

Village Lodge Installation
January 7th, 2012

My name is Ted Sharon and I am a Mason!
I believe in individual freedom.
I believe in hard work.
I believe that each soul is a stone in God's Temple.
I believe that many roads lead to God.
I believe in tolerance and harmony.
I believe in the equilibrium of good and evil in the universe, and that both are necessary.
I believe in the value of education as a cure for ignorance, fanaticism and tyranny.
I am a Mason!

(Most Worshipful), Right Worshipful Sirs, Worshipful Brethren, Ladies, Guests, Brethren — welcome.
Thank you for being here this evening! It is a joy and a privilege for me to welcome each one of you.

It is impossible for me to express exactly how I feel at this moment. To put it simply, I am honored to have been elected Master of Village Lodge. It takes years to get to this point in Masonry, but what a wonderful journey and learning experience it has been for me!

To begin, I want to extend a special thanks to my dear wife, Danielle for her support and for accepting, not always gracefully, staying home alone many evenings while I attended Lodge.

I thank my Installing Officers RW Joe Basler and RW Harry Futch, under the direction of my dear friend, W. Tali Atala for installing all the incoming officers today. I also thank the Brethren who agreed to serve as officers and members of our committees this coming year. With a collection of such capable men, we are bound to have a great team and a wonderful year.

I big thank you to the Knights of St. Andrews Honor Guard for an outstanding performance. They went literally out of their way to be here this evening. No wonder they are so much in demand.

Last but not least, most sincere and special thanks to our immediate PM W. Jed Kurzban. He did an excellent job as a Master in 2011, just as he did it once before, back in 2008. I look forward to our continued collaboration during my term W. Jed, and I already know I can count on it.

Please join me in giving these brothers a round of applause.

Each year, the Master comes before his Lodge to outline his plans, programs and ideas for the ensuing year. My theme for this year is "Raising the Bar". What does "raising the bar" mean? It means consolidating and growing those seeds already planted by my predecessors and at the same time implementing new and bolder ideas on how to bring the knowledge and understanding of the origins and meanings of our amazing ancient Fraternity mainly to our younger Brothers. Help them follow the Masonic footprints left in the world history, cultures, philosophies and religions. Bring back the excitement of properly understood and executed rituals, the role of music and of the arts.

Our changing social and economic environment causes us to focus much of our precious time and resources on keeping our fraternity alive. The kind of new members we would like and need to attract are young, ambitious professionals. Such men would be accustomed to thinking rationally and expect efficiency and measurable results. Such men are not going to spend their evenings on hearing the minutes read, which bills to pay, or watching poorly performed ritualistic work.

Attracting and particularly retaining such members could be achieved first and foremost, by becoming stronger within - making each of our meetings an event one will be sorry to miss. Second, we must be more visible and active within our community. We must clearly demonstrate what Masonry is truly about - that we are good men, working to become better men, and that we follow and live our obligations. **That Masons Walk the Walk, not just Talk the Talk.**

Being proficient in our rituals is critical in carrying the exoteric and esoteric messages of Freemasonry. All Freemasonry has to say, from ancient times to modern day, is in those rituals. We owe it not only to ourselves but especially to our new brethren, to provide them the best and unforgettable experience possible. Becoming a Mason is an important day in their lives and must be presented as such.

The internet and the social networks are the way of the present and the future, and for many of our potential candidates, the first contact with our Lodge and our Fraternity. We shall work to make our website the key communication tool and have it generate income by offering advertizing space.

Now, let me turn to the sentimental or philosophical part. I am for closing open circles. The mythological Uroborus was an ancient symbol depicting a serpent eating its own tail thus forming a circle. The name derives from the Greek (oura) meaning "tail" and (boros) meaning "eating". The Uroboros represents the perpetual cyclic renewal of life. Like a circle it has neither beginning nor an end, it is the eternal return, death and rebirth, the immortality of the soul. Our Fraternity uses the circle, and the compasses that generate it, as one of its most important symbols.

This evening my Brothers and friends, it's the time for me to close a circle and open a new one. W Saul Montes-Bradley (who now lives in Virginia and could not make it this evening) initiated me into the Fraternity, passed me to a Fellowcraft and raised me to a Master Mason. He spent long hours teaching me the catechisms of all three degrees and was proud to see me do well. He probably dedicated more time to me than to his wife and small children during those many evenings after coming home from work. It is befitting that he should be closing the circle with me. He may not be here personally tonight to sit with W Tali in the East, but he is nevertheless co-installing me in my heart. It does not mean that I expect him to eat his tail though I would pay a lot of money to see this.

Not **all** circles should be reopened. I saw my wife teaching Biblical Hebrew in a German public school in Bad Homburg, near Frankfurt, standing on the same grounds and remains of what used to be the local Jewish synagogue and school, burned down to ashes during "Kristallnacht" in Nazi Germany, possibly, by the hands of the parents of the attending students. She closed a circle all-right, but that is a circle that should never be reopened. "Never again"

I started my journey in Freemasonry as an Entered Apprentice years ago, I sat in all the chairs in a Lodge and now reached the last and most important any Mason can aspire to – that of the Master of a Lodge. I have experienced and understood that our Fraternity is not only a microcosm of the universe but also of human nature. I also learned, sometimes painfully, to subdue my passions when confronted with the occasional frailness of the human character. But most of all I learned that in Masonry, however high one climbs, one will always be an Entered Apprentice.

So, Uroboros, here I come...

In closing, I sincerely thank all of you again for your presence here tonight and for attending this installation. May the Great Architect of the Universe continue to enlighten and bless our Masonic Fraternity, our families, and the members of our military who, at this very moment, are in harm's way. Thank You!

Ted Sharon, January 7th, 2012