

It is Precious. . . the. . . •

• **Master Mason's Diploma**

WB Lorenzo Talatala, PM •

The candidate for the degrees in Masonry, on being raised to the sublime degree of Master Mason, is awarded the Master Mason's diploma, under the seal of the MW Grand Lodge of the Philippines and signed by the MW Grand Master and the Grand Secretary. Inherent to this diploma are certain Masonic rights and privileges, among which are, that the holder thereof may "travel in foreign countries, work and receive Master Mason's wages and enjoy the love, care and protection of all Master Masons wheresoever dispersed." It is to signify that the newly raised brother has already attained a state of maturity, and has earned for himself an honored place amongst those who have joined the Fraternity long before him — those "who have gone this way before."

Misgivings: There are however, some misgivings among the conservative members of the Fraternity, for the rapid rate we are passing candidates to Fellowcrafts and raising them to the sublime degree of Master Masons, and thence award the Master Mason's diploma. In some of our Lodges, there have been cases where it took only one month, or even less, to raise a candidate to the sublime degree of Master Mason from the date of his initiation, by accelerating the ceremonies through dispensations for special weekly Lodge meetings convened solely for the purpose. While it may be true, as contended by its defenders, that in many instances the candidates were very proficient and have passed the required examinations given by the Lodge prior to

their taking the degrees, it is equally true that those candidates, in view of the short and inadequate period of their preparation, *could not have been duly and truly prepared in their hearts.* A candidate, may have been adequately prepared orally and physically in a routine manner to conform to the rituals, regulations and edicts of the Grand Lodge; but he cannot, in so short a time, undergo, both the external and the internal preparations to make him a true and exemplary Mason. Since our ancient regulations emphasize that: "it is the internal and not the external qualifications which recommend a man to be made a Mason," then there is very strong reason to assert that, under the above-cited circumstances, the candidate could not have been duly and truly prepared to take the solemn obligation before the Masonic Altar, which is supposed to be of his own free will and accord. The ill-effects of this hasty acceleration of candidates in Masonic advancement, without ample preparation is now being felt in some of our Lodges. After the candidates have been hastily raised to the sublime degree, they, within a short time, began to manifest their unpreparedness to become Master Masons, by neglecting to attend Lodge meetings or take part in Masonic affairs for lack of interest; and eventually, in some cases, they are suspended for non-payment of dues. When this happens, the members of the Lodge are, logically, the ones to bear the blame for the anomaly, because in their desire to increase Lodge membership, especially in those with

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few members and can hardly meet for lack of attendance, they accelerated the passing and raising of their candidates. As a result, many candidates are initiated even before their names can be published in the Grand Lodge Circular, in violation of Edict No 49 s1965 of the MW Grand Lodge of the Philippines, thus leaving no time for any brother to file his objection to the initiation of such a candidate, even if he had strong reasons to do so. There are even candidates whose education borders on illiteracy; yet they are extended the courtesy of being admitted into the Fraternity for *personal reasons*. Thus, many a time the brethren get disappointed when the attainments of the newly raised brother do not measure up to their expectations. WHY? Because, while the Ancient Laws of the Order, especially the OLD YORK CONSTITUTION OF 926 require that "No Master shall take an Apprentice for less than seven years," today, in this jurisdiction, a Master takes an Apprentice for *even less than one month*. Compare one month to seven years and we can only imagine the wide difference in the quality of "products put out" in the two procedures. Brethren, let us take one good look at this unfortunate situation and bring it up to the attention of the ruling body of the Fraternity, and let it seriously ponder on this matter, with the view to effect corrective measures, so that hereafter we may not anymore produce half-hearted Masons to the detriment of the Fraternity. Let us humbly accept the sad reality that our rank and file have been infiltrated by some undeserving Masons. Let us, while there is yet time, strictly uphold the principle of choosing quality instead of quantity in taking in candidates to our fold.

The Master Mason's diploma is universal: On the general subject of diploma, we now see around us many

of its kind, displayed in homes and offices. In our schools, they issue the high school diploma which is recognized by colleges, and entitles them to admission into the college or university. Then there is the college diploma issued by the college or university to the student who has finished a collegiate course as Doctor of Medicine, Dentist, Engineer, Lawyer, Chemist, Architect, Pharmacist, Technologist, Teacher and many others. However, even with the diplomas they have acquired as professionals in their respective professions, and in spite of the licenses which they have secured, they can only practice in this country, because their diplomas and licenses are not honored outside the Philippines, in so far as the practice of their professions is concerned. On the other hand, the Master Mason's diploma is of universal acceptance. Its holder, if in good standing, is "recommended to the friendship and hospitality of the Craft wheresoever dispersed" throughout the world, which recommendation is respected and honored by all Master Masons in good standing, regardless of creed, color, nationality and station in life. In the light of the foregoing, it becomes necessary, in consonance with good and judicious policy, that caution be exercised in the awarding of the Master Mason's diploma by seeing to it that it is awarded only to Master Masons who are worthy and deserving to possess it. Otherwise, unscrupulous persons will take undue advantage of our laxity, for their own selfish interests. It is even necessary, if the interest of the Order is to be zealously protected, that the newly raised brother be placed on probational status for at least one year, from the time he is raised to the sublime degree, before being given a Master Mason's diploma, as an added assurance that he is a true Mason, at

