our modern world with its continual pressure of business, family, and social life. There is the easy ever-present path of least resistance which is not necessarily the proper course to follow. We, therefore, require a guide or symbols to ensure we do not err. Freemasonry provides this track to run on for those who desire to follow it. Within the Craft we come to realize that we are not the only ones who are tempted to stray. We learn from being accepted by our brothers to accept ourselves, that there are many others like us who need the strength, charity and love of our fellowman. Then may I ask - What are our responsibilities as Masons? What example should we be portraying? Masonry is not just to be practised in the lodge room. It must be carried into our daily lives. We must constantly conduct our affairs in the community, in our homes, our business, and outside activities, in a manner which will at all times, express our image, our dignity, and reflect the honor of our order.

The Craft is not a secret society but a closely knit group of brethren of leadership - yes leaders - for you my brethren would not be here if that were not the case. We have the desire to lead our families, our associates and our friends toward a better way of life. We have the responsibility of communicating by our actions these Masonic teachings to our fellow man.

Through our image we can recognize a Brother Freemason. Freemasonry serves its purpose if one can say "I recognize you as a Mason by your square conduct, your uprightness, and your Love for your fellow-man. " Our conduct is the most important way by which we should demonstrate to the world that we are Freemasons. The divine principles of our honored craft are brotherly love, relief and truth, which if practised in their true meaning, will shed rays of light and glory of recognition to all.

Brethren, we have other ways of shedding this light of recognition, such as the Masonic emblems we wear on our clothing, our rings, and on our lodge

buildings. Let us not be ashamed to render

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and display our proud image and let us remember that they represent to us, recognition through a symbolic meaning only. To be recognized as a true Freemason, we must forever practise our principles in their true meaning.

Freemasonry is a charitable, benevolent, educational, and yes, a responsible fraternity, religious only because we profess our belief in God, secret only in our method of recognition, charitable - not for the purpose of monetary gain but for the devotion, welfare and happiness of mankind. Reverence for God is ever present in all our teachings and ceremonials, and we are reminded constantly of morality.

We gather and meet in numbers so as to form a social atmosphere and provide more material for the primary work of education, of charity and worship. Freemasonry continues to seek, improve, and strengthen individual character, thus impressing upon its members the principles of personal responsibility and righteousness, inspiring us all with that feeling of human welfare, charity, and good-will towards all mankind, stimulating and putting our convictions into action. By this action we are bound to truth and justice, enlightenment of orderly and civil liberty, of loyalty to the government of our country to which we owe allegiance.

We, as true Freemasons, must believe that if we are searching for attainment of these objectives in our new members, we must first look for the quality within the men whom we have admitted into our ranks. Every man has an individual quality of intellect hidden well within the resources of his being. It is our responsibility to search and assist in the development of these resources; search for the motivation and dignity each man possesses; inspire him on to his greatest abilities so he can and will, cherish his ultimate achievements but more important he will then be a living example with self-motivation and determination to express the best image of Freemasonry in his home, community, and to his associates through those excellent precepts and principles for which we stand.

I believe the example and strength of our fraternity is best achieved through being united together, determined in the obedience of our creeds and principles which are laid out before us, remembering by that true example, we will all act and live our Masonic lives according to our individual judgment through the dictates of our conscience because our conscience is our lifeline to the G.A.O.T.U.

Now that I have expressed my thoughts of our examples and responsibilities, let me relate to you a very important and grave part of my thoughts of "Leadership and Direction". Freemasonry begins within the heart of the individual. Carried into active operation it is like a stone thrown into a calm lake causing ripples which start with a small circle, but gradually enlarging until the ripples reach the shore in an ever-widening circle. To illustrate this same principle in Freemasonry, this theory also begins in the hearts of our leaders of the Craft by placing that stone of education and brotherly love within each lodge, to start that small ripple of leadership from the Worshipful Master that will eventually encircle and inspire every member to attend and participate giving them the moral courage and desired rewards, creating an atmosphere that will command their earnest respect and devoted attendance.

It takes courage to be a leader of the Craft, or to be a master of one's lodge.

He must be above reproach and be willing to accept real responsibility; responsibility for himself and for his decisions and also for the soundness and success of our enterprises and our institution.

There are some, of course, in any organization who are less willing to accept and carry any real weight of responsibility, who seem to feel they have the unlimited license to criticize the sincere decisions, and mistake the motives which other brethren make. Every honor of every office, every privilege or right, carries with it real responsibility. There is no honor without a sacrifice, but in lieu of any adversity we may encounter, we must maintain an open mind willing to be responsive, and remember, brethren, some men are wiser than others, some more informed, and we stand united in the knowledge of their integrity and intelligence; from them and their assistance, we lead the way. Let us always lend

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an ear to their awareness and guidance, and be willing to accept and share in the prosperity and responsibility we all owe to The Order, for if we are NOT prepared to share and be responsive, we have little right to criticize.

