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“What is the Purpose of the Masonic Fraternity Now and In the Future”

The “Purpose of the Masonic Fraternity Now and in the Future” is what it has been since its inception, namely the growth and development of each of us individually by embracing those high Masonic ideals that first presumably called each of us to “Ask” to become a member of our Ancient and Honorable Fraternity and to assemble with fellow Brethren on the same quest. It never ceases to amaze me that in many cases Lodges get caught up in accepting each and every Petition that comes through the door as if we were a social club, in that senseless desire to increase membership and balance budgets. The preceding sentence describes everything we should not be. Our obligation now and in the future is to provide an environment that is conducive to the exploration of the soul, thereby smoothing our rough ashlar. The business of doing business is not whom we were, not whom we should be and certainly not what we need to be in the future. It is certainly no wonder that, at its heart, when we allow this definition of Masonry to prevail, we see diminishing numbers. Many among us can relate to those special nights when our spirit is nourished and time is forgotten when we see a meaningful degree performed or perhaps participate in an engaging Masonic discussion. Equally, we have all too often been a part of Lodge gatherings where each grain in the hour glass can be counted as we are bored stiff and await our time to go home, thinking “This is it?” When we return to our principled foundation of intellectual and spiritual growth, we will again flourish. More of us need to do this “Now” and inspire all of our ranks to do so in the “Future”. Our current world environment is such that we attack, demean and terminate friendships with our fellow man for the mere violation of having a differing opinion or view. Masons know that the dissenting opinions, spirited debate and mutual exploration of all points of view embodied in our seven liberal arts and sciences allow us to grow individually and collectively as Masons, if we seek and follow our time honored, tried and true, Masonic principles.

Again, our purpose “Now” was what it was in the beginning when Speculative Masons were men who gathered in small groups forming various Lodges. Their goal was the practice of our Ritual, in each of the three degrees coupled with Masonic discussion which I believe is the roadmap to the self-exploration and attainment of the wisdom that brought them together in the first place. In a very real sense, all too many times we get caught up in taking a Petition, rolling an individual through the degrees, start collecting dues, share meals and conduct mindless business meetings unless we have to do some degree work to bring in more members and hope they stick. Then we rinse and repeat.

What is missing? Our future lies in our past. Fortunately, our “Now” is starting to shift. We still have a firm foundation to build our Temple. We have many in our Fraternity who seek, yearn, explore understand and want to share and fully restore our Masonic ideals. Our purpose “Now” is to restore this part of the past that in many cases has fallen by the wayside.

First and foremost, we should perform our part of our obligation in not allowing any man who seeks us for any other reason than having those freely seeking the attainment of our high ideals. We must put aside the members and money fear. That was not our purpose in the past when we met in humble gathering places to form a Lodge and our Masonic principles were discussed and explored.

Secondly, the journey of each new Brother must begin before the Petition. We should clearly identify those things that are the business part of Masonry and then turn to a description and sharing of our personal experience of the spiritual and intellectual journey available to them should they follow the roadmap of Masonry. In short, stimulate that yearning which caused each of us to “Ask”. Is that not what our three degrees are? Rather than rote ritual perfectly performed, ritual performed with meaning, depth and then further explained. And to some, I dare say, spark the soul to begin the true Masonic journey of building the Temple within.

Through the course of the three degrees, the candidate tells us they want Light. I think in some respects they are caused to believe that at the conclusion of the Master Mason Degree the Light will be revealed and somehow bestowed upon, and in them, as if being hit with a lightning bolt from the heavens.

Many of our new Master Mason having reached the conclusion of the Master Mason Degree breathes a sigh of relief that the hard part is behind them. They are a Master Mason, have a dues card, can wear the ring, vote in Lodge and can even occupy a chair.

Many of these tangible and visible attainments are true with one exception – that of the hard part being over. For it is only after receiving the roadmap to Masonry in completing the three degrees that the real Work begins.

In our Entered Apprentice Degree, we are taught the rules of the road. In the “Now”, I think we get this and today we do this pretty well.

In the Fellow Craft Degree, we have laid before us the feast of knowledge that the seven liberal arts and sciences bring to us if we seek to study, question, explore and thru diligent pursuit try to understand them. Even in the likely event that we can never fully attain its riches for our inner self, we are spiritually nourished along the way. If we were to honestly do a self-evaluation of where we truly are in our Masonic journey, it is here where most of us will Labor.

In the Master Mason Degree, we get a glimpse of what we may attain if we diligently and earnestly seek the Light available through our sojourn in the earlier degrees.

In our early beginnings of Speculative Masonry, we actively, diligently and earnestly sought the journey with like- minded journeymen. All too often today, we get stuck individually and collectively in our Lodges in the EA mindset where we follow our rules and customs and little more. A few, both the Brethren and Lodges, perhaps because they have the benefit of receiving some the foregoing, seek the

knowledge and self-exploration of all that the Fellow Craft degree entails. If we are able to accomplish this more often in the “Now” we as a Fraternity will reap the benefits in the “Future”. More importantly, we will receive the personal growth that first inspired the “Ask”. These individuals have a vision or feeling of growth of pursuing a journey with a single-minded spiritual quest to smooth the rough edges of their ashlar exposing that unique self that is within us, if we will only seek.

In closing, I have faith that our Fraternities purpose is needed now more than ever. For those who were first made a Mason in their heart, we offer a difficult but rewarding journey of self-realization and spiritual development. A place where we can seek respite from the profane world and go within, either within our ourselves at any time or place or collectively when we assemble as a Lodge and provide an environment that allows our Ritual, that we hold dear to be examined, discussed, understood and then applied. History does repeat itself and if we labor in the quarries “Now” restoring our essential Masonic ideals on all fronts, the external influence of the chaos of the outside world will stir the heart of good men worthy of being Masons. They will “Ask” and we have to deliver. If we acknowledge that this is our purpose “Now”, our “Future” is assured. Our Masonic truths are age old and will exist for time immemorial. They may become buried, partially hidden, sometimes ignored and maybe even forgotten, but they exist. We as stewards of the Craft must double down in on our work in the quarries and build the Temple using every working tool available to us.

