

# Eulogy For Our Departed Brethren

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*(Delivered before the Grand Lodge of Sorrows on April 28, 1964, in memory of our departed brethren who have gone on before us since our 47th Annual Communication)*

The scythe of time cuts men down at various stages of their development. Masonry being a *progressive* moral science assumes that its worthy and faithful adherents continue in their Masonic growth until the very time they are gathered in by the Grim Reaper. Because of this, our brethren who have lived a long and fruitful life give us very special encouragement in the progressive development we obligate ourselves to carry on as Masons. There can be no doubt whatsoever that our dear departed brethren were most faithful in fulfilling their pledge to improve themselves in Masonry. This is one of the reasons why we call it a Lodge of Sorrows. We no longer have before us the beautiful example of faithfulness, upright living and exemplary conduct which all our departed brethren set before us. Through their very daily examples of brotherly love, by their abundant acts of charity and their faithfulness to truth we were inspired to "do the same." How sad that we can no longer be thus inspired by them.

The inspiration which we take from our brethren is extremely important. Ours is a *brotherhood*. I emphasize the suffix "hood" to focus our attention on the blessings attendant upon our associating ourselves together as a fellowship of free men.

Our departed brethren were among those who fully recognized the privileges and benefits from the "hood." It is a "hood" in that by being together we are sheltered from the withering effect of storms of criticism and vilification made against the Craft. Generally speaking our brethren who drop out of faithful service to the Fraternity are those who have lost the "hood" of brotherhood. They no longer associate themselves together with us and hence no longer enjoy the inspiration taken from the intimate fellowship experienced in the Lodge. The past record of faithful participation of our departed brethren in sharing the warm brotherly love of their brethren is indeed a sad and sorrowful loss.

It is also sorrowful to know that we can no longer feel their friendly handshake whereby we have known them to be brother Masons in the light as well as in the dark. How devoid of joy to know that their smiles of friendship shall no longer be seen and their sweet whispers of good counsel and comfort shall no longer be imparted from mouth to ear. We feel deprived that we may no longer go on the five points of fellowship with them. Our feet shall no longer tread on the same winding stairs, no longer will our

knees bend to meet, in prayer or in helpful service, our breasts can no longer be the faithful repository of their secret hopes or dreams. No longer can we pat them on the back with our hand of encouragement and challenge, their ears are no longer open to the feeble words of cheer and comfort of our mouths.

There are many among us, no doubt, who, if given the opportunity would be able to stand even now and give witness to the many times that our departed brethren have done just that for them. Maybe some of you have felt the embrace of comfort and cheer from one of the very brethren, whose loss we now mourn, when you yourself were mourning the loss of a loved one or were looking for succor when reverses had beaten you down. Possibly you have flown to one or another of them for relief when you were in real distress or even when in imminent danger and have found that they were true to their obligation to treat you as a brother Master Mason under such circumstances. It deeply saddens us to realize that we can fly to them no longer, that we must turn elsewhere to have our distress relieved or our perplexities assuaged. Undoubtedly, unless others take their places, many of us shall be bereft of this important source for comfort and cheer in the vicissitudes of life.

Sadness continues to pervade when we remember that their staunch leadership in Grand Lodge may no longer be felt. Masonry will simply not be the same in our Grand Lodge because of their having gone to that Celestial Lodge above. Fortright and aggressive national leadership has also felt an irrepressible loss by the passing of the brethren for whom we mourn. It is sad to note that the outspoken voices of those who

have through the years championed the causes for which the National constitution is dedicated will not be heard again. Let us pray that in the providence of God other voices as clear and uncompromising will be heard again in life of the nation. National affairs will not only suffer a saddening loss if there are no more John the Baptists to speak out, but it is far more depressing if someone among us does not rise up to take their place. It would truly be a lodge of Sorrows — indeed, one of continuing sorrows if, when faithful voices are stilled, there are no others to be heard.

It is well known that *prolonged* sadness and sorrow is very debilitating. It may even lead to serious bodily illness and is a major cause of much of mental illness. Some medical authorities believe that prolonged sorrow is a contributing cause of such illnesses as diabetes and certain types of heart disease. A doctor friend who was doing medical work in Japan before, during and immediately after World War II told me that he observed numerous cases of death where the only possible explanation could have been the killing effects of overwhelming sorrow. We all know from our own personal experiences how grief and sadness depress the spirit, cut into our vitality and eat away at our energies. Masonry and Masons can not afford to be thus deprived of their vital strength by which they perform their civic duties and lend a helping hand in various way. I am very sure that our dear departed brethren would not want us to mourn their loss, however great it really is, in such a manner. Therefore,

Let us be reminded that when a Lodge mourns the loss of a departed brother it does not stay *permanently*

in mourning. This is not only because we have work to do but also because the loss of our brethren is not altogether sorrowful. I should like to suggest briefly three reasons why Lodge of Sorrows may even have in it a note of real joy.

