

**Grand Lodge
Free & Accepted Masons
Of California
Grand Oration 1976**

**Grand Orator
Ronald L. Broaddus
"What Must I Do"**

Most Worshipful Grand Master, Grand Lodge Officers, Past Grand Masters, distinguished guests and my Brethren

What a remarkable association is ours with men of all walks of life meeting together and working toward a common goal, filled with enthusiasm created by this week of tremendous inspiration. We meet on the level with a common philosophy and with no contention except that of who can best serve. Where, in our busy and competitive world, do we find this relationship among men today? The time and energy required to carry on the work of this Grand Lodge, the devoted and untiring effort by so many, can only be classified a labor of love. Thank God for the privilege to meet-the dedication that exists, and the leadership that we have in the Grand Lodge of California.

This has been a hallmark year for our Country and for our Fraternity. For the first time in many years, we have had the opportunity to let our Masonic heritage and influence over the past 200 years be known. We have noted with great interest, many wonderful things about America this year-most of which, as Masons, we are extremely proud. Throughout our history, there have been great accomplishments for democracy and freedom by our Masonic forefathers.

We who have served this year with Most Worshipful John F. Roberts, hasten to add him to that list of great leaders of our Fraternity, for we have seen in him, wisdom, compassion for humanity, and brotherly love that is unequalled. We are deeply grateful to him for extending to us this most unique opportunity of serving the Grand Lodge and the Brethren of this jurisdiction during our Bicentennial year. We have had an exhilarating experience under his leadership and the challenge that he has given us by his dedication and zeal for duty will be difficult to surmount-but we accept the challenge. What a pleasure it is to work under a man who has inspired all with whom he has come in contact. Friendship and love has surrounded him everywhere he has gone and the depth of admiration within this corps of officers will last throughout our lifetimes. Let me say publicly, in the best way I know how, for each and every one of us Johnny-Thank You.

I have reviewed many Grand Orations of the past 125 years in an effort to organize my thoughts for this presentation, and I have felt the magnitude of this responsibility more than any other because of the remarkable and eloquent orations made by so many distinguished Masons over the years. I pray that I may bring a message that will be meaningful to all.

I have chosen to share with you, some of the observations and opinions I have formed during the past 10 years as a Mason. I have discussed with many of our brethren what they consider our most serious problems. Most of you will not be surprised to know that our problems are consistent throughout the jurisdiction and are not particularly new to you. However, the seriousness and complexity of these problems warrant our constant concern until we can overcome them. We must face reality and place the burden of responsibility squarely on the shoulders of the leaders of our Fraternity, the Masters, Wardens, and Past Masters of our Lodges. If WE don't solve our problems-who will? Let us examine our common problems . . . Membership . . . there exists, and has for some time, the concern over poor Lodge attendance and declining membership in our Fraternity.

The question is asked over and over-' Why?' The reasons for this dilemma are always discussed, but answers continue to evade us.

Lodges, large and small, have tried varied and enticing techniques to lure Brethren back. There are banquets given, guest speakers presented, newspaper and radio reminders publicizing events, but results are short-lived. We have run the full gamut of possible answers and solutions to the question-yet it remains, "Why is Lodge attendance and membership declining?"

My community has a strong Masonic membership, as do most others-ON PAPER. However, our average attendance is only about 9% of our members. "How can we bring this average up?", we asked. Our solution was one that had been tried before built a ground floor Temple in hopes our Brethren would return with added zeal and renewed dedication-this wasn't the solution, either. Maybe the answer that WILL work is a simple one without all the banquets, guest speakers and new buildings . BE A MASON AND PRACTICE MASONRY. Remember, Freemasonry has stood the test of time and has proven its worth over and over. Someone said, "Masonry isn't what it used to be." I ask, "When did Masonry change?" My Brothers, is it not WE who are not what we used to be?

This may sound harsh but stop and think. How long has it been since you re-dedicated yourself to your original Masonic pledges and honored ideals? The valued principles, precepts, and teachings of Masonry remain as sound and firm now as when they were first conceived.

How sorely mankind needs this exceptional brotherhood today. Young and old, alike, are searching desperately for a common ground on which they can have trust in each other. The fundamental principles of Brotherly Love, Relief and Truth are so meaningful to the needs of the world. Not mere words, but moral principles by which all men can live. Live as a Mason should and let your light so shine that men may know of our Craft and want to emulate us.

