

**Grand Lodge
Free & Accepted Masons
Of California
Grand Oration 1966**

**Grand Orator
Warren J. Blomseth
"There Is No Rest For A Messenger
Till the Message Is Delivered"**

Most Worshipful Sir, Honored Past Grand Masters, Grand Lodge Officers and Members,
Distinguished Guests and Visitors, My Brethren All

During this Masonic year it has been my privilege and great personal honor to serve at the will and pleasure of the Grand Master. And at each ceremony I have been asked to specify the duty of my office.

The ritual provided my response and served as a constant reminder that my prime assignment and responsibility was, and is, the preparation and traditional delivery of the Grand Oration.

In accepting this office twelve months ago, I would confess that my personal thoughts were poignantly expressed in that well known phrase . . . "Fools rush in where wise men fear to tread."

But, then, there can be no new experience without a certain amount of risk, and if you please, a certain willingness to fail. For generally in a new venture one finds little encouragement in unsupported and untried confidence.

But, as a magnificent contrast, in the work of Masonry we find abundant support and reinforcement. We discover anew that our faith is founded upon an unwavering trust and confidence in the guiding force of the universe, the Great Creator, who spake us into being. We learn anew that the Supreme Architect extends his beneficent grace to compensate weakness and to give strength and to spare when we are employed in useful and productive labor.

"For Such A Time As This", I was more than willing to accept the challenge and unequalled opportunity to serve in one of the most rewarding assignments in all of Masonry.

In addition, and as unearned bonus, I was well aware that acceptance of this office would assure the continuance of a close association with our Grand Master. An association which has included many miles of travel, many hours of conversation and of breaking bread, and of observing him at labor in the vineyards of Masonry. And the travel, the conversation, and the observation have left an indelible mark of pure inspiration. And who among us has not, in like manner, been inspired by our Most Worshipful?

On behalf of the Grand Lodge Officers and Members and of every Master Mason in this jurisdiction, let the record show that our Grand Master has proven himself to be (in his own words of admonition to the craft) "possessed with a consuming concern for the welfare of others" and (in the language of his brethren) "an elegant Christian gentleman." Thackeray gives us a fitting definition: "To be a gentleman is to be honest, to be gentle, to be generous, to be wise, and possessing all those qualities to exercise them in the most graceful outward manner." Such a man is our Grand Master, Myron English Smith, truly, "an elegant Christian gentleman."

I sincerely trust that he has found this officer's endeavor acceptable and, if so, the credit shall rest with his continual inspiration and magnificent leadership.

To borrow from the modern idiom, I have been "inflight" in Masonry just fourteen and one-half years. And when I view those highly qualified, experienced and distinguished brethren who have held this office before me, I am reminded of my youth and of my many deficiencies. And could not nor would not proceed with this present trust were it not for the previously cited reasons and for the constant encouragement of my brethren, supported, as it were, by the declaration of William Pitt that eloquence is to be found "in the assembly, not merely in the speaker."

I have selected as the title of this oration a single sentence from the writings of Joseph Conrad: "There is no rest for a messenger till the message is delivered."

The dominant theme woven throughout the literary works of Joseph Conrad is the demoralizing effect of isolation. We, of the fraternity of Free and Accepted Masons, can sympathize with Conrad's major characters, who sought to dispel loneliness in a vast sea of isolation, for we are a society built upon the firm foundation of fellowship. We approached the door of Masonry as strangers, we entered as friends and we became brothers in a worldwide society of men who possess like knowledge and understanding. Fellowship is the very cement which enables us to act in concert in the labor of accomplishing Masonry's one great and glorious goal-the Brotherhood of Man under the Fatherhood of God. And when this goal has been attained both isolation and loneliness will have disappeared.

For the next several minutes let us join in exploring and sharing several immediate messages. As we proceed, it is essential that we evaluate today's messages in the bright light of Masonry's ultimate and supreme message, as we find it in the "emblem of truth overflowing", the rule and guide of our faith, the open book upon our altar. Likewise, that we keep in mind Emerson's provocative observation that "God offers every mind its choice between truth and repose."

Inasmuch as we are herein assembled as the Grand Lodge of California, it is appropriate that we select one of the implements of Operative Masonry to guide and to limit our discourse. The most suitable implement seems to be the compass-that tool generally used to inscribe 360 degrees, with 32 points of division, and four cardinal points to mark the direction of east, west, north and south. In Operative Masonry it is that implement used for the admeasurements of the architect's plans, to give those just proportions which assure beauty, as well as stability. And in Speculative Masonry the compass is that implement most symbolic of virtue, the true and only measure of a Mason's life and conduct.

Let us figuratively pick up the compass that we might trace a few lines upon the trestleboard of our understanding, to inscribe the four cardinal points and a like number of messages. What shall constitute today's messages? What are the messages that would be carried, without rest, to the point of delivery on this occasion?