Brethren, there is absolutely no substitute for good knowledgeable enthusiastic leadership. Without it we have no proper direction, we perform no service, we make no sacrifice, we destroy our image and identity, our road we travel is not true and straight. These are some of my deepest concerns and so should they be yours.

Let me relate just a few of some of the adversities I feel that we need to amend, to look at, and to study very closely. Brethren, first let me state there is nothing wrong with Freemasonry; there is little wrong with our lodges; then what is left? - is it us, the members, the leaders? It is not new to anyone that our membership has declined. Some lodges are experiencing very poor attendance, so what is the problem? The Grand Secretary of The Most Worshipful Grand Lodge of British Columbia R W. Brother Charles Lorimer, perhaps placed it in its proper perspective when he stated and I quote "Lack of attendance is not the problem in our lodges, but is the result of the problem."

Let me further relate by asking, are we unconsciously, downgrading our Craft-Freemasonry? Yes, brethren, there are some in our ranks who have failed in the task of digesting the true meaning and principles of our Order. Like eating an apple, they devour the peel and throw away the fruit. When we submit our honored Craft to all sorts of indignities, look upon it with contempt, label it as something hardly worth mentioning or belonging to, then what can we expect, if these master masons no longer give to their lodges their full measure of loyalty and devotion. Yes, we have failed unconsciously, and our craft has had to suffer.

Have we lost by default the esteem and enthusiasm the craft once held? We, I'm sure, have all asked ourselves this very frustrating and blank answers. Masonry today, as in years past, has had its share of ups and downs. Masonry, as we know it today is not held in the high esteem which it has enjoyed in the past. There is not the same appeal for the brotherly love, relief and truth, and certainly not for the moral law.

How unfortunate for those who do not understand, and see fit to flaunt our fraternal society. Take heed, brethren, the tide is changing, we are beginning to see new light, to experience new awareness. .It is time for us to rededicate, to re-establish our genuine beliefs in our tenets and principals so that when we hear that knock we are not found wanting or absent at the gate.

Have we in our haste to accept more candidates, overlooked the internal qualifications of man and have we substituted "Quantity" for Quality."? Let us forever be aware that it is only the inner qualities of a man and his dedication to the G.A.O.T.U., his devotion and loyalty to society that should make him a qualified candidate to join our fraternal order.

Have we failed to provide new members with the opportunity to express their talents thereby losing them to other concordant bodies? With all due respect this is a sincere and delicate question. As for myself, I too belong, and as a member of these very worthy concordant bodies I remain loyal to and supportive of my masonic lodge. Brethren, every member of the masonic order deems 'fellowship' the most precious jewel in our masonic diadem - a quality which is the very existence of our fraternity. If Brethren cannot find it in their masonic lodges their search will continue elsewhere. It is our duty as officers and brethren of our lodges to see to it that these new members are properly prepared. Let us seek to find their given talents, and above all, to cultivate that masonic friendship to the best of our ability and with great zeal so that they will not feel their lodges have denied them.

Leadership and direction, where does it begin and what is its purpose? Brethren, leadership through ability and knowledge is the divine and wholesome requirement of every worshipful master. It

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will command the utmost loyalty, interest and genuine respect of every Freemason belonging to his lodge. This is the direction he should take and this is where it all begins. Every worshipful master is charged with a keen responsibility. The honor, the usefulness, and the reputation of the lodge is charged to him. The skill and ability with which he governs the lodge affairs requires a sincere effort. He must be worthy of the humble and loyal support of the brethren have endeared to him. He must, through his leadership and education, endeavour to maintain the interest and prestige the Craft and his lodge deserves, thereby inspiring his members and satisfying their desires whereby he will receive the benefits and rewards of their worthy support and faithful attendance.

A worshipful master is the supreme ruler of his lodge; he must exercise just and wholesome authority with tolerance and understanding for the welfare of his members, to lead them with the courage of his convictions and with the knowledge and obedience to the precepts of our Order. With this desire of achievement, he would then require more chairs to accommodate that loyal respect and attendance of his members. The Craft, his lodge, and the community at large would then forever endure and share in that grace, and would thereby be surrounded by those genuine tenets and principles of brotherly love, relief and truth, which would then forever prevail.

Let me finish by leaving you with this final thought. FREEMASONRY can, and is a great teacher to all who search for examples that can somehow lead to a life less encumbered by the hurt that can arise from human relationships.