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DDGM Talks

Talk Number 9

Title: Visiting and Friendship

Presented at: Mountain Lodge No. 221

Date: February 21, 2019

VISITING AND FRIENDSHIP

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On the Occasion of his Official Visit to Mountain Lodge No. 221 and Annual Reciprocal Visitation of Niagara "B" District
February 21, 2019*

In 1987, RW Bro. Robert W. McGilvray (aka Bert), had a vision to encourage Entered Apprentice Masons to visit another Lodge as soon as possible following their initiation. Thus, he came up with the idea of the "Traveling Trowel", to be delivered by an Entered Apprentice to another Lodge in the district that was conducting a first degree at their meeting. The Traveling Trowel was designed and crafted by W Bro. Emil Barkwell. Again in 2001, RW Bro. Floyd G. Brooks and VW Bro. Dan Vernal, in an effort to promote visitation by Lodges at Official Visits, established an "Accompanying Lodge" schedule which is still in use to this day. Mountain Lodge No. 221 has always been a Lodge keen on visiting and creating lasting friendships.



Niagara "A" District Traveling Trowel

The secret of visiting is vaguely understood as a mythical, magical bond of friendship and fraternity binding the family of Masons together by invisible and powerful chains. Because Masons do not assemble out of necessity or fear, the strange,

subtle alchemy of visiting is hard to comprehend. Visitors are at the heart of Masonry; many arrive as strangers, but leave as friends. At the time speculative Masonry assumed predominance, visiting became philosophical and social in nature and an exchange of ideas and information rather than for any immediate practical reason. Such words and phrases, therefore, as friendship, good will, kindness, profit and pleasure, to be happy ourselves and to communicate happiness leap from the pages of Masonic ritual and literature. The frequent repetition of such words and phrases opens up the danger of forgetting their intrinsic meaning. But, at many Masonic meetings, visitors have sensed those words come vividly to life when they have been greeted by a warm smile and the open hand of friendship.

Fraternity or friendship is the mortar that unites all Masonic activities and transforms work into pleasure. This is not merely superficial, but a genuine and sharing unity of loyal companions. There is no law that prevents a Lodge from failing, there is no fairy godmother to wave a wand and solve the Craft's problems. It is the efforts of its members working in harmony and with fraternity that gets things done.

Masonry is a philosophy of self improvement. The tools of the Mason's trade symbolize moral and ethical behaviour and a man's relationship to his fellow creatures. Masonry requires a member to use those tools to perfect his inner spirit and to convey that beauty to others by example. This cannot be done in an atmosphere of enmity or antagonism. It is fostered simply

by the aura of friendship, of companionship and of working together towards a goal.

If fraternity falters, Masonry is in danger of forgetting its roots. When a member of advanced age can be suspended of an inability to continue his dues, Masonry has lost its sense of direction and lost most of its idea of friendship and brotherly love. Under these conditions' members become like wanderers in the desert who have lost sight of their destination and who, in panic, choose any path regardless of its direction.

A candidate is at first a wonder to behold, someone to be guided and to be friends with. Some members consider the Master Mason's degree to be the pinnacle of a candidate's Masonic life and consequently overlook his future needs. Teaching and learning however must continue as a joint effort; members work, they learn, they understand Masonry and they share the beauty of Masonic knowledge with others. Masonry is in danger of becoming extinct, if members cannot do this, because only things which deserve to live, will live. Members must welcome debate, be open to fresh ideas, practice what they preach and tell people they care. All this is accomplished by the cardinal virtue which is at the soul of Masonry; friendship. This is the friendship of fraternal association, the friendship of brotherly love, relief and truth, which is never envious, never jealous, but is steady and reliable. It is the friendship that rejoices at another's success and responds with sympathy to another's defeat. It is difficult to accomplish anything when members are at odds with each other.

Masons are practical, sensible and intelligent men able to plan and think for themselves. If, however, this was incorrect, Masonry would be a moribund organization. Even though several grey areas of self-imposed tradition and the “we’ve never done it that way before” syndrome still exists, the vitality of Masonry shines through and puts such thoughts to flight. There is a wonderful activity in Masonry. One can feel the pulse of Masonry quickening, feel the exhilaration and enthusiasm and the steady beating of the Masonic heart. Without any words a special bond exists between one Mason and another. As members they believe in the same things; charity, freedom, compassion, justice, co-operation, tolerance and a myriad of other truths. This is all observed in Masonic gatherings when friendship is seen in its most brilliant and vivid colours. Those who do not visit do not experience the mythical warmth of the Masonic fraternity. The friendship exhibited by Masons is not to be restricted to Masonry, but taken into the community in order to share the Masonic sense of purpose, sense of unity and sense of morality. The same friendship must include the family to allow them to be a part of the Masonic team and enjoy the magic, beauty and fragile loveliness of Masonry. For friendship to flourish, the challenge for each Mason is to be a friend and try Masonry.

And finally, in his May 2000 message to all Lodges in this jurisdiction, MW Bro. Robert J. McKibbon was appreciative of reading the monthly summons from Mountain Lodge;

“This month I received “A Lesson in Life” from the summons of Mountain Lodge No. 221 located in St. Catharines. I am not sure who wrote this message originally, but I thank the author and those who forwarded the same. The instruction is appreciated and hopefully will be assimilated in my life. I hope you will appreciate it also.”

A LESSON IN LIFE

I’ve learned-that sometimes the people you expect to kick you when you’re down will be the ones to help you get back up.

I’ve learned-that sometimes when I’m angry I have the right to be angry, but that doesn’t give me the right to be cruel.

I’ve learned-that true friendship continues to grow, even over the longest distances. Same goes for true love. I’ve learned-that just because someone doesn’t love you the way you want them to, doesn’t mean they don’t love you with all they have.

I’ve learned-that maturity has more to do with what types of experiences you’ve had and less to do with how many birthdays you have celebrated.

I’ve learned-that some members of your family may not always be there for you. It may seem funny but people you aren’t

related to can take care of you and love you and teach you to trust again. Families aren't biological.

I've learned-that no matter how good a friend is, they're going to hurt you every once in a while, and you must forgive them for that.

I've learned-that it isn't always enough to be forgiven by others. Sometimes you are to learn to forgive yourself.

Thank you, Worshipful Master, for the opportunity to speak openly and thank you Brethren for your time and attention this evening. Take care.