

Pledge of Service . . .

MASONIC PRINCIPLES

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"All of the study that it has been my privilege to make of Masonry, has seemed to strengthen my conviction that everything beyond the first degree is founded on those great Masonic principles taught in that degree — specially the three great tenets of a Mason's profession to you brethren, my interpretation of those principles as applying to our every day conduct as Masons.

Masonry is not only a great fraternity, it is also one of the greatest social organizations of this, or any other period. From the earliest history, Masonry has had as one of its basic principles a way of life for men, in their effort to make real to themselves their own struggle for a better life. Its historical background and the principles on which it is based make it a wonderful study for men of today. Although a secret order, the principles on which it is founded are known to all mankind. The secrecy is only in the ritual essential to the teachings of the basic principles of the order. Masonry is not a religion, but the principles inculcated in the teachings are deeply religious.

The three great tenets of Masonry — Brotherly Love, Relief and Truth are not Masonic teachings alone, but Masonry endeavors to make them clear and impressive for its members. These tenets are presented in the first degree, the conformity to which makes the Entered Apprentice a good Mason and a better man. These principles apply to the three great tenets of a Mason's profession as they apply also to the four cardinal virtues: Temperance, Fortitude, Prudence and Justice.

The First tenet of Masonry, Brotherly Love, is one of tolerance, goodwill and mutual understanding, based on that great Masonic principle of sincerity and plain dealing, as all men are brothers regardless of race or creed. Our Nation's history began with the words, "We hold these truths to be self-evident that all men are

created equal." All races are fundamentally the same—mankind is one the world over. As Masons, we must obliterate hatred, suspicion and antagonism toward other races. As Masons, we do not think of classes, of aristocrats and commoners, we are one fellowship, free and equal before God, and it is a part of our Masonic teachings that we remain so.

The second tenet, Relief, implements the first. When a brother is in distress, our attitude and feeling toward that brother should be one of deep sincere desire to be of service to him without a feeling of condescension, but rather as one of friendliness given on the basis of equality. We should always consider the opportunity of sharing with a less fortunate brother as a privilege in the manifestation of our teachings as Masons. The great humorist and Mason, Will Rogers, once said, "You never know what you may be buying when you give a hungry brother a dollar." When a brother is in distress, then brotherly love is as a tinkling cymbal, unless it manifest itself in the relief of that distress.

We recall that one of the first lessons that we are taught is, that Truth is a divine attribute and the foundation of every virtue. This is a virtue that we should constantly bear in mind in our daily relations with our fellow man. "We search the world for truth." The poet said, "and come back from our quest to find that all the sages said is in the Book our mothers read." If this thought is uppermost in our minds, it will help us to wear a cloak of sincerity and integrity. The great underlying factor in the development of ourselves is truth—in the creation of every person there is woven through his character the golden thread of truth.

We are living in a time marked by the discarding of customs and conventions, when moral standards are threatened. There also seems to be scepticism today on the part of certain ideologies, to cast doubt on truths we hold to be founded in our very existence: doubt of the Bible, doubt of religious leaders, doubt of our form of government. Our real need is a realization of Truth, for which there is no physical emblem—that intangible something which is in harmony with our Masonic way of life and makes us one with God. The principle of truth is an individual, a personal matter, and something which might be considered as being that still small voice of conscience. Cicero said, "The man who is always true, is both virtuous and wise."

Temperance, which may be interpreted as self-discipline, Fortitude, Prudence and Justice encompass the whole of man's life.

We, as Masons, feel that if man, who is created in God's own image, is to live to do honor to his Creator, he must strive to be the recipient of not only one of these great virtues, but that he may attain in a measure all of these virtues. It is axiomatic that when one grows into the development of any one of these virtues, he at the same time is acquiring the other virtues. One of the greatest needs of our world today is putting discipline back into life. We have reacted so strongly against the imposed authority and the taboos of the Victorian age that we have swung into a license which we thought was liberty. We are now finding that it is not. We have grasped for liberty and found disintegration. We as Masons and American citizens, do not need a discipline that is externally imposed, but the kind of discipline that comes from an inward desire — a discipline of one's own choosing. Temperance or moderation in our habits probably includes the whole idea of temperance in our lives, for our lives are literally what we are. Temperance in habits comes through self-discipline.

Fortitude, though frequently used as a synonym for courage, comes to us from the ancient Stoic Philosophy. In studying the word Fortitude and its implied meaning, we find that Fortitude carries a deeper meaning than does the word courage. Fortitude means courage in time of trouble — firmness of spirit. The world today stands in need of men with a firmness of spirit — men who are able to maintain their spiritual and moral equilibrium in the face of all odds. It has also been said that Fortitude is not an inborn trait but is matured only by exercise. Fortitude will always be a highly prized virtue.