THE FIRST MESSAGE
THE CARDINAL POINT EAST
A SOCIETY WITH SECRETS

One of the major problems of our fraternity since its inception has been how best to erase from the mind of the general public the idea that Freemasonry is a secret society. Our great and beloved fraternity was never designed to be in any sense a secret organization. Taken to the extreme, to emphasize this very point, an American patriot, writer, diplomat, signer of the Declaration of Independence, and a Past Grand Master of Pennsylvania, Worshipful Brother Benjamin Franklin, stated in one of his publications (just prior to his acceptance into the craft) that Masonry's, "Grand Secret is that they have no Secret at all." Certainly if this statement were true for the profane in Franklin's day, 225 years ago, there is even less about the Masonic fraternity today that is "secret."

Witness our well marked halls and temples (this debt-free California Masonic Memorial Temple, in particular); our lapel pins; our rings; our announcements in the press; our numerous public ceremonies; our magnificent homes at Union City and Covina (which inform the world that the fraternity is ever mindful of the needs of those less fortunate); and finally, the thousands-upon-thousands of volumes of books, stories, and articles (favorable and unfavorable) written upon every aspect of Freemasonry and which can be found in every book store and library in the free world.

Obviously, what our good Brother Ben Franklin had in mind, and rightly so, was to confirm that Masonry's membership, time and place of meeting, activities, purpose and principles are well publicized and can surely be well known to anyone having the slightest interest.

We were conceived, and remain to this day, an institution laboring among men for the moral and social advancement of the whole human family. If this be our purpose, and it is, then, how essential it is that we carry the message to the profane, to the uninitiated, and to the entire world that Freemasonry is not a secret society.

Undoubtedly the confusion on this point can be traced to our ritual, to our modes of recognition (whereby one of us may know another), and to the private and confidential business of our tiled meetings. But each of these is simply the universal secrecy which is recognized the

world over: that secrecy of the lawyer to his client, the minister to his penitent, the physician to his patient, or of a friend to a friend. It is that trustworthy confidence which is present in every valuable relationship and is one of the foundations of the glory of man. Without it family, business, national and international relations would be imperiled, if not destroyed.

Truly, the "secrecy" which Masonry maintains is that which is practiced by all worthy individuals and is intended only to safeguard the institution and to ensure its proper security.

We are, then, a society possessing certain secrets, but not now nor have we ever been a secret society.

Masonry has nothing to hide from the general public, it has no secrets beyond its rightful responsibility to confidentially conduct its private business. And there is a very valid reason why we must, each one of us, deliver this message to all with whom we come in contact. I find these few lines of Seneca's provide a comprehensive explanation:

"I will govern my life and my thoughts as if all the world were to see the one and to read the other: For what does it signify to make a secret to my neighbor, when to God all our privacies are open.

My brethren, the meaningful and significant work of Freemasonry cannot be accomplished without the aid and assistance of all right thinking men. Masonry's one great, ambitious dream-the Brotherhood of Man-Under the Fatherhood of God-rests upon the principle of maximum participation. Is this not our first and most important message to all mankind? Can we rest till this message is delivered?

THE SECOND MESSAGE
THE CARDINAL POINT WEST
TO BE FREEMASONS

This current Masonic year our Grand Master has on several occasions reminded us of the significant fact that as a Grand Lodge and through our constituent lodges we move into the public square and ask for support with regard to two and only two Masonic programs: Public Schools Week and Constitution Observance. What is the message here that we would convey and why does it concern Masonry?

There is neither time nor opportunity this afternoon to trace the birth and development of Freemasonry. But let us pause and note the unquestionable fact that the process of evolution from Operative to Speculative Masonry could only come from and with the great surge of national endeavor which brought liberty to mankind at the end of the Dark Ages. As our very name suggests, Freemasonry, in itself, embraces a desire to be and to remain free.

As we study the history of our fraternity, we are impressed time-and-again with the prerequisite of liberty. And when we have thoroughly learned this lesson, we will have come to understand much, if not most of the meaning of the free in Freemasonry. Hence, the undeniable importance of both our Constitution Observance and Public Schools Week Programs.

Under the aegis of these two programs we endeavor to protect, secure, appreciate and understand the Constitution of the United States, and to achieve and maintain widespread support for our free public schools.

To describe these two Masonic programs in the simplest terms, we annually make use of Brother Rudyard Kipling's six honest serving men: their names, as you will remember, are-Where and What and Why and How and Who and When.

You might well ask why we need be reminded every year, year after year, decade after decade, of the necessity of supporting our free public schools or of understanding our Constitution. The answer can be found in the wisdom of a child's definition-"memory is the thing I forget with!"

Unless we are constantly compelled to remember. we all too soon forget, or what is far worse-we take it for granted-we assume that free schools and constitutional government are everybody's business and therefore need not be our concern-and in a brief span of history, too minute to measure, they become nobody's business-and they are gone.