It is so important to display the basic virtues of Masonry in our everyday life. To radiate the qualities of our Craft in all our daily actions. We must strive to meet our Masonic responsibility with one thought in mind: How can I, as an individual, be of greater service in the Universal Plan of Freemasonry? How can I have a depth of understanding to see the light that can come only to those who, asking nothing, gladly give all. The flaming light of our Brotherhood must shine in our homes, in our businesses, and in the daily association we have with our fellowmen. It is not what goes on within the tiled Lodge which is the basis of our Masonic greatness but, rather, the way in which one meets the problems of daily life outside of the Lodge, more so than within. We must represent the highest standards of sincere endeavor in all our undertakings and never lose sight of the needs of those around us.

WHAT ABOUT OUR TEMPLES? . . .

In many ways, we are operating our Temples and maintaining our property as though we are second-class citizens. In some cases, our property is badly neglected and run down. How can we expect to gain the respect of our community if our buildings contribute nothing to pride in the community? Remember, most of our neighbors have never seen the inside of our Temples or witnessed our ceremonies. They can only evaluate us by our outward appearance. For example, I am personally aware of a Lodge that received a letter from a non-member concerning the dissatisfaction of the community with the appearance of the Temple. Fortunately, that problem was corrected, but this may have cost the Lodge untold numbers of members. In most cases, our Temples were erected some 30 to 40 years ago through long years of dedicated effort. No one can be expected to build a new Temple just because the one we have is old-but what a difference a regular maintenance program can make! Some of the most beautiful Temples are the very old ones that have been remodeled. There is a quality about the architecture of 40 to 50 years ago that is rare. It has a distinction and demonstrates to the community that Freemasonry has been around for a long time exemplifying brotherhood and concern for mankind. To maintain and preserve our Temples shows pride of ownership and our respect for those members whose efforts made it possible to have a Masonic Temple.

FINANCES-there is no way to avoid the topic.

Perhaps the most serious problem in most of our Lodges, is the tremendous financial burden under which we are operating. It would help us to overcome many of our problems if we were not under-financed. I would estimate that 60% of our Lodges are financially distressed. Brethren, it shouldn't be that way! We must keep pace with increased costs and live in 1976. We can't operate our Lodges on the same income we had in 1940! In a period of 30 to 40 years, we have raised dues only an average of 2% per year, while inflation is running away at approximately 7% per year! The average dues in 1957 were \$14.45, and in 1976 they are \$20.57. In 20 years we have had an increase of \$6.12 a year on which to operate. We must be using up valuable capital or neglecting our membership and property. There isn't any way we can carry on an

effective program and continue to be recognized as a viable force when we are one step away from being insolvent. Is there any organization to which you can belong for \$20.57 per year?!

Are we selling Masonry too cheaply? Have you ever offered something of great value to someone for nothing? If you do, you will find that they will be very suspicious and probably refuse it. Place a high value on it and everyone will desire it. Yes, some say we would drive our older members out with increased dues. This doesn't appear to affect the membership of other organizations. They are doing more for our communities and growing continually stronger. Don't forget, Brethren, those older members are the ones who toiled in the vineyards of Masonry to build our deteriorating Temples and who built our declining membership. I'm sure they will carry their burden as long as they can see a well organized and clearly defined program to advance the dignity of their Lodge.

LET'S TALK ABOUT BASIC MASONRY. . .

In the ritual that we know so well, we are taught by the 24-inch Gauge, the working tool of an Entered Apprentice, to divide our time into three parts. One part being for the Service of God and a Distressed Worthy Brother. A Mason is obligated to offer service to God above all else. He is never relieved of this duty because of the contributions he may make to his Lodge. In Masonry, we open all our meetings on the Holy Bible, The Great Light of Our Fraternity.

Regardless of his individual faith, a Mason must believe in the Supreme Being, the God of Heaven and Earth and Creator of all life. The service we give to our Fraternity should remind us of our religious duty and inspire us to greater stewardship.

BRETHREN, LIVE MASONRY AS YOU RECEIVED MASONRY . . . and you, your Lodge, and others around you will grow strong. Show yourself to be "UP AND ABOVE" to those of the community who are ignorant of Masonic principles-not being haughty-but, by always setting a proper example. Always be ready to aid someone where you can, to administer comfort, and encourage others by a kind word. Guard against being led into unwholesome conversations where you might unwittingly speak against someone, whether he is a Mason or not, that could bring disfavor to our Order. Above all, mention God's name only with the reverential awe which is due the Creator. DON'T place yourself in any situation where others may say, "See, I told you Masons weren't much." Make a firm rededication and a conscious effort to practice sound Masonic and personal principles and new pride, strength, and interest in Masonry will again abound.