Prudence is the ability to regulate and discipline oneself through the exercise of the reason as opposed to acting impulsively. If we judge from the diary of Longfellow, he was never subject to overmastering impulses, but always acted with foresight — not from selfish calculation, but from a sane and temperate judgment. Not only does a man have to guard against conscious impulses, but he must bear in mind that there are unconscious impulses which exist in masked form. These are often, by the imprudent person, considered non-existent, but the evidence of their existence is overwhelming and until they are accepted in the facts of life, it will be impossible to deal realistically with the anguish they cause. The person who early learns Prudence and the mastery of his impulses will experience less frustration in his own life and will be able to help his fellow man toward a well adjusted life.

Justice implies the strict and judicial rendering of what is

due. We do not need to go beyond the inspired word of God for an interpretation nor application of Justice. The Masonic concept of Justice is equality of all men and is based upon the principle of one law for all — that all men shall stand before the same bar of justice and be judged. The Bible teaches us to do justice and love mercy. The good Mason knows that back of every act and every failure, the causes leading up to that act of failure must be considered. Justice is evident in all Masonic teachings, the understanding of which is reflected in our every day dealings with our fellow men. Justice is the opposite to bias, prejudice and injustice. The most revolutionary idea that has ever been presented to the world was declared over two thousand years ago. Matthew 7-12. "Therefore all things whatsoever we would that men should do to you, do you even so unto them; for this is the law and the prophets.

Since God created man in his own image, certainly man has the capacity to place a workable interpretation on the above virtues — none of which are beyond the grasp of any individual who desires to make his life a dynamic influence for good in the world. To those of us who have subscribed to the principles of Masonry and whose hearts and minds are guided by these principles, comes the greater challenge and heavier responsibility. These principles are a real challenge, but they do not ask the impossible. Let us stand shoulder to shoulder and by unity of thought and purpose, use these principles and virtues as guideposts for making us better Masons."

It may be interesting for you to know that the Craft is well represented in the U. S. Government. Five of the ten members of the Cabinet are members of the Craft, Seven of the nine members of the Supreme Court of the United States, Thirty of the forty-eight Governors, Fiftynine of the ninetysix members of the Senate and two hundred and fourteen of the four hundred and thirtyfive members of the House of Representatives. So you see the Craft is well represented in Washington.

One needs only to remember the names of such Masons as Washington, Franklin, Jefferson, Putnam, Greene, Warren and Adams. Their memory and principles are strong in the World to-day.

I can tell you, as a matter of interest, that H. R. H. the Duke of Edinburgh, now Prince and Consort to H. M. Queen Elizabeth II, was initiated and raised in the Navy Lodge a short time ago.

The Lodge Kilwinning is claimed to be the oldest Lodge in the

World. This Lodge was founded at the building of the Abbey in 1140, two documents dated 1598 were found.

In the York Rite Ritual we often, so often, make reference to the square, the level and the plumb. No architect of any standing would, for a moment, contemplate erecting a building if he neglected to use any one of the working tools, much less neglecting all of them. He could not possibly erect a building without the level, square and the plumb. That should convince you, Brethren, that as in architecture, those three implements are the foundation of all architecture, so the principles of Masonry are not only necessary by our application of those working tools, but they do represent the Divine rules, I emphasize, the Divine rules which are the basis of Freemasonry. If this Grand Lodge and all its constituent Lodges will conduct their Masonry, having regard for the lessons learned from these Divine principles, I think Masonry in the future can be a force in this World, the magnitude of which none of us can foretell at the present moment.

We note the great movement of Nationalism throughout the World, I would like to think what would happen one day when we can say to the Fraternity, wheresoever dispersed upon the face of the Earth: "May Masons of all Nations be united under the mantle of Universal Friendship". We do not want to compose one great big Grand Lodge, but all we ask is for Universal Friendship; and if we get that, our purpose is fulfilled.

In this character building of the speculative Mason as against the cathedral building of the operative mason, lies the secret of Freemasonry, the secret of its strength, the secret that will insure its survival against the political and social changes of the machanized-World we now live in.

The World will always need men of good character, men of high principles, men of religion, men believing in true charity and benevolence. This need becomes greater rather than less, if men are NOT to become slaves to the push buttons of automation. You can rest assured that since there will always be a need for free men of good report, and well recommended, there will always be a need for Freemasonry, with its peculiar system of morality, veiled in allegory and illustrated by symbols."

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