



## MASONIC CHARITY

Address to the Brethren and Visitors of the Ancient Landmarks / Doric Lodge No. 654 on Feb 26, 2019 by R.W. Bro. Robin J. Colville – DDGM Hamilton District “C” on his Official Visit.

Good evening Brethren:

The act of **“Paying it forward”**, as it is commonly referred to, is really catching on. Have you ever been at a Tim Hortons drive through with your coffee order already placed and you drive up to the window and the cashier tells you ... No charge ... the person in the car in front of you paid your bill! Well ... I can honestly say it has never happened to me personally, but I do know people where this has happened to them ... it is a real thing and it is inspiring. The concept is based on a person receiving some benefit of good fortune, goodwill, a good deed or even some form of charity at some point in time in the past, and now with the means and desire to pass on the goodwill and to repay the good deed ... to some random stranger. That “stranger” receives the benefit of this act of kindness and is motivated to do the same to another “stranger”. In principle, these **“random acts of kindness”** perpetuate themselves in an exponential way making our world a better place to live in.

In Masonry, we are taught from the very beginning that the fundamental principles of our order are **Brotherly Love, Relief and Truth**. Quite often the word relief can be substituted with the word “Charity”, and this is the intention or meaning of the term Relief. Upon taking our first steps into Masonry we are taught that Charity “has the approbation of heaven and of earth, and, like its sister mercy, blesses him who gives as well as he who receives.”

It is also explained in the Entered Apprentice’s lecture that we claim the vast dimensions of the earth to represent the universal nature of Freemasonry and its relationship to the unrestrained nature of a Mason’s charity. We also learn that the greatest round in Jacob’s theological ladder is CHARITY because it “comprehends the whole, and the Mason who is possession of this virtue in its most ample sense, may justly be deemed to arrived at the summit of Masonry ! “

But, what is charity? Google defines charity as:

1. an organization set up to provide help and raise money for those in need
2. help or money given voluntarily to those in need
3. kindness and tolerance in judging others
4. love of humankind, typically in a Christian context



The most common concept of charity is giving time, money, or property to those in need. However, a deeper and more significant meaning of charity is;

*To have a benevolent goodwill toward humanity, and to bear kindness and tolerance in the judgment of others.*

Thus, **CHARITY** doesn't only mean or focus on donating money or services, but having a **pure and charitable HEART**. By this is meant, we should wish for, and be willing to encourage, the best in our Brethren. We should always be sincere in exercising the tenets or fundamental principles of our order – that of

### **BROTHERLY LOVE, RELIEF and TRUTH.**

By exercising **Brotherly Love**, we are taught to regard all human beings as one common family created by one Almighty parent. On this principle, Freemasonry unites men of all origins, all faiths, all walks of life, and all levels of social status, into a true brotherhood.

By **Relief**, we believe it is incumbent on all Masons to soothe the afflictions of others, have sympathy and compassion for the misfortunate, and relieve their necessities as can fairly be done within our means. On this basis, we form our lasting friendships.

And the third tenet, **Truth**, is something we believe to be the foundation of every virtue. To be good men and true, is one the first lessons taught in Masonry. Hypocrisy and deceit have no place in promoting each other's welfare and rejoicing in prosperity.

The two doctrines of **Brotherly Love** and **Relief** can be construed as outward expressions of **Charity**, and the following is a beautiful story depicting Charity extending beyond the grave and also reinforces our charge to not side idly by while our fellow man is in need. Some of you may already know about this story, but it is worthwhile hearing again.

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In a small town in mid-19th century, a young man said to his wife, "Mary, you have a shawl you never use. May I have it?"

She was puzzled for a few moments, but got the shawl. He thanked her and left the house. She was suspicious, because several evenings during the past few months he had left after dinner



without any explanation. He was never gone long, and when he returned he seemed to have an inner peace about him. He said nothing, and neither did she.

About a week later, Mary was shopping in the village when she saw her shawl again. She was shocked. It was on the shoulders of a beautiful young lady. Angrily Mary followed the girl to a shabby shack. Mary knocked on the door. The girl opened it and smiled when she saw the visitor. She held the door open and Mary stomped in.

As Mary looked around, she saw an elderly lady propped up on a cot. The lady smiled and said: "How nice of you to visit us." Mary was stunned. She did not really know what to say. The girl asked if she could fix her a cup of tea. Mary nodded and the girl turned to put a kettle on the stove. While the water was heating, Mary said, "I do not know exactly what to say, so I will tell you the truth. I saw my shawl on your daughter, and I was furious. Last week, my husband asked me for it but didn't tell me why. I still don't understand how you have it."

The mother said "We have no idea who left it. We have no idea who has been doing some nice things for us for the past several months. Perhaps now we can solve the mystery."

It started soon after my husband died. We had no money, and I am unable to work. And Nancy couldn't find a job. We were desperate. We had no food and no fuel. Then one morning when Nancy opened the door, she found several packages of food, clothing, and coal on the doorstep. You have no idea what that meant to us. A short time later, along with more packages, Nancy found a note telling her to see Mr. Tompkins, the lawyer, if she would like a job. She did and Mr. Tompkins hired her.

He also sent a doctor to see me, who has been coming regularly ever since, and he won't take any money. And we still find packages, but have no idea where they come from." They drank their tea and chatted pleasantly for some time. The mysterious packages were mentioned from time to time.

Suddenly Mary asked: "Was your husband a Mason?" "Yes, he was," said the lady. "He loved his Lodge. I don't think he ever missed a meeting."

A short time later Mary left, promising to visit often. After dinner that evening, Mary worked on a quilt she was making while her husband read.



She looked up from her work and said, "I think I learned the great secret of Masonry today." Her husband looked at her with alarm and asked, "And what is it?" Mary answered: "To do good and not say anything about it."

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Now, as I said, this is a beautiful STORY, but our job as Masons is to make it more than that. It should inspire our lives and our actions. It should encourage us to do a little more than we would otherwise do and to be a little better than we otherwise would be.

Of course, we cannot meet every need or help everyone all of the time. We also know that our charity should not cause material injury to ourselves or our families, but there is so much more we can do that we don't.

Sometimes all that is needed by someone who is sad, or lonely, or in distress is a kind word or gesture, a smile or handshake; a pat on the back or a hug. It's the little things .... little things can add up ! We know these little things can mean so much, so what stops us from sending that card, or making that call that we were thinking about?

What stops us from making that visit or doing that favor that we could so easily do? Are we too tired, too distracted, or too engaged in our own enjoyments? We are human and none of us is perfect, but our Masonic philosophy, the teachings of our ritual, and our Masonic obligations are there to help us when we find ourselves being morally lazy or selfish.

Brethren, most of us are blessed with health, the financial means to keep ourselves sheltered, clothed and fed, and family and loved ones to provide support and companionship in our daily lives .... all of the fundamental components of a happy life. With all of these basic human needs taken care of, we have also been given the opportunity for personal growth as men and Masons, both spiritually and intellectually, and well as professionally and as members of society .... limited only by our imagination, motivation, resources and capabilities. Let us remember to thank the GATU every day for such blessings, and let us also ever be mindful of those in much less fortunate circumstances, and cheerfully embrace the opportunity of practising Charity in its fullest sense .... that virtue which we all profess to admire.

Thank you for your attention.

Acknowledgements: "A Masons Charity" by Brother Stephen Suratos, Junior Deacon, Naomi Lodge No. 87