

What Masonry Means To Me.....Thoughts from a Past Master

Many times since I became a member of this gentle craft, 44 years ago, I have in retrospective moments, asked myself... 'why I am proud to be a Mason?', and then I dwell upon those things that Masonry has brought before me.

The feelings of warmth, friendship, and potential comfort in times of distress are always with me, yet they seem to appear most readily in Lodge surrounded by my Brethren. But even now, in the midst of our time of separation from one another, just talking with the brethren by video or phone conversations, brings a feeling of peace and comfort.

I believe that Masonry is many things to many people, and we all take from Masonry those things from within us that are weaker and more vulnerable; it is a kind of storehouse of moral fiber, as well as a refuge from a sometimes mad and seething world. To be a Masonic brother affords a time when all can be tranquil, when all is at peace in a world of turmoil; this aspect of our Brotherhood is most rewarding.

In a society in which man sometimes feels so alone, so alienated, it is comforting to be with others who share the same feelings. However, more importantly, we carry those feelings with us away from the Lodge, and practice them in our daily living and in dealings with all people at all times. We are charged to make brothers of all men, for we are after all, brothers in a larger and broader sense of the word.

I know full well that these high and noble aims are impossible to achieve at all times, but my Masonic teachings have made me fully aware that we should at least attempt to live by these precepts whether they are fully achieved or not. In fact, by their pursuit alone, successful or not, we have become better men; and in the end, will become better Masons.

Since the coin has two sides, what do I bring to my Lodge in return for that which I obtain? Though important to the upkeep and running of the Lodge, my monetary dues are rather insignificant; it matters only a little in the grand scheme of things. I do what I can for my lodge and my brothers when I can, and I do it readily and without hesitation; without thought of "repayment" in any form. I know that if called upon again and again, I would perform to the best of my ability. That, I think, is the essence of Masonic teachings. We take from our fraternity and we give back; it is a sort of unending and open-ended life of ethics that renews itself as surely as the sun rises in the East.

Sometimes, I ask myself, what does Masonry do for my community? This is a question sometimes asked by folks in the immediate community and it may be harder and more nebulous to answer. The presence of a Masonic Lodge in any community is indeed an asset, and most people, who know who we are, realize this. The teachings of our order do not lie strewn about the Lodge room floor when the Master has closed his lodge; they are not discarded until the next meeting to be picked up again like comfortable old clothes. They go back into the community in the minds and hearts of all the brethren, and in so being disseminated, the teachings of Masonry do indeed bring benefit to the community of which it is a part.

Who is to say, that a certain flower in a bouquet does not impart a particularly wonderful fragrance to the bouquet of which it is a part, without whose presence the scent might be much less inviting?

So it is with the Masonic Lodge in any community. It enhances the “aroma” of communal living in a subtle but definite fashion. In fact, I feel that this contribution may well far outweigh the community events in which our Lodge regularly participates. Events come and go, but friendship and reverence, for both our Creator and fellow man, are as permanent as the stars in heaven.

I think we must realize from the outset that a primary interest of the Masonic order is the welfare and wellbeing of its own; after all that is a primary and most noble aim of any fraternal organization. If it were not for this feeling of self-interest and self-perpetuation, where would any fraternal organization garner its’ strengths and foundation?

Lastly, I ask myself again, just once more, why did I become a Mason? I think my answer is much like that of a mountain climber who endeavors to scale the highest peak. I paraphrase perhaps, but certainly it’s applicable to a degree: because Masonry was there and I felt its call to become as we all would want to be, a better man, a more compassionate brother to all my brethren, and a more deserving servant of the Great Architect of the Universe.

Living Stones - Masonic Thoughts for Today's Mason

Douglas M. Messimer, LEO Fraternal Lodge No.53 6-20