
ADDRESS DELIVERED BY JUSTICE ARCHIE T. HIGGINS, GRAND MASTER OF THE
GRAND LODGE OF THE STATE OF LOUISIANA, F. & A. M., AT THE DEDICATION
OF THE MASONIC TEMPLE AT SHREVEPORT, LA., JANUARY 8, 1938.

BRETHREN OF THE MASONIC FRATERNITY, LADIES AND GENTLEMEN:-

In this age, when people are being unduly influenced by selfishness, greed and ambition, it is refreshing to be affiliated with an organization which teaches idealism. It is not surprising that the members of our Order take an altruistic view and attitude toward life for they believe in the fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man and that the Bible is God's Holy word, given to us as a rule and guide for our faith and practice. Yet, Masonry is not a religion nor a substitute for religion. We urge our members to attend and support their respective churches. It is a fraternal association which has for its objective the uniting of men in an acknowledged bond of brotherly affection for general good and helpfulness. The principles upon which it is founded are so broad and fundamental that our fraternity is universal. Men of every creed, race, speech and nationality are found in its ranks. This would not be possible if the lessons of tolerance were not taught and observed by its adherents. We must be considerate of the conscientious opinions and beliefs of others, if we would have accord and harmony among us.

Masonry has always not only championed the cause of liberty but also stood firmly for freedom of conscience and intellect. Thus, our members are constantly striving to advance to a higher and more elevated way of living by using their talents in this process of progress. They are searching for more light, greater truths and spiritual knowledge to be able to discharge their obligations to God and man. Since our Creator granted us liberty and freedom, it is our belief that we should not permit man to deprive us of them, for liberty and freedom are the "breath of God and the life of man."

Guided by these thoughts and convictions our early brethren in this country fought and sacrificed to preserve them. George Washington, the father of our country and the President of the Constitutional Convention, was a Master Mason. So were John Paul Jones,

First Admiral of the United States Navy, who ~~subdued the British Navy,~~ Benjamin Franklin, Paul Revere and Dr. Warren. The Massachusetts brethren adjourned their lodge to stage the Boston Tea Party as a protest against tyranny. Of the thirty-nine delegates who signed the Constitution of the United States, twenty-one are known to have been Masons. The minds and spirits of these brethren were so influenced by Masonic teachings that the cardinal principles for which our Fraternity stands were written into our fundamental law. One's right to worship God according to the dictates of his conscience; our liberty and freedom, the right to the pursuit of happiness, and generally speaking, respect for each others rights, are all guaranteed by its provisions.

Another struggle against oppression and usurpation, where Masons took the leadership, occurred in Texas. Although the territory was a vast and sparsely settled area, there was not enough room, notwithstanding its enormous proportions, to hold the people of such conflicting views. So Sam Houston, Anson Jones, David Crockett and other Master Masons rebelled against the oppressors of the people and after an heroic struggle threw off the yoke of subjugation. They then established the Republic of Texas and wrote into its Constitution provisions guaranteeing the same God-given and inalienable rights protected by the Federal Constitution. They went further and wrote more liberal laws for women, man's helpmate and life companion, and for the education of children. When Texas was admitted to the Union, these principles were preserved. It required implicit faith in a great ideal and unfaltering trust in the justice of Divine Providence to undertake these great tasks and it was only through such source of inspiration and sustaining influence that these men found the necessary courage, determination and energy to bring their plans to fruition.

The desperate efforts of our forefathers for our national independence and those hardy pioneers for the independence of Texas furnish us with a great object lesson which is apropos today. There is a general disposition on the part of our people to sit idly by and

view with indifference the efforts of destructionists, who are advocating principles subversive of our constitutional guarantees and our American ideals and institutions. Such would not have been the attitude of our predecessors, judging by their actions. We need not resort to force or violence to counteract the influence and actions of such enemies. All that we have to do is to live up to the high standards of our citizenship in our daily lives and thereby set a good example for our fellowcitizens. Through good example, the efforts of those who array themselves against a free government will come to naught.

We of the western world, with its commercial outlook upon life and steeped in affairs of society, are especially prone to give precedence to things material over things spiritual and eternal. We try to figure out what is the matter with the world today and, in so doing, we waste valuable time and only add to our own confusion and discouragement. We know instinctively that the trouble with most lives and most nations, is that envy and selfishness rule. If they did not, people and nations would want to co-operate for the good of all.

We owe a debt to our country. The land which gave us liberty, free institutions and such heroes as Washington, Jefferson and Lincoln is not to be despised because of insincerity and misrepresentation. Our National heritage is too precious to be cast aside, too fine to be spoiled, too necessary to be disregarded. We should not be unmindful of the great sacrifices which founded our Republic and made her strong, that made America a light among the nations and her aspirations the hope of the world. Our resources are great, our wealth abundant and, as are our talents, so ^{MUST} our service be. Cannot we then add our quota of enduring labor for the common good? A body of men who stand for principles, who act from high motives and trust in God, are the greatest resources of strength a nation can have.

