

## IN WHOM DO YOU PUT YOUR TRUST?

Valley Lodge No. 100

February 13, 2012

Thirty-six years ago, March 17, 1976 on entering the lodge I was asked, In whom do you put your trust? Then in repeating after the Worshipful Master, I took the oath and obligation of an Entered Apprentice Mason. The experiences that March evening, 36 years ago, have been indelibly etched in my mind.

Membership in Masonry has always been a universally recognized badge of honor. Its stress has always been on character. The fundamental Masonic teachings are belief in the Supreme being, loyalty to country, a high standard of personal morality, and a belief in the universal brotherhood of man. In the life of a Mason, these fundamental teachings reach out through participation and support in community life. Masonic men find an inner peace and contentment when they are contributing to the well-being, growth and support of the community they live in.

I asked myself again and again, what attracts men to Masonry? What was its appeal? Why were so many of them ardent and active members throughout their lifetimes? I have been privileged to work with Masons of varied cultural, racial and ethnic backgrounds. I soon realized that the questions just posed also applied to me -as I am sure they must have been of concern to each of us during our early and most impressive Masonic years.

Certainly it was not due to improper solicitation. No man is ever asked to join. However, today, the literature and public relations of the outstanding Friend To Friend program, and Brother to Brother program, is encouraging a positive response for Masonry from men in many areas of life.

I believe the answer is found in Freemasonry's lofty idealism. Its stress has always been on character. Membership in Masonry is recognized as a standard of honor, of Brotherhood, of uprightness and decency. Many heads of Government or Country in Europe were or are Masons, as well as fourteen Presidents of the United States of America.

Today, I am convinced the teachings of Masonry have not changed. While all dimensions of life are adjusting to a new age, to a changing world, to computer technology, the basic concepts of the Fatherhood of God, of Brotherhood, of honor, of uprightness and decency will never change. We have a rich heritage in Freemasonry. It is ours to grasp and follow during our lifetimes, and is incumbent upon us to pass it on to future generations.

Let us never forget, or lose sight of the truth, that Masonry begins at the Altar in the Lodge Room. Its foundation is a belief in the existence of a Supreme Being. This is the first and fundamental principle in the life of every Mason. Hear again the question, In whom do you put your trust?

Yet, Masonry although based on religious beliefs, is not a religion, nor is it a substitute for Religion. Masonry is not interested, nor is it concerned in how a man may develop his religious faith. However, it stands for, teaches and practices, tolerance toward all faiths that rest upon this first and fundamental principle, belief in the existence of a

Supreme Being! Men of various religious faiths come into Masonry, here in our great country, as well as in nations in the uttermost parts of the world. They retain the religion of their choice and are strengthened in the practice of their particular beliefs by the truths and teachings of Masonry. God is known by many names, and worshipped in many ways. There is no religious bar to anyone who would become a Mason, provided he is not an atheist. So, a Hindu, a Parsee, a Buddhist, a Moslem, a Hebrew, a Christian can all become members of our wonderful Fraternity

While Masonry is religious, it is not, even in the remotest sense, a religion. Masonry has no creed, no confession of faith, no doctrinal statement, no theology. Masonry does not assert and does not teach that one religion is as good as another. It does not say that all religions are equal simply because men of all religions are Masons. It is precisely because we are not a religion, we can come together as men of faith. Masonry asks only if a man believes in God. If he were asked if he believed in Christ, or Buddha, or Allah, that would be a theological test involving a particular interpretation of God. Belief in God is faith. Belief about God is theology.

From its very beginning, Masonry has been consistent that religion and politics—are not suitable subjects for consideration within the Lodge Room. Masonry believes in principles rather than political programs. Principles unite men, political programs divide them. So we are taught to leave our opinions on religion—and politics outside the door of the Lodge Room.

While Masonry is not a religion, it is not anti-religious. We are a completely tolerant body. It is a Brotherhood whose trust is in God. Its stress has always been on character. We are charged to maintain peace and harmony, and to uphold the chief Masonic virtue, charity or brotherly love. Membership in Masonry is recognized as a standard of honor, of Brotherhood, of uprightness and decency. We are sure that he who is true to the principles he learns in Freemasonry will be a better man because of it.

And so, following that most impressive and unforgettable night 36 years ago, when I was led into the lodge unable to see and asked the question, In whom do you put your trust?, I have traveled, as you have, across many peaceful and many troubled waters, and again and again my trust in the fundamental principles of our Fraternity has strengthened me. No person, more especially a Mason, can live for himself alone. We are guided by the great teachings of Masonry, the belief in the Supreme being, the Brotherhood of Man, and the chief Masonic virtues of Charity and Brotherly Love. All of these combined form the basis of us becoming “Better Men”

Thank you Brethren for your attention.

R.W. Bro. John K. Johnston