

**Grand Lodge
Free & Accepted Masons
Of California
Grand Oration 1970**

**Grand Orator
Donald R. Fretz
"Tomorrow
And Tomorrow
And Tomorrow"**

Most Worshipful Sir, My Fellow Officers, Visiting Dignitaries and Brethren

Before we talk about tomorrow I would like to reminisce about yesterday and talk about today. To work with a great man is inspiring and working with our Grand Master this year has been an inspiration to those of us fortunate enough to have been elected or appointed. There are moments or times all of us would like to preserve. I would like to wrap this year in some beautiful cloth and carefully keep it for all time to come. I thank you, Most Worshipful Sir.

In saying these things, I am mindful of the strength of the Deputy Grand Master and the Senior and Junior Grand Wardens and that their years, too, will be excellent years for this Grand Lodge.

But now about tomorrow.

Do you remember when you were introduced to the concept of infinity? Do you remember being bewildered? I do. You were told to think of the largest number you could think of and then keep going on and on, and when you had thought of the new largest number you could think of you went beyond that. It didn't make any difference how far you went, there was a number beyond that and beyond that and beyond that. Think of the farthest star you can see, then keep going out and out and on and on into space, and where does space end? Who knows? Just keep going on and on and on.

As of today, tomorrow will be October 14. But when tomorrow becomes today, tomorrow will be October 15. And on any given future day there will be a tomorrow. Tomorrow and tomorrow and tomorrow-

It is this infinity of time that I want us to think about today. Let's think about the problems that will be facing the world and Freemasonry thirty years from now and then, if we can do it, 100 years from now.

Tomorrow and tomorrow. We might rightly be concerned whether there will be anyone here to enjoy that tomorrow. We've lived for the last 25 years or more and do live now at the threshold of disaster. Circumstances in the world are such that the catalyst of such a disaster may now exist. Some people have lived so long in conditions which seem to be on the borderline of catastrophe that they no longer build fallout shelters. Others are so frustrated by what they believe is their inability to control their own destiny that they want to exist only for themselves, to "do their own thing." Most of us assume tomorrow and that it and we will meet.

If we assume that we will be here, we need to take stock of what tomorrow will bring and to determine what we can do to make it what we want it to be. And if we are not going to be here, then we may assess what we will not experience.

We frequently think of what may happen or what we would like to have happen next year or five or ten years from now. But how many times do we try to see beyond our own lives and plan for the long-term future of others or of our organizations.

Let's take a look at the problem. There are now 3 1/2 billion people in the world. By the year 2000 only several tomorrows away there will be 7 1/2 billion people on the same-sized earth. Some wise men predict that the earth will not be able to accommodate its future population. Others, equally wise, rely upon the adaptability of man.

But when there are 7 1/2 billion people, or more billions than that, how can their physical needs be met? Can you picture even twice as many cars on Los Angeles freeways? Or twice as

many freeways? Can you picture doubling our world housing, doubling our world food supply, doubling our world rate of fuel consumption? What new methods of travel, what new housing construction, what new sources of food, what new sources of fuel will be found to meet the needs of these people? Assuming that people continue to exist, can you imagine the immensity of the urban problems when 400 million people instead of 200 million people inhabit this country? That could happen sometime soon after the year 2000. What will the year 2070 bring?

Can you imagine the problem in parts of the world where population growth is more rapid than ours? The physical problems-food, housing, transportation-presented by such numbers of people seem prodigious. But what of the social problems? Let's take crime and law enforcement. Crime rates are now tremendously high. But we know that crime rates are highest in the low income, urban areas. What then will happen in the future when urban areas increase in density? As crime increases, courts are busier and court congestion results because we are unwilling to pay the price for new judges and of new methods. Then picture the medical problems, mental health, welfare. When we double the number of people, we many times more than double the problems.

It strains our imagination to try to think of the year 2000. What then of the year 2070, only a hundred sets of tomorrows away? Picture the problems of that day! Even with all of the vast changes and improvements which may be made in mental health, medicine, law, courts and social organization, can you picture the regulation of peoples lives in that day? It's not difficult to picture a governmental communications system which watches the conduct of everyone. It is not difficult to imagine that the mental attitudes of people will one day be controlled by adding something to the air they breathe, or the water they drink, or the food they eat. The real problem is to preserve such freedom as makes life worthwhile, while yielding to such necessary regulations as may be required to enable people to live in peace and harmony. This will not be easy.

The immensity of the problems to be faced creates the challenge of tomorrow, and the challenge of tomorrow is really the challenge of today.

There are three parts of the problem. The first has to do with human beings. Human beings, by their numbers, create the problem. They will also solve it or be destroyed.

Man is a creature of dignity, of God-given attributes. He is worth saving, and he must believe it. This assertion conditions governments, as our Declaration of Independence says. It conditions our way of life, the manner in which we organize ourselves economically and socially.

Man may need to change, but he must not lose his dignity or his freedom. Attempts to cope with increasing numbers of people will focus upon restrictions upon freedom of activity. It is more likely to come in the gradual erosion of rights than it is by some revolution which will suddenly impose restrictions upon activity.

Where you find the present indication of such future restriction will depend upon your point of view. Some may find it in the fact that the tree house of their youth has been sacrificed to zoning ordinances for the "benefit of all." Others may find it in a new "no knock" law which permits law enforcement officers some new freedom of action. Others may find it in higher taxes. All of these may be right or none of them may be right. But this is an area in which we must be vitally concerned and vigilant.

