

**Grand Lodge
Free & Accepted Masons
Of California
Grand Oration 1971**

**Grand Orator
Burton Meyer Jr.
"Thank God I Am An American"**

Most Worshipful Sir, Grand Lodge Officers, Distinguished Guests and Brethren

"I believe in the United States of America as a government of the people, by the people, for the people; whose just powers are derived from the consent of the governed; a democracy in a republic; a sovereign nation of many sovereign states; a perfect union, one and inseparable; established upon those principles of freedom, equality, justice and humanity for which American patriots sacrificed their lives and fortunes. I therefore believe it is my duty to my country to love it; to support its Constitution; to obey its laws; to respect its flag; and to defend it against all enemies."

Nearly 200 years ago, at the Constitutional Convention of 1787, after many months of careful deliberation and many heartaches, there was engrossed upon parchment, a document unique in the history of mankind. Of the 39 signers of our Constitution, 23 were Freemasons. From that time forward, the fabric of our nation has been woven with the golden threads of Masonry always evident, creating a tapestry that has been the centerpiece of admiration for nearly two long centuries. This great nation was born out of the agonizing existence of oppression of a foreign nation. It is the oldest continuous form of government in existence today. Freemasonry is also the oldest continuous fraternity in existence today-the two go hand in hand because the principles upon which each were erected are the principles which have made each of them a shining light in the history of mankind. The basic principles of Freemasonry and the basic principles of our Constitution are inseparable. The members of our Fraternity therefore played an important part in the creation of the United States of America.

Today we should, as Masons and as Americans, be concerned with the events in our history during the past few years. Our country was founded in an atmosphere of turmoil but in a spirit of excellence. Throughout our history, trouble has come and gone but our high purposes have remained intact. Today, the standards we raised are still vital in a complex and changing world. We are being challenged to hold to our high ideals and to share in the great American dream-freedom and justice and equality for all; the pursuit of happiness and the absence of fear; where man's loyalty is to God and to his country.

It is inconceivable that it should be necessary to have an "Honor America Day". We should, each day of our lives, thank God that we have the rare privilege of living in this great country and to be Americans. We should be concerned about those who would seek to destroy our way of life, seek to destroy all that this nation stands for and what it has meant to the millions of persons over the years-and to those who have fought and died to preserve the very things that made this country great-our cherished ideals and our dreams of an ever improving tomorrow. Our nation was conceived in liberty and dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal. This nation has survived and endured events in our history that have destroyed other nations. Today, we are being tested as to whether this nation or any nation so conceived and so dedicated can long endure; whether our form of government, as we know it today, will survive yet another crisis; whether this nation dedicated to freedom and dedicated to almighty God will continue to exist.

Yes, my Brethren, we are being challenged by a group of young radical revolutionaries, dedicated to the destruction of the establishment and the overthrow of our form of government. Let us pray to God to give us the wisdom, the strength and the courage to meet this challenge.

Can we succeed? I am sure that we can. We can succeed because, as Masons, we have always had the desire and the determination to uphold our Masonic principles-the Brotherhood of Man under the Fatherhood of God; because the foundation stones upon which our nation and our fraternity were erected are as strong today as the day they were laid. No other nation on the face

of this earth or any other nation in the history of mankind can match the progress and the accomplishments of these great United States of America. Let's look at some of these accomplishments:

Let's look at education-Today there are more children attending more schools, with more facilities, receiving a better education than at any other time in our history.

I look at these accomplishments and say, "THANK GOD I AM AN AMERICAN."

Let's look at medicine-The life expectancy of Americans has increased by 50 in the past 50 years. We no longer fear the diseases of the past. Polio, typhus, diphtheria, smallpox, scarlet fever and T.B. have virtually been eradicated. More Americans enjoy longer and healthier lives than at any other time in our history.

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Let's look at science-In the past few years, American scientists have enabled us to have a world wide communications system; launched satellites to forecast weather conditions; perfected nuclear energy for the benefit of all mankind; put men in orbit in outer space; successfully landed men on the moon and dramatically returned them safely to earth.

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Let's look at civil rights-In the past few years, more has been done in the field of civil rights than was done in nearly 200 years. While more remains to be accomplished, today, the minority groups have more advantages, earn more money and have made more social progress than at any other time in our history.

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Let's look at labor-More Americans support our free enterprise system by owning more stock in more corporations than ever before. Today, there are more persons employed, working shorter hours, working under better conditions, earning more money, enjoying more leisure hours with more luxuries than at any other time in our history.

