

REDEDICATION

We are all creatures of habit, some of us more than others. When we come to lodge we know that a certain point in the opening ritual the Chaplain prays. If you come to all the Communications in a year you will hear that same opening prayer many times. But what does that prayer say? It is not a prayer derived from any partisan religion; it has no trick phrases or hidden meanings. That prayer is made to a Supreme Being whom we in Masonry choose to call the Great Architect of the Universe and it has special significance to our great Fraternity.

That prayer, first of all acknowledges the source of all our blessings—family, friends, home, material things. It states that we have assembled in the name of a Supreme Power and it asks for His blessings that we may know and serve Him in a manner acceptable to Him; it asks that all our actions may tend to His glory and to our advancement in knowledge and virtue.

The opening prayer asks that our minds be illuminated with the divine precepts of Freemasonry; it ends with the prayer that we may walk in the light of the Great Architect's countenance that, when the trials of this life are ended, we may be admitted into a Heavenly home. And then we respond with "so mote it be".

Is that response automatic with you—the product of a habit? Or is it a heartfelt acknowledgement that, in your heart, you have prayed right along with the Chaplain? There is a difference between praying and merely saying a prayer.

In the closing prayer we find the very essence of Freemasonry in the phrase "May all our irregular passions be subdued, and may we daily increase in Faith, Hope and Charity, but more especially in that Charity which is the bond of peace and the perfection of every virtue".

We might keep those words indelibly on our minds as we, at the beginning of this New Year, consider the concept of rededication. Many lodges set aside the first communication in the New Year for examining our individual performances under the obligations we assumed when first we knelt at the altar. Have we kept the promises we made there? Do we even remember what they were? Yes to all of them?

The more we know about Freemasonry and its teachings the more we will derive from our Masonic affiliation. The initiatory process through which we pass in becoming Master Masons, for some if not all of us, is not the most conducive atmosphere in which to absorb the deep meanings of Masonic teachings. Regular attendance to lodge and diligent attention to lodge proceedings are good ways to keep in touch with and better understand the most excellent teachings of our institution. Understanding those teachings will be greatly enhanced by attending lodge schools. Lodge schools are for all Master Masons, not for officers only.

From the moment we sign a petition for entry into Masonry until we are raised to the Sublime Degree of Master Mason, we invest an enormous amount of time. That investment of time can best be justified by making the maximum effort to clearly understand the tenets of Freemasonry and the obligations we assume when we become Master Masons.

All of this leads to two questions: One, "Is Masonry Worthwhile?", and two, "Is Freemasonry worth saving?"

Your very presence in lodge clearly states that your answer to the first question is "yes". That being true, the answer to the second question should also be "Yes, Freemasonry is abundantly worth saving". Let us, then, review some of the competitive aspects of preserving this Fraternity.

The past half century has seen vast increase in outlets for our energies, interests and participation. New causes develop almost every day and each clamor for our time and support. There has been enormous growth in entertainment mediums, travel possibilities, community affairs, clubs, group activities, organizational projects. Behind each of these there is tremendous promotional activity to recruit you and your time. But the very nature of Masonry prevents our entry into membership promotion. Our product,—that is, the teachings and morality of our Craft, are as good as they have ever been and some think more badly needed now than ever before. So, in responding to the necessity to compete for the minds, the time and the participation of others in order to reverse the downward trend in Masonic membership, our tools are limited to what we can reflect to the world in terms of personal values we have derived from Masonic membership.

It is time now for each of us to take a personal inventory of the virtues that have been added to our lives because we first knocked on the door seeking entry into the Lodge. We need to polish those virtues and make them so to shine to our non-Masonic friends, neighbors, and co-workers—all with whom we come in contact, to the end that they will be attracted by and drawn to those qualities so valued by good Masons.

So, as we reflect on rededication of ourselves to the most excellent tenets of this Fraternity, we must not only set our goals on being better Masons, we must each of us also resolve to do our part to improve our ritual, improve lodge attendance and we must employ every appropriate device—limited as they are by our customs—to add to our numbers, halt the decline of Masonic membership nationwide and worldwide, as well as here in our own lodge.

When reduced to its barest essentials, Freemasonry, like religion, is a personal commitment. In measuring the depth of that commitment we would do well to remember the admonition found in Shakespeare's "Hamlet", which reads:

*"This above all: to thine own self are true. And it must follow,
as the night the day, thou cannot be false to any man."*

My brethren, if we are to be true to ourselves, then we must be true to the teachings we embraced and swore to uphold when we knelt at the altar upon entering this great Masonic order.

Will you rededicate yourself to the principles of Freemasonry in 2009? If Tuckahoe Lodge in particular and Freemasonry in general is worthwhile and abundantly worth saving, re-dedicate yourself right now and plan to make a personal commitment to supporting Tuckahoe Lodge in 2009. I pray that you will be illuminated with the divine precepts of Freemasonry once again.

**“Behold how good and how pleasant it is for brethren
to dwell together in unity.”**

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