The freedom we now enjoy was not easily won nor will it be so easy to retain. Freedom demands of us the very best we have to give. And if we would protect and secure our precious heritage, this free society, we must willingly heed the advise of Episcopal Reverend Phillips Brooks, who over 70 years ago delivered a prayer for all liberty loving people, in these words:

"Do not pray for easy lives,

Pray to be stronger men.
Do not pray for tasks equal to your powers,
Pray for powers equal to your tasks."

Duty and responsibility must be constantly exercised by each and every citizen or apathy will abruptly separate us from our precious freedom. Have we really delivered this message throughout our jurisdiction? Can we rest till we have done so?

THE THIRD MESSAGE
THE CARDINAL POINT SOUTH
INDIVIDUAL CRAFTSMEN

It has been said that ". . . a man's ideal like his horizon, is constantly receding from him as he advances toward it." So it is for every Master Mason, so it is for Masonry, and for all of mankind. But, here again, Freemasonry possesses a most significant message, one which, tends to elude each of us as we translate our Masonic teachings into our daily lives. It is the message of individual craftsmen.

The entire philosophy of Freemasonry is built around the individual-the erection of a moral edifice within the heart of a single man. All our symbolism is pointed to the individual, all our traditions and practices are aimed solely at making individuals wiser, better and thus happier.

I have always found this single sentence of that eminent Master Mason, Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, to express in just seventeen words, one of the most beautiful summaries of what we must do to earn and warrant the title of brethren of the ancient craft: "Life is a quarry, out of which we are to mold and chisel and complete a character." And as a companion we might well add Michelangelo's lesson to the craftsmen: "The more the marble wastes, the more the statue grows."

If the objective of Masonry be the construction of moral edifices within the hearts of men: if the objective of Masonry be thus centered upon the individual-one man at a time: if such be our objective, then, each one of us, alone, but well attended, must answer for himself that ever present question-"What is Freemasonry?"

As a reply, or if you will, as a personal message we might answer that burning question as follows:

I belong to the fraternity of Free and Accepted Masons, which encompasses the world within its walls: that can and does claim the great and good men of every level of society: that discovers with joy the gold in every creed: and floods with light and love the goodness within every man.

Is it possible to "mold and chisel and complete a character" without -concomitantly delivering a like message? Can there be any rest for a Masonic messenger till he has first formulated and then delivered his personal message?

THE FOURTH AND FINAL MESSAGE
THE CARDINAL POINT NORTH
THE SPREADING OF LIGHT

"No man, of woman born, coward or brave, can shun his destiny."

So spoke Homer in the 10th century B.C. What of Masonry's destiny? What does the future hold for the true and trusty craftsman? Would that one among us could respond for all. But any meaningful and lasting answer must come from the aggregate response of every Master Mason.

How might we best respond? Let us begin with a single word to guide our future acts as members of this great fraternity, and let that one word be enthusiasm. Emerson set forth its value as, "Every great and commanding movement in the annals of the world is the triumph of enthusiasm-Nothing great was ever achieved without it." Seeley put it another way: "No virtue is safe that is not enthusiastic."

There is a story that became a legend in its time. A story that has been told as happening in the Napoleonic Wars, although also reported as having taken place in the American Civil War. Actually its origin is of little import. It tells of a youth, too young to fight but who possessed enthusiasm and devotion in such abundance that he was designated to carry the regimental banner. During a bitter battle his unit advanced slowly under heavy enemy attack. But his zeal

carried him so far ahead of the regiment that he was soon beyond hailing distance. His commanding officer sent a runner with the message-"Bring the standard back to the line." The lad sent back the ringing reply-"Bring the line up to the standard."

That particular story brings to mind with crystal clarity the advice to our young Republic by Worshipful George Washington, in his Farewell Address: "Let us raise a standard to which the wise and honest may repair." There can be no doubt that he would have wished his fellow Masons to find equal sustenance in his counsel!

Who among us can now envision the vast expanse of Freemasonry's future attainments, if every Master Mason would but respond to the challenge to "Bring the line up to the standard?"

My brethren, we are too deeply indebted to the founding fathers of Freemasonry to accept in unthinking ingratitude what we have inherited.

Let us, each and every member of this great and good fraternity, expand (if we now possess) or acquire (if we now lack) both a higher opinion of ourselves and of Freemasonry-that we might travel forward on the firm faith of our convictions. Thus, and only thus, can we assure that tomorrow will also witness its Masonic messengers!

Earlier, we figuratively picked up the compass that we might trace a few lines upon the trestleboard to encompass, delineate and mark four messages:

The Cardinal Point East-

A fraternity possessing certain secrets-not a secret society;

The Cardinal Point West-

A fraternity exercising duty and responsibility in order to be and to remain free;

The Cardinal Point South-

A fraternity of individual craftsmen;

The Cardinal Point North-

A fraternity employing dedicated and enthusiastic labor to ensure that its present and future attainments will ever reflect its glorious past.

It is now time to close the compass, that implement most symbolic of virtue, the true and only measure of a Mason's life and conduct, and to return it to its proper place. May we do so with this observation: "There are two ways of spreading light-to be the candle or the mirror that reflects it."