

A Masonic Minute



The Canadian Maple Leaf Flag Fiftieth Anniversary

The Canadian Maple Leaf Flag was adopted by Parliament on December 16, 1964, officially proclaimed by Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II, and inaugurated on February 15, 1965, now observed in Canada as National Flag Day. The adoption of the distinctive design emerged after much heated debate, led by the Leader of the Opposition, the Right Honourable Bro. John George Diefenbaker. Our distinguished Brother, the Honourable John Ross Matheson, at the time the Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister, Lester B. Pearson, by adroit negotiations with the opposing parties, was instrumental in the final resolution of the debate. Bro. Matheson was also responsible for the creation of the Order of Canada.

Bro. Matheson was initiated in Queen's Lodge No. 578, Kingston, in 1940 on the night before he was deployed with his regiment for active service in World War Two. He was the recipient of the William Mercer Wilson Medal for Meritorious Service, a 33rd degree Scottish Rite Mason, and a member of the Royal Order of Scotland. On November 13, 2010, Bro. Matheson was presented with the Long Service Award – 70 Years a Freemason in a ceremony attended by the Speaker of the House, Members of both the Federal Parliament and the Ontario Legislature, together with a host of friends and family. Bro. Matheson died 27 December 2013. A great Canadian, it can be truly said of him, that he 'lived respected and died regretted.'

The words from the Sacred Writings in the Book of Revelation, "*The leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations*" were quoted to describe the distinctive design of the Maple Leaf Flag. In a speech given to the Supreme Council of the Ancient and Accepted Scottish Rite, Bro. Matheson said: "*Our symbolism must need affirm spiritual values. It conveys a message of noble expectations for humanity, of our Masonic hope for an even 'better country.'* Each of us, like the Flag, represents Canada. This nation can be no worthier than what we imagine and will it to be."

When M.W. Bro. Donald H. Mumby was the Director of the R.C.M.P. Degree Team, this Charge to the Flag was given as part of the ceremony:

I present our Flag, our symbol of Unity and Sovereignty,
Between bars of red on a field of white,
It blazons forth in its full Autumnal glory.

The Canadian Maple Leaf

Whose points represent the Provinces and Territories,
Which comprise our great Dominion.

To Freemasons –

The red symbolizes the dauntless courage of our forefathers, which we strive to emulate,
The white, that blameless purity of life and conduct to which we aspire,
And the points, the eleven knightly virtues, of which Patriotism is the greatest, and to which we are ever dedicated,

And finally, it inspires in us a reverence to Him, to whom we fervently pray

God Save the Queen, and heaven bless **The Maple Leaf Forever**.

As Freemasons we are obligated to fulfill the duties of a good citizen. As loyal Canadians, the National Flag is displayed in every lodge room and outside most Masonic buildings throughout the jurisdiction, a symbol of national unity and pride. It is important, however, in the Masonic context to make a distinction between '*nationalism*' and '*patriotism*.' Nationalism, pushed to the extreme, results in conflict and war; Patriotism is loyalty and respect for one's native land.



The distinctive lapel pin of our jurisdiction is the Red Maple Leaf surmounted by the Square and Compasses in gold, signifying that the wearer is a proud Canadian and a proud Freemason.

Raymond S. J. Daniels
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