Brethren,

My thanks to the brethren in attendance, W.M Bouchard, the Officers and members of Corinthian Lodge and the Visitors. My talks so far this year have focused around the importance of ritual, the symbolism inculcated in our degrees and the need to emphasize those key attributes of Masonry, Brotherly Love, Relief and Truth.

While perusing the Grand Lodge website, I took a look at the Lodge Resource area for some inspiration and found an amazing booklet, “Penetrating the Veil” by David C. Bradley. In it he discusses the three degrees of Masonry and some of the history and significance behind the words of The Work. Interestingly, these words can be traced back to the 1700’s and I strongly recommend everyone present to get a copy and read it yourself.

**From Penetrating the Veil pg. 11. “Ritual Presentation”**

The ritual is neither literal nor historical, but a dramatic allegory to explain the tenets and principles of the Craft. The delivery of the Work is of crucial importance. The ritualist ought to remember that he has placed himself in the position of a Master of the Craft to his apprentice. His responsibility, therefore, is to convey the stories of the ritual to the candidate clearly and interestingly. The general meaning of the ritual can be sensed in the feeling and flow of the words. They are not meaningless. The ritual must impress the candidate with awe and wonder and fill his mind with intelligent information. The Work must be sincere and, although accuracy is pleasing, there must be communication. The right words can be pronounced, but it is unavailing unless the message comes across. Ritual is the performance of a ceremony to illustrate a mystery. Society has many such rituals: shaking the hand of a friend, raising one's hat to a lady, saluting an officer by one of lower rank. Although these aresimple gestures they do possess deeper meanings. The Intent of Masonic ritual is to bring a man into a brotherhood of men, who believe in right thinking and right action.

The ritual is a path to greater understanding and the absence of such understanding means that members are simply going through the motions. It must exude life and energy and avoid being a dull recitation. In essence, the ritual is a play and each man must attend to his cue. The greatest danger is that ritual may become a mechanical performance. The ritualist must have some empathy with what he is saying. When told properly, the degrees provide more light to a candidate that his eye can see. The result of such teaching will be a candidate who remains an active, interested member, who understands Masonry and who ultimately becomes a more mature individual.”

And **from page 12, the three degrees**

“The three degrees are the method by which candidates attain the rank of Master Mason and, although each is a discrete ceremony, together they form a unity of teaching. Each degree is necessary for the completeness of the whole. Notwithstanding the reference to three degrees, the system is actually one initiation unfolded to the candidate in three parts. The aim of the ritual is to be a total and profound experience, in which an understanding of the threads that have run unbroken for several centuries are seen as a strength in a member's life. Starting at a low level the ritual works upward to create the impression that it is leading the candidate to greater matters. In essence the candidate is transformed into a new man with a new range of thought, possessing a new feeling of mankind, a strengthened confidence in God.

The first section attempts to clear the mind of a" worldly influences to enable the candidate to seek the principles of moral truths without interference from the outside world of emotion and instinct. This section also concerns itself with setting the stage by explaining the physical aspects of the lodge room and its contents. Masonry is a progressive science. It refers to a continuing process, and gives a hint of the future. The candidate is told that he represents a foundation stone upon which he may build a personal and satisfying character.”

**So what does this mean to all of us here?**

I believe that Masonry is a means to create leaders in our communities. Albert Einstein said that “Setting an example is not the main means of influencing another, it is the only means.” A well delivered ritual brings us together in harmony and enables enlightenment. Within the lodge we create an environment where all of us are taught to consider our responsibilities: to ourselves, to each other, to our families, to the fraternity and to the broader community at large. Freemasonry creates a society of gentlemen that encourage strong personal integrity, promotes good manners, philosophy, morality, support and understanding between its members. It also works to assist society providing all of the above through the example of the daily interaction and behavior of our membership. In conclusion to paraphrase John Quincy Adams… As a Mason if your actions inspire others to dream more, learn more, do more and become more, you are a leader.