Today, we do not build pyramids but skyscrapers and big businesses. On the one side are the financiers whose one aim is to

wrest profits out of their transactions, often with little thought of the human cost. On the other side there are the toilers, many of them underfed, underclothed and underprivileged. There are still others who have been out of work for a longer or a shorter period of time. Men have long felt that the distribution of economic resources is not just. They have looked for someone to lead them out of the house of bondage. Let our Masonic Order contribute its full quota to this great need.

The godliness of our fathers and their noble influence constitute a heritage which stands before us as a mighty challenge, urging us to daily consider the results of their lives and to imitate their faith. But, are we content merely to benefit from the fruits of their labors? Or, are we preserving and trying to increase the sacred heritage of our race and country for posterity? If a Master Mason is not a good citizen, it is because he is not living up to his obligations and teachings. If he is not a patriotic and civic-minded member of his community, he is disregarding the lessons he has been taught. If he is not a tolerant, broadminded and sympathetic neighbor, he is neglecting his duty.

Thus, you see that Masons are not only builders of imposing edifices and temples, such as the one we are dedicating today to the service of God and man, but creators, constructors and preservers of free government and institutions.

If we stopped there it would be a creditable record. But we go further and build temples of upright manhood and integrity, temples of character and spiritual temples in the lives of men who are seeking a closer relation with and a better understanding of the Supreme Architect of the Universe, God.

There is a marine animal which first inhabits a tiny shell and as it grows it shuts its former room and builds unto the outer edges of its house. It was the sight of one of these shells that inspired Oliver Wendell Holmes to write the poem "The Chambered Nautilus," the last stanza of which is:-

"Build thee more stately mansions, O my soul;
As the swift seasons roll!
Leave the low-vaulted past!
Let each new temple, nobler than the last
Shut thee from heaven with a dome more vast,
Till thou at length art free,
Leaving thine outgrown shell by life's unresting sea."

Like the poet, each normal human soul feels the inward urge that drives it toward greater achievement. That urge is created by God himself. And it is God who holds before man's eyes the goal he is to obtain---his place in the house of many mansions.

Our lives are like buildings which are being builded through the years. A building has many essential and important parts but probably every experienced builder would consider the foundation most important. The modern temples and skyscrapers are built upon bed rock, ^{OR ON PILLARS} ~~piers~~ or piers driven deep down into the solid earth---only so can an enduring structure be reared. What about the foundation upon which we are building our lives? Is it dependable? Will it stand the test in all kinds of weather? The winds of circumstance and ~~the~~ unstable conditions place tremendous strains upon even the best lives. We need to build upon solid rock -- "The Rock of Ages." Like this great temple, our lives must be stable and attractive, strong and firmly supported; there should be no cheap or shoddy material used in their construction, but, like Solomon's Temple, even the hinges must be of pure gold. So, may our characters be firmly founded and constructed that they stand unshaken under any test.

The things which our eyes can see and our hands can handle perish and pass away; the moral and spiritual values represented by truth and beauty and kindness and love alone endure. That which we do to make our life and the life of our fellowmen purer and stronger and nobler does not perish. Kind words, generous deeds and unselfish service are among the permanent treasures that we can lay up for ourselves in heaven.

Building such noble characters and spiritual temples require even more careful planning, time and skill than that exacted of the architect and the craftsman in creating and erecting an edifice. Patience, perseverance and industry are necessary. Love and beauty

and abhorrence of the sordid are indispensable. An overwhelming desire and longing to reach the ultimate goal at any cost are essential. Love of God and our fellowmen alone furnish the idealism, the inspiration and the spirit of self-sacrifice to accomplish this glorious and superb result.

If the people of the nations of the world would get this vision and live according to it, the desire for the respect, love and goodwill of their fellowmen would erase unjust ambition, greed for power and worldly things and selfishness from the earth. Then we would have harmony and understanding in our industrial fields instead of strikes and lockouts, we would see justice meted out to men rather than injustice, and above all else, we would have peace on earth instead of war and rumors of war. May the merciful and loving Heavenly Father so influence the hearts of men, so as to hasten the day when all shall live as brothers, loving one another. Too much time has already been lost, let us take the opportunities that are at hand and construct of them our life's temple, dedicating it to His service.

Let us heed the entreaties of the poet Bard:

"Seize the day! Beyond returning
It will vanish into night;
While unstilled remains the longing
In thy soul for love and light.

Opportunities are fleeting
When and whither? Who can say?
But an inborn voice e'er prompts thee,
"Passing pilgrim, seize the day!"

Is life but a wave that rises
And falls back into the sea?
Are the hours but golden moments
Borrowed from eternity?

Thou wert born a matchless spirit
Finding duties, all thine own
To the temple of the ages
Aim to add thy little stone."

("Carpe Diem" by Bard.)

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This spirit of the poet is reflected in the life-long philosophy of our venerable and beloved senior Past Grand Master, E. H. Addington, which I quote:

"We have come from the eternal, unremembered past without hurt,

"We shall go to the un-explored, eternal future without fear."