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## DDGM Talks

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Title: Of My Own Free Will and Accord

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## OF MY OWN FREE WILL AND ACCORD

As one begins his Masonic journey, he is quickly taught by his guides and mentors that everything throughout the ceremonies of Masonry happens for a specific reason and that there are symbols and allegories attached to these ceremonies. If you attended the Masonic workshops last year put on by RW Bro. Michael Locke and myself, you learned about the symbolisms and their meanings in the Entered Apprentice and Fellowcraft degrees.

You quickly learn by way of the lectures the continual usage in Masonry of three numbers... three, five and seven. Let's look at seven words which a Mason repeats in his Entered Apprentice, Fellowcraft and Master Mason degrees. That's three times. To attain the rank of Installed Master, he repeats these seven words in each of the two obligations he takes. That makes five times. And once becoming a RW Grand Lodge officer and then perhaps the Deputy Grand Master, he will repeat these seven words at least two more times. What are these words you ask? **"Of My Own Free Will and Accord"**.

I've always been curious about the peculiar practice in Freemasonry that no man may be asked, invited or solicited to enter the fraternity. It is an organizational feature almost unique among societies. In fact, organizations with the most select membership are those which receive no applications, but select and invite their candidates. The no ask/no tell canon has been a rule of immemorial standing in the fraternity and, yet, it is impossible to determine when it originated. There is nothing concerning it in the Gothic constitutions, nor in any of the rules and by-laws of the old lodges, or in the constitutions of 1723; nor is it discussed by any of the masonic writers of the 18<sup>th</sup> Century. There is nothing in the ritual on the subject. The "candidate interrogatories" written by William Preston asks only that the candidate affirm he comes to Freemasonry unbiased by an improper solicitation.

And yet, we know that men of noble rank were solicited to become Grand Masters, though they were not Freemasons and had to be initiated just for that purpose.

So, all this begs some questions—if we come to Freemasonry by our own free will and accord, in what way are we free? Masonically, what does it mean to be free men? Is this freedom important? Once we enter and take on the commitments and obligations of our fraternity, does this make us less free?

Perhaps there is something to be learned by reflecting on the meaning of being free men in the context that Freemasonry is a “system of morality, veiled in allegory”. These three words, “system of morality” may be at the core of our understanding of being free-men, or free-masons. Certainly, these words would be a reason why we should insist that all men who join us do so with complete freedom. Freedom is a condition *sine qua non* for joining an order based on morality.

That a person enters of his own free will and accord means that he is a man free from all prejudices and attitudes which are not based on his own self examination, that he is prepared to judge all attitudes, including his own, with intellectual integrity, that he is free and ready to make a moral judgement and to defend it even when he is in the minority or under strain for holding such a view, and even more important, that he is aware he must place limits on his own freedom if he is to insure other men the same right to theirs.

There is a thin line between being free and being just; between dividing one's obligations with one's rights; in self-censoring our own freedom as a result of recognizing another has the same right to his own; that the moral norms of one country may be different in another, yet both right, that the majority recognize the minority's point of view and that the minority accept the right of the majority to bind all by its

decisions. One becomes morally free only when his individual independence is balanced by intelligence choice.

To be moral and act in accordance with moral values requires the ability and readiness to judge between right and wrong, between what is conformity with prevailing norms and what is not. A moral choice can only exist if it rests on choosing between two possible alternatives, and this choice has to be made with complete freedom and with no coercion of any kind. A man determines his sense of morals only when these are put to the test. If the choice he makes is made under coercion, there is no moral value in his choice.

To be a Freemason means we possess fundamental moral attitudes which are based on constant self evaluation and re-evaluation of every aspect of our life. The opening charge to the Master Mason in the 4<sup>th</sup> degree of the Scottish Rite is worthy of our contemplation. *“Freemasonry is an institution seeking human happiness through tolerance and love; self-perfection, glorifying justice, truth and equality, fighting tyranny, ignorance and prejudices”*.

To achieve this definition means that every Brother must approach free objectivity in his moral choices. We may think of freedom only in a sense of being free from restrictions or limitations. However, this is perhaps the lesser freedom. The freedom to act according to our freely-made moral choices and convictions is what makes us true Freemasons.

Are we less free as a result of undertaking such commitments together as Brothers? I think not, in fact, we have chosen of “our own free will and accord” to be committed to certain moral values.

To me, this is a true expression of being free.

And finally, thank you W. Bro. Lecompte, the officers and members of Adanac Lodge No. 614 for the fine manner in which you received all visitors and myself this evening. It has been duly noted. To the members of West Gate Lodge No. 734, thank you for making the sojourn around the lake to be with us tonight. I look forward to attending, along with the brethren of Adanac Lodge No. 614, and others from the district on March 27, 2019 on the occasion of the Official Visit and Homecoming of RW Bro. Kevin Furlong.

Thank you all for attending this evening.