First we can be assured that our brethren who have gone on before us to that Celestial Lodge above are now building more stately and stupendous edifices. Masons are builders and their building does not stop with the laying down of the working tools of this earthly life. Our future existence would be a most miserable and boring one if all we did was to pick out heavenly tunes on golden harps. How could "that place not made with hands, eternal in the heavens" be less productive than this vale of tears. I contend that it is cause for joy on our part to be assured that our departed brethren continue as builders.

It is said that the great cathedrals of Europe, most of them built by our operative brethren, took hundreds of years to construct. Nothing worthwhile, lasting and good can be constructed over night. Even as Rome was not built in a day neither is the Masonic moral and spiritual edifice built in a day. It is a continuous task. For most of us, the building we do upon this edifice is intermittent rather than persistent. It is my belief that the beautiful moral structure constructed by our brethren who have taken their abode in the Celestial Lodge was done so because they labored at it *persistently*. How joyful, how inspiring to think that such building goes on apace. In fact I should say at a much more accelerated pace because the obstructions of temptations and sin no longer beset them. How happy we should be to remember that with

deftness and dexterity the construction work proceeds. I like to visualize our brethren not in white robes with solemn faces and folded hands but with the working tools of eternal life still in their sturdy hands building more stately mansions above.

Second, for these brethren there is no more *confusion* in the temple. Now they know clearly and fully all the meaning of the designs laid out upon the trestle board by the Great Architect of the Universe. The Great Light informs us that there shall come a time that "we shall know as we are known." We hear these words every time the perambulation of the Second Degree is given. It is my belief that this promise of infinite knowledge has been fulfilled for our beloved yet departed brethren. Is this not a cause for joy rather than sorrow? The world is full of confusion and misunderstanding but they enjoy the blessing of perfect knowledge and understanding, thereby preventing for them the pains and pangs attendant thereon.

Relief from pain is really a very joyous experience. Like the little boy who said he hit himself on the head with the hammer because he felt so good when he quit! Several years back I had to be flown to Manila because of a kidney stone. The pain, as some of you know, is excruciating. When I was carried into Mary Johnston Hospital on a stretcher, the late Bro. Gumersindo Garcia Sr. met me and took my hand and assured me everything would be alright. That was comforting but the next day when I actually got rid of the stone I truly experienced relief and release. This, I am sure, on a *greatly magnified* scale is what our departed brethren who no longer are pained by the hardships of this life or by the misunderstandings and

recriminations which sometimes arise between the closest of brethren, are now experiencing. The very words, "Well done thou good and faithful servant" which I'm sure they all received, are theirs. They understand their meaning fully, are blessed by their sweetness and carried higher by their warmth. Nothing evil now exists between them and the Great Architect of the Universe. Hence the accent is on joy rather than upon sorrow.

Third, these brethren are now all raised to an even higher degree. We speak of the Third Degree as the sublime degree but let us remember that there may also be the *sublimest degree*. We all enjoy promotions. A chance to "go up" in Masonry is also desired by most of us. Even the purple of our Fraternity rested upon the honored shoulders of some of our brethren for whom we mourn.

Very likely, if we would admit it, we all secretly covet the various honors which our Fraternity can confer. Something in us makes us desire recognition and makes us feel happy when we receive it. My father was a hard task master. He demanded very strict discipline. He was extremely hard to please and only rarely ever said anything to let you know that you had satisfied his demands. But when he would tell me I had done a good job or had accomplished something well, I would feel the stimulus from it for days at a time. Just to have pleased him made me walk on air. By hav-

ing been raised to the "sublimest" degree our departed brethren are in a position to receive that Heavenly recognition that brings eternal bliss; joy that is based not on a useless existence in flowery beds of ease but a happiness that is based on moving up, on accomplishing even more. The sublime degree was conferred upon them by human hands, the sublimest degree is and can be conferred only by Divine hands.

Now they have received the sublimest degree. That intimacy with the Creator! That ever present fellowship with Him who loves us and desires only the best for us. Is this not a most joyous condition?

So let us end the Lodge of Sorrows upon a bright and glorious note. Let us not go forth with gloom but rather with the full assurance that man goes to his long home, that place where we shall never, never, never die in order to enjoy the blessings of eternal bliss and therefore to sorrow no more but rather to be with Him forever before whom we should all with reverence bow.

Let us in closing be reminded of those inspiring words from the final sentence in the lecture of the Sublime Degree, "that we may be prepared to *welcome* death, not as a grim tyrant but as a kind messenger sent to translate us from this imperfect to that all perfect, glorious, and celestial Lodge above where the Supreme Grand Master of the Universe forever presides." This truly is the manner in which we shall all receive the "subliuest" degree.



...There is no truth more thoroughly established, than that there exists in the economy and course of nature an indissoluble union between virtue and happiness, between duty and advantage, between the genuine maxims of an honest and magnanimous policy, and the solid rewards of public prosperity and felicity....The propitious smiles of Heaven can never be expected on a nation that disregards the eternal rules of order and right, which Heaven itself has ordained. —

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