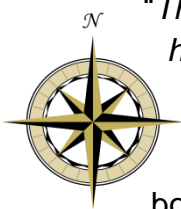


A MASONIC MINUTE

Freemasonry is not an end in itself, but a means to an end

Whither are you directing your course?

When a Candidate is first admitted to the lodge, the Inner Guard confronts him with this caution: “*Take heed upon what you enter.*” Soon after, the Candidate is reassured that “*where the Name of God is invoked, we trust no danger will ensue.*” So what is the import of this warning if “*no danger*” lies ahead? The admonition contained in the marriage ceremony comes to mind: “*to be honourable among all men: and therefore is not by any to be enterprised, nor taken in hand, unadvisedly, lightly, or wantonly, but reverently, discreetly, advisedly, soberly, and in the fear of God.*”¹ Perhaps we can draw an analogy between matrimony and Freemasonry. Both require solemn vows and long term commitment and both are based upon a bond of mutual trust.



“The real voyage of discovery consists not in seeking new landscapes, but in having new eyes.” – Marcel Proust

We must never consider the attainment of the Master Mason’s Degree an end in itself. Rather, it is the beginning of a lifelong journey of discovery, both spiritual and educational. The Gift of Freemasonry is an open ticket to this lifelong journey. It provides us with the moral compass – a guiding light upon our path.

“The journey is the reward.” – Chinese Proverb

In his book, *The Alchemist: A Fable About Following Your Dream*, Paulo Coelho gives us an exquisitely written parable expressing this concept.² It tells the story of Santiago, a shepherd boy, who sets out in search of treasure, but along the way discovers the real meaning of life from those he encounters. It has been described as “*an eternal testament to the transforming power of our dreams and the importance of listening to our hearts.*” I seriously recommend this book to every Brother that has embarked, or is about to embark on his personal journey of self discovery.

*No man is an island entire of itself; every man
is a piece of the continent, a part of the main.*

John Donne (1572-1631)

The adventure of the journey of discovery is a solitary journey, but the experience is enriched by all those we meet along the way. It provides intellectual

¹ Book of Common Prayer, 1611 – Solemnization of Matrimony

² Published by HarperCollins and available from most bookshops.

stimulation in the company of like-minded men – our fellow travellers. The Charges of a Freemason remind us that, “*Masonry is the centre of union between good men and true, and the happy means of conciliating friendship amongst those who must otherwise remained at a perpetual distance.*”³ It is our association with these “*good men and true*” that produces a positive difference within ourselves. This difference cannot be reduced to words, but must be experienced to be understood and appreciated. It does not suddenly burst upon you with initiation, but quietly and gradually creeps into your inmost consciousness, until it becomes an integral part of your innermost self. This process is the real ‘secret’ of Freemasonry and how good men better themselves.

RSJD January 2016

³ The Charges of a Freemason: I. – Concerning God and Religion.