I look at these accomplishments and say, "THANK GOD I AM AN AMERICAN."

The list of our accomplishments and our contributions to world progress is not only impressive-it is endless. But what about the future? We need not be afraid of the future for the future will be in our own hands. We shall need courage, energy and determination but above all, we shall need faith-faith in ourselves, faith in our communities, faith in our country and faith in Almighty God.

We must place our faith in the youth of this great nation and while some groups of our youth are testing and challenging our form of government, I believe that those who would divide us will have united us. Someone once said, "What a pity to waste youth on the young." I disagree. Youth need not be wasted-it cannot be wasted. It is our greatest natural resource.

Young people must have someone or something to identify with-let that be Freemasonry and the Master Mason. The youth of our nation today will be the leaders of tomorrow. Herein lies our challenge. We can take the youth of our nation and help mold them into better citizens. What better place to begin our program than with our own youth groups-Jobs Daughters, Rainbow for Girls and DeMolay; our own youth groups who are dedicating their lives to the Brotherhood of Man and the Fatherhood of God; young Americans who believe in and practice the basic philosophies of Freemasonry. In each of the past few years, we have had representatives of our youth groups appear in this magnificent auditorium and address this Grand Lodge; outstanding examples of what the overwhelming majority of our youth really stand for and what they truly represent. America's future is in their hands and since these young adults are in the majority, then we can be confident that America's future will be safe and secure. We can be proud that they believe in what we believe in-that Freemasonry does, indeed, serve the Brotherhood of Man under the Fatherhood of God; that the foundation of this great and glorious nation was built upon those Masonic principles which we hold so dear; that these youth groups will safeguard and protect this country against the groups of radical revolutionaries and thus insure that this nation, under God, shall not perish from the earth.

The youth of our nation have an awesome responsibility placed in their hands and they must learn that responsibility is the price of freedom. Let us not forget that we, too, have a responsibility, a duty and an obligation to support these fine youth groups by showing them that we have a genuine interest in their programs and in the goals, which they have set for themselves.

The hallmarks of our Fraternity have always been brotherly love, relief and truth. Let us insure and safeguard these principles not only for ourselves but for the entire world. Let us display to the public, not by mere rhetoric, that we do indeed practice the tenets of Freemasonry and so impress the outside world of the goodness of this Institution and prove to them that we are proud to be Masons and proud to be Americans. By our acts and by our deeds, shall we be judged. It little matters what we say or what we do if our words and our actions do not subscribe to the highest of our principles.

Remember the solemn obligations that each of us took at the altars of Freemasonry and makes them a part of our daily practice-so to live and so to act. There is no place in Masonry for less than our very best. Strive always for perfection because if we fail in this regard, we have failed not only Masonry- we have failed ourselves as well.

Our heritage dictates that we must, on all occasions, uphold the traditions of our Fraternity. Let our principles become a part of the daily lives of our youth groups and, in particular, of our DeMolay. These are the persons who look up to us as examples of virtues upon which they will erect their lives. They will judge us as examples of excellence or examples of failure. If we can be the guiding light in some young person's life, we will have fulfilled an important mission in our Masonic life.

You, who sit out there today, are the representatives not only of your Blue Lodges but the representatives of Masonry in your local areas. You are the Grand Lodge of California and, as such, you will be judged by your fellow man. If the principles of Freemasonry have instilled in you a strong will and a strong desire to be better men and better citizens in your communities, you will have added another important and vital link in the golden chain of Freemasonry. I hope that each of you will leave this Annual Communication desirous of rededicating your lives to Freemasonry and to better citizenship.

Let each of us have the unbounded determination and the burning desire that our forefathers had to make the American dream come true. Let each of us light a candle of faith and hope and the glow from that flame will truly light the world. Let each of us unite in a common goal, as Masons and as Americans, to insure that future generations will realize that American dream; not an impossible dream but a dream come true; that same dream our American forefathers had nearly 200, years ago when those 23 Freemasons affixed their signatures on that piece of parchment, our priceless heritage known as the Constitution of the United States of America.

Let each one of the 200 million Americans of this great nation climb that highest mountain and whether it looks out on the windswept plains of Kansas or the snow capped mountains of Montana; or the sand covered deserts of California or the rock bound shores of Maine; we should climb that highest mountain and-standing erect-at the very summit-shout in a voice for all the world to hear-"THANK GOD, THANK GOD I AM AN AMERICAN."