

WB Maximo P. Echiverri, PM
Secretary of Marunaw Lodge No. 111

In one of the regular stated meetings of our Lodge recently, WB Esmeraldo B. Roque came out in the open and propounded the question, "What is Freemasonry?" Everybody got alerted, stood one after the other and boldly endeavored to give his answer as best he could. All went well and this generated in the lodge a note of progress in Masonic moral science. Why? Because since then, this same question has become a by-word of the members of the lodge.

In the unbidden meaning and sensitive concept of Freemasonry, come these fraternal greetings:

What came we here to do? To learn to subdue our passions and improve ourselves in Masonry. What have we been and are we, presently, doing to improve ourselves in Masonry? How much reading and studying have we done since we were raised to the sublime degree of Master Mason? Are we getting everything out of Freemasonry that we expected and hoped for? What is this art known as Freemasonry and why do we have to study, investigate and explore to find its true meaning and concept?

Freemasonry is not a religion, yet it is religious in nature and in all its aspects. Religious, because before we embark on any great and important undertakings, we first invoke the blessings of GOD. So we kneel for the benefit of prayer. Upon completion, we again offer our prayers of THANKSGIVING. But what is most vital and important is that, as a fraternity, we are not to usurp the functions of the Church. We are not to declare war on them as an organ-

WHAT IS FREEMASONRY?

ized group. Rather, we are to aid and steadily assist in the untiring pursuit of a sacred mission. Thus Freemasonry undertakes a teamwork with the Church in the spiritual development of the individuals. And it is this cooperative team effort that should make Masons feel proud as members of this most ancient and honorable organization in pushing through the religious beliefs and practices to even greater heights in future years.

A social organization, Freemasonry is not. Although the Masons are highly sociable and they belong to an elevated bracket of society. Freemasonry is a way of life so that social attainments, social affairs and social intercourse are essential parts of life and a means to an end and not an end in itself. Society, therefore, is in itself, Freemasonry.

Secret? No! Never! Freemasonry is not a secret Order. There is nothing secret in Freemasonry. The constitution and by laws of the organization is free for every body to read, and even to own and possess. There are, of course, some ways and means of recognizing and identifying a Mason from one who is not, in the dark as well as in the light. There are also some pass words and rituals which must necessarily be kept from the non-masons. The reason for this is very clear and simple. If a non-mason knows how to identify a Mason, he can pretend to be himself a Mason, and enjoy the rare privileges and rights of a genuine Mason among brethren in any valley he may happen to roam. It should be borne in mind

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that it is very painful and most difficult to become a Mason, but it is, indeed, a joy and an honor to be one.

For beneficial purposes, Freemasonry is not either. This organization is not a Beneficial Order. But our charities are highly beneficial to mankind. We have the Crippled Children's Hospital, the Research in Mental Health, The Templar Eye Foundation and many other minor undertakings that serve as monumental manifestations in our firm belief in the Fatherhood of GOD and Brotherhood of MAN. To Masons and much more to those who are not, Freemasonry is, indeed, a very precious luxury founded on the divine belief that it is more blessed to give than to receive. This is conceived and promised on the principles and practice of give and no take. This is Charity. "Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal. Though I have the gift of prophecy and understand all mysteries and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing. And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor and though I give my body to be burned and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing. Charity suffereth long, and is kind; Charity envieth not; and charity vaunteth not itself. And now abideth faith, hope and charity — these three; but the greatest of these is CHARITY."

Freemasonry is neither a political organization. As citizens, of course, we are privileged to take active participation in the affairs of the community, the state and the nation. In the lodge, however, we should temper our discussions with cool, fraternal emotions and sound judgment as we are duty bound to respect our broth-

ers' political beliefs and inclinations. If we do these, we refrain from making the lodge sick of political fever during election years. Thus, harmony is maintained which is the strength and support of all societies specially this of ours.

Let us now picture Freemasonry clearly. In the Entered Apprentice degree, we have been told that it is an institution designed for three purposes, namely:

- (a) to enlighten the intellect.
- (b) to improve the moral nature and
- (c) to raise up humanity the world over.

In a democratic society, we hear much of freedom. We have the freedom from poverty, for example, freedom from immorality in high places and from restraint. These are the three freedoms in connection with the great design of Freemasonry promulgated by our Masonic forefathers and so needed in our national fibre today. Freedom from intellectual poverty (meaning enlighten the intellect); Freedom from Moral Decay, (meaning improve the moral nature) and Freedom from self, (meaning raise up distressed humanity).

Freedom from Intellectual Poverty in our craft would raise the level of

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our understanding and consideration to the point that wherever we live as Masons, the uninitiated as well as the profane would see our good works

Freedom from Moral Decay is one of the most compelling requirements in our society today. When Freemasonry raised its head on the scene of history in the 13th, 14th and 15th centuries, morality was at a low ebb in England and all throughout the continent. The Church had miserably failed in its mission to improve morality, and so with the state. But through conspicuous examples displayed by members of the Fraternity, morality got improved in a fortnight and it is this glorious achievement that is worthy of credit which brought Freemasonry in human society today.

Our selfishness as individuals and as nations for centuries has been greatly responsible for most of the evils in this world today. I should like to bring you to the two great Commandments which we are admonished to strictly and constantly observe. "Thou shalt love the LORD, Thy GOD" and "Shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." This embraces all the laws and is dramatically illustrated in the upsearch and outreach of Freemasonry. If after digesting these two commandments and we forget ourselves for sometimes, then we shall come to happiness in reality and be able to truly enjoy life and say, "Behold how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity. It is like the precious ointment upon the head that ran down upon the beard, even Aaron's beard, that ran down to the skirts of his garments. As the dew of Hermon and as the dew that descended upon the mountains of Zion. For there, the LORD commanded the blessings, even life forever more."

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Nueva Ecija, to dedicate the new temple there.

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On November 10, 1968, Grand Master Schon flew to Davao City to be present at the conferral of Scottish Rite degrees on over forty candidates of Davao Bodies, AASK, on Nov. 11 & 12. Venerable Master of the Lodge of perfection there is WB Tiburcio Cervantes, younger brother of MW Cenon Cervantes, PGM, and Grand Treasurer of the Grand Lodge. MW Cervantes went to Davao City with the Grand Master.

MW Schon made a visitation to Sarangani Lodge No. 50 and Davao Lodge No. 149 on Nov. 13, 1968. △

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The wise men of antiquity, when they wished to make the whole world peaceful and happy, first put their own states in proper order.

—Confucius.