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DDGM Talks

Talk Number 1

Topic: Function of Freemasonry

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What is the Function of Freemasonry?

What Do Freemasons Think They Are Doing?

These questions are often asked by Non-Masons, and even by Masons themselves, and various answers may be given. Let me try to respond. In the first place, Freemasonry explicitly defines itself as a “system of morality”, and says that its meetings are intended “to induce the habit of virtue”. Perhaps the two-sided question sums that up well— “Are they good people because they are Masons, or are they Masons because they are good people?”.

Secondly, it is also the happy means of developing friendships amongst those who must otherwise have remained at a distance, and Masonry is shown in its true light when its meetings are “blended with social mirth, and a mutual interchange of fraternal feelings” that is, it is an affinity group of men who enjoy each other’s company.

Thirdly, it encourages its members to contemplate the intellectual faculties and exhorts them to make a daily advancement in Masonic knowledge, “the cultivation and improvement of the human mind”. The study of the Liberal Arts and Sciences, and the researches into the greater and lesser lights of Freemasonry, the working tools, the rough and perfect ashlar can be intellectually stimulating and richly rewarding in our search for truth.

Fourthly, it patiently ministers to the relief of want and sorrow, and calls upon its members to “exercise that virtue” which Masons “profess to admire”, that is to say charity; it instructs them to extend “relief and consolation to their fellow creatures in the hour of their affliction”. The Masonic Foundation, our District Charity and our Grand Lodge Bursaries are but single examples of our attempts at assistance.

Thus, we have four basic functions or purposes of Freemasonry...to some extent related but still distinct; teaching virtue, encouraging friendship, fostering education and prompting benevolence. Certainly, much can be said about each of them—indeed these four functions of Masonry will be the primary focus of my presentations throughout this Masonic year.

MW Bro. Eric W. Nancekivell announced in 1977 that he had received the great honour of being elected to serve as Chairman of the Conference of Grand Masters of North America. He spoke wisely about the need for training;

“The past is secure...but what of the future Joseph Fort Newton, the great Masonic scholar, wrote fifty years ago ‘to go on making men Masons...without giving them an intelligent and authentic knowledge of what Masonry is...is for Masonry to lose, by ignorance or neglect, what has been distinctive in its history and genesis, and invite degeneration, if not disaster.’

It is, therefore, important that in our Lodges and in Grand Lodge we stress proper, efficient and knowledgeable Masonic Education so that our time is devoted, to a greater extent, to teaching the great moral precepts of Masonry and not just to the usual and sometimes only activity of Initiating, Passing and Raising. Entire meetings could and should be devoted to Masonic teachings.”

I therefore wrap up this evening’s presentation with a simple question to which I will provide my own answer...” Are we in Niagara ‘A’ District focusing our efforts and achieving success in each of the four basic functions of Masonry?” My answer is YES, we are, and we should be very proud of it. Could we do more---most certainly! But let’s not hide our candle behind or under a bushel basket...Let it shine, let it shine, let it shine.

May your light and leadership continue to shine in your community and unite with that of other Lodges in Niagara “A” District in “making good men better” and this world of ours “a better place in which to live”.

And in closing, I congratulate Perfection Lodge No. 616 in once again achieving the Cornerstone designation. Yes, it is chaired by one or possibly two brethren, but it requires cooperation of the full membership to attain its ultimate goal. I admire and applaud the manner which the Lodge has chosen to keep the program interesting by tackling the different requirements instead of taking the complacent route of doing the “same old, same old”.

Thank you, Worshipful Master and thank you Brethren for your time and attention.