The second problem area is that of economic conditions. Economic conditions can change causing people who have existed comfortably for many years to lose their comforts, to become fearful. While we have taken many of the valleys and hills out of the economic road, new chuckholes are constantly being made and need repair. One economic challenge is to find new ways to market new products in a new age. Economic institutions have added to the problem by giving us numbers instead of names. We can ill-afford such depersonalization. The more anonymous a man becomes, the less dignified he is, and the less responsible he may hold himself for his actions. The psychology of the mob is too well known to us for us to permit such anonymity.

The third phase of the problem is that of organizations. Man's organizations are changing. Some forms of government have ceased to exist; others have taken their place. Even our form of government, which purports to be the same as it was when this country was founded, is not really the same as it was fifty years ago or one hundred years ago. It has changed to meet

the needs of the times. Other organizations have faced challenges, some have ceased to exist. The challenge to institutions is to remain alive and useful.

I have presumed to believe that the challenge which warrants this discussion is the challenge to this institution-Freemasonry-to remain alive and useful thirty years from now, one hundred years from now.

Freemasonry has met challenges in all its history. Persecution has not daunted it. But today we face a new danger.

All institutions are threatened today. There are people who advocate revolutionary overthrow of the establishment, which includes organizations, governments, businesses. At least some of these people are dangerous. Many others are simply expressing youthful discontent.

But the greater threat to institutions today comes from the people who are far from violent revolutionaries. The danger comes from boredom, from a lack of enthusiasm, from apathy, from doing nothing. The opposite of this is enthusiasm, activity, involvement.

Governments, whether federal, state or local, control much of our lives. But how hard it is sometimes to get able men to subject themselves to election to office. How hard it is to interest people in local issues. The apathy of voters, of potential office-seekers, creates bad government. It can be remedied by involvement.

Churches of dozens of denominations have affected the moral and spiritual lives of most of us. Now the question is raised as to whether the church is relevant. When was it ever more relevant? When did it ever need to have more people involved?

Schools-universities and colleges have become so politicized that instead of being regarded as places of education, they are regarded as places where political opinions are expressed by violent and destructive confrontation.

We need government. We need churches. We need schools. If these organizations were destroyed today they would somehow be recreated. They are relevant.

And I say to you today that if Freemasonry were destroyed, it would be recreated. It is essential. It is relevant.

It has been said that WHAT WE MUST REACH FOR IS A CONCEPT OF PERPETUAL SELF-DISCOVERY, PERPETUAL RESHAPING TO REALIZE ONE'S BEST SELF, TO BE THE PERSON ONE COULD BE. What organization could be more relevant to this task? Our principles must be discovered and interpreted by the individual. Our method of teaching permits, and even requires, interpretation by the individual of the lesson which is taught. To listen one time, then again, then again- is to hear, to learn a new lesson each time. Masonry's chief goal is to aid each man by helping him find and keep his best self. The principles are wonderful.

But as we face tomorrow, and tomorrow and tomorrow, is this enough? Does the practice conform to the principles?

We teach brotherly love. But we witness instances in which the lesson is not learned. I recognize the need to screen and admit men cautiously to membership in our order. But I pray that when a qualified black man has the courage to apply to my lodge, that no one will say NO because of his color.

We teach brotherly love, and are influenced by the teaching, but are we influenced enough to make all members feel welcome in a warm and friendly place, to reach out to sojourners and make them part of our group?

We teach relief, but give so little. We teach truth, but do we always know it or tell it?

How do you measure your life against the virtues of temperance, fortitude, prudence and justice?

The greatness of this lodge has been the greatness of men freely united who share moral commitments. Our society now suffers because we have freedom without moral commitment. Never was there a time when society more needed this organization than now. We need, both here and in government, a vigorous sense of individuality and a sense of shared purpose.

It is good for us to be proud of the organization to which we belong, but unless we kindle such pride and belief in our institutions in others, our organization, too, may wither and die.

We need to be diligent in making men Masons, for it is only by their actions that other men are attracted to our order. Our Grand Master has been saying this through this entire year. And we know it is true. We are not looking for quantity, what we are looking for is men of integrity

who by their very existence rekindle faith. Such men will be interested in Masonry when Masons follow the principles taught.

But there are several things which would not be out of place, which we might do. There may be some kinds of activity which we are not now doing which would be worthy Masonic activities. For example, we heartily support public education. There are those who say that education might be more effective and less expensive. Could we help public education even more if we financially supported an analysis in depth of education to determine if this were so? Could we do this, not as partisans or even as advocates of the recommendations which might result, but as a public service?

Another example. We believe in justice. Are there ways by which we could promote some study of ways to make law enforcement more effective or justice more certain? Again, not as partisans or even advocates of the recommendations which might result, but as a public service?

We believe in the social responsibility of man for man. Our principles are strong. But to protect tomorrow, we may need to find new avenues of activity, to walk rather than to sit. Few people these days desire to belong to a passive institution.

Tomorrow is a challenge. So is the day after that. And next year. And all the tomorrows to come. You and I as individuals will not be here to see all of them-perhaps not even many of them-but we can aid in preserving this institution which has from time immemorial been dedicated to the task of aiding men aid themselves. This institution is needed, is relevant. But we as individuals must constantly remind ourselves of what it is that makes it so.

We must do the things that will make it so and keep it so-tomorrow, and tomorrow and tomorrow.