

Not Form. But Substance

(Address delivered by WB Mariano Lueco, PM, Grand Lodge Inspector of Hiram Lodge No. 88, at the Public Installation of its officers on January 5, 1968, Plaridel Masonic Temple, Manila, Philippines).

I count it a privilege to be conferred this honor of being your guest speaker today. I would like to express my greetings to all brother masons and non-masons present here tonight — for an occasion like this affords us the splendid opportunity of meeting each other and creating new friends and acquaintances.

I congratulate the past officers of this lodge particularly WB Juanito U. Fernandez for a job well done. During his mastership your membership increased by fifteen. I also extend my heartfelt congratulations to the Worshipful Master and other officers who have been installed. I trust that you will consider this honor as an opportunity for greater service and that you will discharge well your responsibilities to your lodge, to the Grand Lodge of the Philippines and to Freemasonry in general.

If I may suggest, at the very start of the year, the officers should draw up plans and set specific targets or objectives toward which your efforts will be specially directed. Do not entertain the feeling that you were elected as a matter of routine in the lodge. Let us constantly remember that when we become recipients of a trust, we must keep and maintain that level of worthiness. "That it was the faith, hope and expectations of our Masonic forebears that we who come after them would strive to prove worthy of what was being passed on to us; that we would work, plan and struggle to preserve the ORDER in all its purity, beautiful splendor and that we would transmit

unimpaired through a succession of ages the excellent tenets of Freemasonry."

Let us not only be proficient in the rituals, or in our labors, but let us adhere to the precious heritage we have received from those who came before us. It behooves us to cherish this heritage — appreciate its full meaning, its worth, and understand aptly its message by constant practice of the moral virtues we derive from it.

In this spirit, may I enjoin you to avoid unwarranted passions, petty jealousies and personal piques. The Craft is not only after admitting more members in Freemasonry, but promoting more Masonry in men. To achieve this, let each and everyone of us get involved in the activities of the Lodge. Let us not think of the misgivings of the past but rather regard them as experience and use them as references and guidelines for the success of our future undertakings. Let us work together as a team, and discharge our duties for the good of Freemasonry.

You know my wife is a "cursilista" and I am not. But of course, she had my permission. The priest of our town, Msgr. Sicat, addresses me always as Brother and I am flattered. He used to ask me when I would join. But I was non-committal.

The practice of "cursillo houses" are not the same. Maybe they just chose the guy. I know some Freemasons who were admitted without retraction. One of them is Ill. Bro-

ther Teofilo Abejo 33°. After his lengthy discussion with the priest, he was allowed to continue without retracting his firm belief in the tenets of Freemasonry. Here we have a brother who has a strong conviction. According to him, when we invited him to speak at Dapitan Lodge which is his Mother Lodge, had they insisted on his retraction, he would have packed up and left. I heard later that the priest who had permitted him to finish the course without retraction was transferred.

At this juncture, allow me to quote from one of Dr. Rizal's letters dated April 4, 1893, while he was exiled in Dapitan to the Jesuit Priest, Padre Pablo Pastels, in their debate by correspondence on philosophical and religious issues and I quote:

"I do not deny that there are precepts of absolute necessity and usefulness which are not clearly enunciated in Nature, but they have been lodged by God in the human heart, in the conscience of man, which is God's best Temple. Therefore, I adore more this good and provident God who has endowed each one of us with all that is necessary to save ourselves, who has continuously opened to us the book of his revelation, because his priest is ceaselessly speaking the voice of our conscience.

"I do not prejudice when I say that the voice of my conscience can come only from God; I judge by deduction. God could not have created me for my misfortune, for what evil did I ever do to Him before I was created, that he should want my perdition. Nor did he create me for no purpose, or for an indifferent purpose, because what are my sufferings for, what for is the slow torture of my continuous longing. He must have created me for a good purpose, and to this end I have no better guide than my conscience, my conscience alone, which judges and appraises

my acts. God would be inconsistent if after creating me for some purpose, He did not give me the means to attain it, like a blacksmith who wants to make a knife, but will not fashion its edge.

"All the brilliant and subtle arguments of Your Reverence xxx can never convince me that the Catholic Church is endowed with infallibility."

Speaking about conviction, many of you here perhaps have seen in the movies that film "A Man for all Seasons." That is the life story of Thomas Moore who had the courage of his conviction. At the gallows just before his execution he said: "I am the king's good subject, but God's first." In Masonic philosophy, I wish to paraphrase the above and suggest that the Freemasons wither-soever dispersed use as guidelines: "I am a Freemason. I am willing to enter the Cursillo, but there shall be no retraction."

As Freemasonry believes in the brotherhood of men under the fatherhood of God, permit me to dwell just a little bit on ecumenism enunciated by the late Pope John XXIII as his favorite maxim: "Stress that which unites, rather than that which divides." He was so imbued with the spirit of ecumenism that he was unselfishly guided by his conviction.

▲ Freemason perseveres in his firm

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quested donations from civic leaders of the community to equip the rooms in the new hospital building. The friends of the hospital responded agreeably and most of the rooms in the new building are being built and equipped as memorials to relatives of the donors. A group of priests have asked to donate at least one room if they cannot have two or three. They want to donate them in appreciation of the care the priests have received from the hospital since 1902 when it was founded by Baptist and Presbyterian missionaries. There is also a Catholic hospital in the city. Δ

NOT FORM...

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belief that Freemasonry, of which he is a member, is the one and only common ground for all sects and people, and, unless he believes in this philosophy and were imbued with a similar belief, he ought not continue to belong to this ancient fraternity. Therefore, a true Freemason is called upon to contribute his humble effort toward the achievement of ecumenism.

Masonry is not a religion but it is a religious fraternal organization. In fact, we pray before commencing any great undertaking. We believe in the saying "No man should ever enter into any great or important undertaking without first invoking the blessings of God."

Let us practice less form, but more substance in our religious, political or civic endeavors. It is the substance in all our actions and in all our undertakings which make us better men and better citizens. It is no, the form but the practice that makes us christians. Δ

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