TO SERVE A DISTRESSED WORTHY BROTHER . . . just what does that mean?

Should this service be limited to our Masonic Brothers? In that Holy Book that adorns our altar, we are taught that we are all brothers and that we should love one another. It appears that our obligation as individuals should extend to all . . . mankind, but particularly, to our brethren in Freemasonry. I ask myself, "What, am I doing to be of particular service to my fellow man or a distressed brother? Have I given of my time in the service of a Brother who is in need? How many times have I called the widow of a Brother to reassure her of my willingness to help her?" These are very important areas where we can practice Basic Masonry. By rendering Masonic service to our fellow man we will again be recognized as a great source of leadership.

ABOUT OUR OFFICERS. . .

Another serious problem to many Lodges is the lack of members who are willing to assume responsibility of leadership as officers. What is the problem with our new Master Masons? Again, we had best turn to introspection-look inward, at ourselves. It is by our example they are attracted and motivated-or become disinterested. WE must engender the desire to serve if we are to make Masons of them and not merely members. The most important responsibility we have as officers and Past Masters is to develop programs of leadership and Masonic education for new Master Masons to captivate their interest. Obviously there was interest which moved them to spend 4 to 6 months and many hours of study to become Master Masons. WHERE DID WE LOSE THEIR INTEREST-AND WHY? ? ?

We have always had great leadership in our Fraternity. Some of the greatest men of all time have believed in and contributed to the successful plateau where we now stand. If we are to

continue in this position of high esteem, it is vitally important that we captivate the young men that have been attracted to our Order through De Molay-or whatever source. We must extend the hand of Brotherly love and show them the opportunity that awaits them through a continued search for further light.

ABOUT SECRECY. . .

It is true that we have modes of recognition, rites, and ceremonies, with which the world is not acquainted. However, we are not a secret order. All true Masons know that their work is not secret, but they realize that it must remain unknown to all who do not live the Masonic life. If the so-called secrets of Freemasonry were shouted from the housetops, the Fraternity would be absolutely safe, for certain spiritual qualities are necessary before the REAL Masonic secrets can be understood even by the Brethren themselves. Hence it is, that the alleged "exposes" of Freemasonry printed by the thousands and tens of thousands since 1730 down to the present how, cannot injure the Fraternity. They reveal merely the outward forms and ceremonies of Freemasonry. Only those who have been weighed in the balance and found to be true, upright and square, have prepared themselves by their own growth to appreciate the inner meaning of our Craft. To the rest of the world, within or without the Lodge, our sacred rituals must remain, as Shakespeare might have said, "Words, words, words." Within the Mason's own being is concealed the Power which constitutes the Builder's Word. His life is the sole password which admits him to the true Masonic Lodge.

I LEAVE YOU THESE THOUGHTS TO PONDER UPON. . .

As Masonic leaders of today, in meeting the challenge we face, we must have a set of clearly defined goals and arrange a program that will be effective in meeting the needs of the members. Our duty is clear. If Masonry is to prosper during the next century, we must convince the world by our actions that we ARE better men; that we ARE actively engaged in the industry of spreading useful knowledge, practicing charity and inculcating goodwill among men. It is to the everlasting credit of Freemasons that we have taken these great principles, the Brotherhood of Man and the Fatherhood of God, as our foundation and put them into practice in daily life. To be a Mason is to be a friend to any man in need, regardless of his race or creed.

America today desperately needs a great cause! She needs a noble and just purpose. She needs to catch the vision of a goal which calls for and is worthy of sacrifice and hard work.

Brethren, I suggest to you, WE are, indeed, the vehicle which can aid in America's search-that is, to stimulate a re-dedication of duty to God, to our Country, and to our fellow man through those basic principles of our Fraternity !

Our Masonic forefathers in 1776, when our Country was founded, created great works that now stand as symbols of freedom and democracy for the world to behold. Their legacy to us-THE FUTURE. IT IS IN OUR HANDS!

WHAT MUST I DO?

It is true, "I am only ONE man,
 but I AM one man.
 I can't do everything,
 but I CAN do something.
 And what I CAN do,
 I MUST do.
 And with God's help,
 I WILL DO.

THANK YOU.