

HONESTY & INTEGRITY

It is a pleasure to be here and recognize some outstanding young people who are being presented here as examples of possessing and exhibiting qualities that are more important today than ever before in our society. With them are parents and family members who share in this honor.

To each of you here in this building, you may have wondered when you were first notified "who are the people doing this?" "why me?" "what is this all about?" and then "what is the big deal about being Honest and having Integrity?" Well, hopefully, in a short period, all of these questions can be answered to your satisfaction. You were nominated by a family member or a friend or a neighbor, or perhaps a teacher to be a young person who is an example to others, perhaps quietly and unknowingly to you, that you uphold the character of being Honest in your relationship with others – family, friends, neighbors, teachers, church members; and you have Integrity which in today's world is becoming very rare. You serve as an example to others – and yes, you remind us, all of the Masons in this room, of what we are supposed to practice in our lives each day.

The dictionary defines Honesty as fairness and straightforwardness of conduct; adherence to facts; sincerity; uprightness of character. Integrity is defined as living by a code of conduct, a moral standard, incorruptible, being complete in dealing with others, having honor. So the two – Honesty and Integrity go back to each other – each supports the other – being true to ideals, dealing fairly with everyone, standing up for your beliefs, and not bending or changing just because "everyone else is doing it", or "all of my friends are able to go". You try not to be one of the

crowd – you are a leader, not a follower. Reason, common sense, the teachings of your family, hopefully, the words "you are judged by your actions" constantly come to your mind before doing anything that might bring you down to the level of everyone else. You might even remember the words "you only can make one first impression, make it a good impression". Is your word as good as your bond? Do you stand tall when others run away or hide in a situation? Do you know right from wrong and tell others the difference? Are you never willing to compromise your ideals and morals for the easy way out? Do you recognize that in the end, when all around you back away, falter, make excuses, leave you – that right is right and wrong is wrong – and that you have only one thing left – your Name. Your reputation, your name, your honor – always being tested. So-called friends may want you to take a short-cut, the easy way, pulling you down to their level – compromise your standards, peer pressure, be one of the crowd. Your Integrity is your best weapon against those who tempt you. But those who see you as better than the average have observed you and see you as possessing all of the best qualities – that is why you are asked to be here.

Never forget that someone is always watching you – it may be a brother or sister, it may be a friend, but you have someone using you as their example – how you act, what you do, what you say and how you do it, if you behave or misbehave – the like-minded will be proud of you and hold you up as one they want to be like and associate with – if you fall or pull back from your ideals – there are those who will be ready to say "see, he or she is just like the rest of us!" Be a Leader in all that you do, all that you say and treat others as you want to be treated – that old Golden Rule.

Now maybe the answers to the questions "why me" and

"what is this all about" and "what is the big deal about being Honest and having Integrity" – you are here because you are already examples to others – you are someone's image of who they want to be.

So now, "who are the people doing this"? Simply stated, we are Freemasons or Masons – it includes many different groups – the men who are here are Masons, the ladies of the Eastern Star, men of the the Scottish Rite, the York Rite, the Knights Templar, the Shrine, the Grotto, and many other Masonic related organizations – all pledged to help each other and assist each other – and, help those around us and recognize those who are practicing the same principles and ideals that Masons believe and practice. There are about 2 million Mason in America, about 20,000 in Louisiana; in this area, there are about 2,000 Masons located in 20 Lodges, or clubs, like the one you are in now. Masonry originated many years ago in Europe and comes from the builders of castles, cathedrals, and large stone buildings – many still exist today, so perfect and exact was the builders' work. Taking rough stones and making them into finely fitted smooth stones to build the buildings – using labor and using the arts and sciences such as geometry, arithmetic, to plan and lay out their work – in 1717 in London four of the Lodges came together and formed a Grand Lodge and used the symbols of their buildings to teach the lessons of taking a man who was a "rough stone" and teaching him the moral arts and sciences of friendship, morality and Brotherly Love, truth, relief for those in need and making each man into a fine smooth stone acceptable to the Master Builder, our GOD. In this room you see some of the symbols – an Altar sits in the middle of this rectangular room, and on it the Word of GOD, we call it the Volume of Sacred Law. The presiding officer, called the Master, sits in the East, symbol of the beginning of the day, the second officer, the Senior Warden, sits in the

West, symbol of the end of the day. And the third officer, the Junior Warden, sits in the South, symbol of Noon or the middle of the day – but another symbol is also used – the East is youth, the West is death, the South, manhood or fullness of life. So a person joins and symbolically takes a life's Journey from birth to Maturity to death – a human life – a day. Beginning, ending – what happens in between – your life – how will you live it – what will you do, what reputation will you leave behind – Masonry tries to bring out the best, the very best in every member. Emblems such as the square, compasses, level, plumb, gavel and we each wear an apron – the builder's symbol to keep us clean from daily labor – all symbols to teach us to live a good life. By practicing our Arts & Sciences as the symbols teach us to use daily – doing good for each other, helping, assisting, being a friend and a Brother, living the life with Honesty and with Integrity – we hope to finish our life, when we each come to the West, and have a good report to give to GOD. We want the report to be the best.

So we look around us and recognize others who we think are also living a life as they begin that Journey, still in the East of their youth, not quite to the South or adulthood, maturity, and say – live well your life and live it with Honesty and with Integrity. We think we have found six who are. We congratulate you. We thank your parents and family who have guided you to this point, we hope that you realize that your parents and family will always be beside you helping, guiding, assisting. Never forget that there are those who are watching you – you are someone's example. Thank you for being who you are. Thank you for trying to Lead and for trying to be the best. Keep Honesty and Integrity a part of your character all of your life – you are on the right path – never stray, never change, never compromise your principles – and may GOD bless you every day of your life.