

A Personal Note to a Potential Candidate from an Old Past Master

I understand that you would like to explore your interest in Freemasonry. I was hoping that we might arrange a personal chat, but time and circumstances seem to make that a long-term goal. And so I will revert to this means. First let me hope that you are settling in after graduation to life in the real world using the skill and ability that you possess in such ample form. Above all, that you are enjoying life.

Like many serious-minded, well-educated, well-read young men of your generation, many have expressed a curiosity and an interest in what Freemasonry is all about. I expect that you have explored some of the vast amount of information posted on the World Wide Web – both positive and negative – and probably discussed it with your friends. It is a matter not to be entered into lightly. Being a thoughtful young man with superior intelligence, you will have many questions. That fact, in itself, qualifies you as a potential candidate.

When I am asked what Freemasonry is about, the best answer I can give in simple terms is that it is a global fraternity – the oldest and largest in the world – an ancient institution rooted in tradition with modern relevance. In this sense it is a gentleman's philosophical society based on high standards of ethical behaviour and moral conduct. It provides a means of self-discovery through self-discipline: self-examination, self-analysis, self-realization, and self-fulfillment. As such it is personal and individual for every man engaged in his own quest for knowledge, wisdom, and understanding.

What do young men in the twenty-first century find attractive that draws them to the fraternity? Each year about 1300 candidates are initiated in Ontario. Having the privilege of meeting and

talking with many of them, I have discovered that their motivation takes many forms, but falls into a relatively few categories: providing stability in a changing world, continuity in the midst of uncertainty, intellectual and spiritual stimulation, and male bonding. I feel certain that you would find many like-minded kindred spirits among the members of a Masonic lodge.

In our formative years we all need role models to inspire our own hopes and dreams. In modern society, these have become rather few and far between. There is scandal in government and business, sports figures are sullied by allegations of drug abuse or sexual indiscretion, respect for leaders in the church has been reduced by unacceptable moral behaviour, the family unit has disintegrated in the “me first” hedonistic atmosphere. Freemasons make serious promises to act according to the principles of virtue and morality that the Fraternity is based upon. No, none of us are gods or heroes, but there are role models among us worthy of emulation as men in society.

One of the first serious questions that concerns most young men is about religious belief. One of the great glories of Freemasonry is its universality. It professes no dogma, neither does it demand conformity to the specific belief of any religion. It does require what we term “a belief in a supreme being” – in other words, a greater power than mere mortals possess. This is left to each individual to define for himself. There are religious aspects to our Rites and Ceremonies, but the emphasis is on the spiritual rather than any established religion.

Unlike the established religions, each of which is based upon a prescribed body of dogmatic beliefs, which makes them exclusive, we are inclusive. The language of Freemasonry is careful to avoid a definition of God – preferring to use descriptive attributes: “Supreme Being,”

“Great Architect,” “Grand Geometrician,” “Most High”. All discussion of sectarian religion and party politics is strictly forbidden in the lodge.

If you happened to read Dan Brown’s latest novel, The Secret Symbol, he makes the point: *“In a world where people are killing each other over whose definition of God is better, perhaps the Masons have it right.”* Brown is not a Freemason, but it could not have been said better. Our members include Jews, Christians, Muslims, Pagans, and every other degree and shade of belief, respecting each other in the universal brotherhood of man.

There is a long term commitment required to realize the benefits I have outlined. Freemasonry is known as a ‘progressive science.’ It’s principal purpose is ‘the cultivation and improvement of the human mind.’ That is a life-long process. There are also certain financial obligations – initiation fee and annual dues. Members of the lodge are required to observe a dress code, usually a dark business suit. Formal dress is worn by the officers.

Having said all this, and based on a lifetime of involvement, and despite giving many speeches and writing many articles on the subject, I must admit that mere words cannot really explain the profound meaning of Masonry. It must be experienced to be understood and appreciated fully. Obviously, I would encourage you to pursue your interest, and I would feel privileged to discuss further any questions you might have.

Freemasonry has played a major role in my life. I truly believe that, with all my inadequacies as a person, it has contributed to making me a better man than I would otherwise have been. I have learned so much from the fraternal affection and example of the good and great men in the fraternity that I have been

associated with now for more than a half century.

I look forward to hearing from you. I wish health, happiness, and satisfaction.

RSJD 2014