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## Concept of Masonic Renewal - What Does it Mean to You Now and in the Future?

Masonry has existed for three hundred years now, but this great length of time is not necessarily synonymous with progressivism within the Masonic community. In these modern times, the search for answers to why Masonry is being held back from a truly sustainable future is largely ignored. There are uncertain times ahead for Masonry, but to new Master Masons like myself, the renewal truly means everything.

The idea of Masonic renewal to me is not the renewal of age old traditions and ceremonies and values, but the rapid shift of the organization to meet the needs of the modern day man who considers joining a lodge. Renewing the Masonic fraternity revolves completely around understanding the men who will one day govern the lodge from labor to refreshment. Look around the world today and it should not be hard to see the expedience of society, the marvelous technological advancements that captivate us, and the general overcommitment of individuals in society. Then, look internally at Masonry; barely any real, applicable uses of technology, slow moving processes, and no attention-grabbers for those who look in from the outside, and even those who are involved now. Organizations within the Masonic sphere are light years ahead of most Grand Lodges and Blue Lodges. The Northern Masonic Jurisdiction of Scottish Rite is filming new ads, releasing tell-all surveys, and building a better website, donor base, and many more modern and applicable successes. DeMolay International, dependent on and sponsored by Masonry, has a DeMolay App, database system, tip videos to assist their members, and more developments on the way. Not to mention, the Northern Masonic Jurisdiction and DeMolay International host many events for their members, and are not solely ceremony-based organizations. These organizations are providing a reason for involvement for

men, who will find a way to be involved in an organization, even if they are busy, that serves a purpose to better their lives both socially and mentally.

The comparison of organizations is vital, because Masonry is failing at the most basic level, and while the other organizations associated are succeeding, this failure at the basic-level will hurt them in the long-run. Blue Lodges and Grand Lodges have to look at renewal not as a long-term project, but as an immediate operation. To me, Masonry has to start finding ways to broaden its horizon. We cannot be a one-dimensional organization, focused on the procurement of ritual, but we have to be a multi-faceted organization that has events, opportunities for growth and involvement, all the while reinforcing the great aim to make men better. Talking to young men (under twenty-five years old) in Masonry today, many are struggling to justify the payment of dues for an organization underserving them, especially for many that come from the bustling and exciting DeMolay organization like myself. To that end, with the financial struggle outweighing the sense of pride or joy they may receive from Masonry, the financial side will ultimately win-out if Masonry cannot turn a corner in our lives. Masonry is not exempt from admonishment, and in this case, the admonition to Blue and Grand Lodges is to stop pigeonholing the organization to one, overwhelming purpose, and open the doors to a modern, social organization that is needed to open the opportunity for sustainability. Renewal in Masonry is everything to me, because if membership success is everything to Masonry's future, then without renewal there is no organization to be had down the road.

While the renewal of the Masonic fraternity is an immediate action for Blue and Grand Lodges, as time progresses, it will become equally as important to keep up with the non-stop advancement of time. Even if a Blue Lodge became more modern, hosting more events, reducing the amount of ritual, and providing a true "product" to men who join, that does not inherently

mean that twenty-years down the line the changes that were made will still be effective. The continuation of efforts to adhere to the changes in society that could affect membership is vitally important to keeping the fraternity on a sustainable path. It may seem that today's potential members are already difficult enough to understand, but the challenges to growing the fraternity's membership will only increase as society innovates and advances more. As people are given more tools and opportunities, organizations like ours become less and less worth their time. The future renewal efforts are just as imperative as present efforts, because the same issues we face now will not only replicate, but become much more complex. When the younger Masons in Blue Lodges around North America grow to be leaders within the Lodge, the hope should be that they, who helped bring about the renewal of Masonry should be able to usher in the continuance of the same for future brothers and members. It is important to young Masons like me, that the opportunity to lead a fraternity that is consistently working to stay relevant is still afforded to us when the time is right.

Perhaps this idea of the importance of Masonic renewal to an individual is incorrect, because in so many ways this renewal is an issue for all Masons, everywhere. It is an issue we should be talking about in terms of solutions to the problems extant in the fraternity. It is a tough pill to swallow knowing that Masonry has boomed for three hundred years, but now, the time-tested traditions are facing a real challenge. For once, Masonry is forced to make a change, and one that some have accepted willingly. In spite of this acceptance, great issues remain at the first step of the Masonic journey, even if some subsets of the Masonic community have taken action. If Blue Lodges do not embrace renewal and cannot see the importance of appealing to a younger base of men, then Masonry's average age of members will increase, and with that, growth will

continue to stagnate. If this is what is at stake, the choice should be crystal clear, and the renewal of Masonry should be enacted tomorrow.