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heart and soul. Let only those worthy and well qualified be identified as Masons. Let the newly obligated brother own a diploma, but let him first pay the price for it in the form of proven steadfast loyalty, love and complete adherence to the tenets of the Fraternity, and after a well-meaning sacrifice and time-tested endurance, consistent with our ancient usages and customs.

On diploma mills: This name is given to private schools and colleges which, for certain material considerations, turn out every year graduates who have not fully complied with the prescribed courses of instruction. There were cases of so-called ghost classes, classes that were non-existent. There have been cases of students who merely enrolled in schools and colleges, said to be "Recognized by the Government," and paid their tuition fees, but did not actually attend classes. They merely waited for the end of the school year to be graduated and to receive their diplomas. There have been cases where students failed to make the grade in schools and colleges, nevertheless, received their diplomas in consideration of certain favors. Many diplomas have been awarded in the past, either for personal considerations or under dubious circumstances. Because of these, some private schools and colleges have earned the infamous name of *Diploma Mills*. Their reputations have been of public knowledge and in some cases have reached scandalous proportions.

Are we veering towards this direction? Of late, there are unmistakable indications that show the tendencies of some of our Lodges to veer towards this diploma mill direction. And, should the present momentum of this undesirable practice of rushing candidates to the sublime degree of Mas-

ter Mason, without ample preparation, be not arrested on time, before it becomes a definite pattern, then, one of these days, and sooner than we expect, we shall find many of our Lodges which once upon a time we adored so much as *worshipful* to be amongst those flourishing diploma mills, desecrated and disdained. While it is not yet too late, let us stop this practice altogether. Let us allow sufficient time for the candidate to change his mind, if he should, for what is of paramount importance to us is to let the tenets of Freemasonry penetrate deep into his heart and soul, in order that they may cast a permanent and everlasting impression therein, before he is bestowed with the coveted honor by our ancient and honorable Fraternity. The only way to accomplish this, is to let time, perseverance and sacrifice prove that he is worthy to be taken into the Fraternity as a brother. Then and only then shall we realize with satisfaction, that we have made him a Mason, in heart and soul. Then and only then, may we rest assured, that our newly obligated brother will stay with us through "the inclemencies of the seasons" and the tribulations of life. Then and only then, can we sit down contented and with peace in our minds and consciences, confident, that we have done our duty to protect the prestige, reputation and honor of our mother Lodge and the Fraternity as a whole.

Take good care: A Master Mason's diploma, if truly earned, is one worth keeping for posterity. It is to be owned with pride and dignity and should deserve to be looked upon with envy by the uninitiated. It should occupy an honored place in every Mason's home and heart, not to be kept rolled up inside his locker undisplayed and neglected. It should be handed down to the members of his family as a

legacy after the demise of the Mason. The practice of some brethren, especially those who did not sacrifice much in obtaining them, just to place them carelessly anywhere in their homes to be exposed to the elements and to be destroyed by house pests, is unfortunate and should deserve the condemnation if not detestation of all good Masons. If rightfully earned, this diploma should transcend all others, and should be handed down not only to the immediate members of his family, but also to the succeeding generations as long as it lasts and "until no more remembrance may be had of him among men and Masons forever." A Master Mason's diploma is truly a *diploma of honor*. Treat it thus, as every Mason should, and yours will be the undying love, respect and admiration of the brethren. Handle it with care. . . . △

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City to hold a like seminar for Lodges in the Tenth Masonic District. On August 26, the officers as above cited, will hold a seminar with the officers of Lodges in the First and Ninth Masonic Districts will meet in Manila for the seminar.

It is hoped that henceforth the reports will come in on time, complete and correct. △

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undertake Masonic labors in the South Vietnam capital. So far the government has refused permission for the lodge to work. No explanation has been given. The Hiram Club is active in promoting this Masonic project. Its members are Filipinos, Indians, and Americans, representing lodges from all over the world.

There is also a very popular Saigon Oasis Shrine Club in Saigon which meets every third Monday at the Club Hippique. This group was organized in 1958 and each year plans a "safari" to Manila with a large number of potential nobles.

—Masonic Service Assn.

The Grand Master wishes it known that report forms, petition forms, etc. are now distributed to Lodge Secretaries free of charge.

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