

The Great Foundation

The meeting of Morning Star No. 795 for September, 2016, was approaching and I wanted my LEO report to be one that would have the brethren think about the upcoming masonic year and what ways they would want to serve. Service in masonry came to mind and I began to look for ideas online. I came across a Short Talk Bulletin from May, 1927, titled "What Masonry Means." Knowing that Short Talk is one of the recommended sources, I read the article. As I read, I realized I had read and heard variations of it many times. I knew I had found what I was after, but how do I condense all the variations into one presentation since all had a slightly different presentation and ending with all basically the same meaning. My mind simply said, "John, you are a story teller. Tell the story." I pray the "story" I tell does justice to all the variations I have heard.

The youngest entered apprentice with the oldest member of the lodge and several officers were sitting at refreshment. They were talking about all the benefits of masonry, all the young apprentice could learn and accomplish, and what Light they could pass on to him. He looked at them and asked, "What does Masonry mean to you?"

The oldest member began. "To me it is friendships I have made along the way." He went on to tell of all the friends he had made through masonry over the years and how much his brothers had meant to him. He emphasized that through the Fraternity, he had met many who not only became lifelong friends but stood beside him in good times and bad - uplifting him in joy and holding him in sorrows. "None better than masons," he finished.

The master of the lodge spoke next. "To me it is service." He explained that he had been master of the lodge on more than one occasion and it was always he served the Fraternity and brethren – not they serving him. He explained how service to others gave him great pleasure and meaning to his life. "To serve – that is what a mason does," he concluded.

The senior warden smiled. "His chair I hope to assume one year. So for me it is education and learning." He went on to say that education in the traditions, ancient symbols and meanings, and the seeking of Light in Masonry would give him the tools and knowledge to increase in wisdom and to lead the lodge one day. "The more I learn, the more I can become and the better I can make men masons," he said.

The junior warden spoke up. "To me it has been the social times." He told the apprentice how before he became a mason, he did not socialize much. Since becoming a mason, he, his wife, and family have enjoyed life much more because of visiting with other masonic families and attending events together. "Masonry has added much to my life and to that of my family," he said with a broad smile.

The senior deacon proclaimed, "To me it is the ritual. It is our common ground and what makes us different from all others." He went on to tell how he led candidates through their journeys in the degrees and why the ritual was so important. It was obvious from his demeanor that he took great pride in how he and others conferred the degrees through the ritual. "The ritual must be done properly and with meaning," he stated.

The junior deacon spoke, "To me it is charity. I sit in the southwest and it allows me to talk with many who enter. I hear their needs quite often. I listen to how masonry has helped so many in both the Fraternity and community. We are told 'the greatest of these is charity.' We as masons need to be charitable."

The youngest entered apprentice listened to all and then added his. "When I asked to join, I was told that masonry makes good men better. This is what I seek and what it means to me at my young age in masonic life."

The oldest member then noticed that the tiler had been sitting there but had not said a word. "Brother Tiler, you have been listening and have been a member almost as long as I have. What does masonry mean to you?"

The Tiler spoke slowly, looking at each in turn as he did so. "You all speak truth and you are all correct in your own beliefs. But none of you hit upon the very foundation of masonry in what you have said. You have only told of the floors that have been upon and supported by that great foundation. To me the meaning and foundation of Masonry is 'The Brotherhood of Man Under the Fatherhood of God.' If friendships are not built upon that foundation then how strong is their structure? Service without that foundation is given to whom and with what meaning or purpose? Without that foundation, education, knowledge, and even Light in Masonry itself become simply masonic classrooms. Social activities and society have little joy without it. Without this moral foundation to give it meaning, ritual becomes only dry words put into motion. Charity is the greatest when based upon the love created by that foundation. And, my young entered apprentice, if you constantly hold to this great foundation of masonry as you apply all which the others have told you and all you will learn and accomplish along the way then you will get what you seek – a good man made better."

(Note: Hopefully this will lead to discussion. Enjoy that discussion.)

WB John F. Maxwell

Morning Star Lodge No. 795 F. & A. M. of Ohio

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