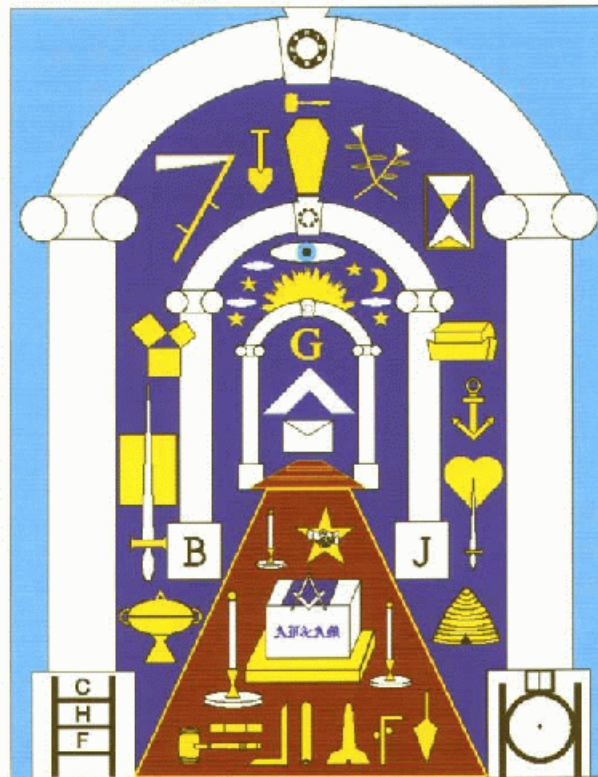


# APPROACHING THE PORTAL

of

# Freemasonry



## General Information Concerning Freemasonry

## **Grand Lodge Officers – 2009 & 2010**

M.W. Bro. Thomas M. Velvin, Jr., Grand Master

R.W. Bro. Stephen J. Ponzillo, III, Deputy Grand Master

R.W. Bro. Herbert Y. Holcomb, Grand Secretary

R. W. Bro. William E. Gyr, Grand Treasurer

Note: This book was developed in 1999. The committee members that were instrumental in this project are listed on the “Introductory” page.

No Changes, other than the addition of this page which we use to introduce you to the current Grand Lodge management team listed above, have been made to the original document.

This book is intended to be issued, one per candidate, for use by all members of the “Accelerated Classes”.

It is not to be changed, added to or deleted from, without permission of the presiding Grand Master.

## Introduction

This is the first chapter, in a series of four that has been prepared as an aid to assist your understanding of our ancient rituals and the symbolism contained therein. It is purposely a small document. It would literally take volumes to begin to explain the significance of each and every event within our Degrees and ceremonies. Thousands of books and tens of thousands of articles have been written about all aspects of Freemasonry. Only through diligent study can you begin to fully realize and comprehend the magnificence, as well as the significance, of our ancient ritual and the symbolism contained therein. You are, therefore, earnestly and sincerely encouraged to continue to investigate all of the various aspects of our Beloved Ancient Craft.

This chapter, Portals, and the remaining chapters you will receive following the conferral of each of the three Degrees, comprise a large portion of the educational material you are to receive. The booklet they make up is an adaptation of a similar booklet produced by the Masonic Renewal Committee of North America. It has been modified for use in the Grand Jurisdiction of Maryland by the following original 1999 committee members of the "One Day Class":

### **Instruction Book Committee Chairman**

Edward B. Kraft, P.M. No. 189, Grand Lecturer

### **Committee Members were:**

John R. Biggs, P.M. No. 134, Deputy Grand Lecturer

John M. Lister, P.M. No. 89, W. Past Grand Standard Bearer

Stephen J. Ponzillo, III, P.M. No. 219, Past Grand Marshal

### **Ex Officio Members were:**

Francis E. Larrimore, Most Worshipful Grand Master

Bennie G. Owens, Right Worshipful Deputy Grand Master

Our Grand Lodge maintains a Web Page on the Internet. It can provide those that have access to this medium further information on our fraternity and the many interesting things that are taking place. There you can find information on our several collateral bodies and other Masonic information.

The Maryland Masonry Web address is <http://www.mdmasons.org/>

## **WELCOME TO MASONRY**

You have been elected to receive the three Degrees of Masonry. We congratulate you on your acceptance and welcome you as one about to enter our ranks. We hope that you are earnestly seeking the truths our Fraternity has to offer.

You have made an important step, one which we are sure you will value not only now, but also for many years to come. Masonry is a unique Institution that has been a major part of community life in America for over 250 years. Masonry, or more properly, Freemasonry, is America's largest and oldest Fraternity and one that continues to be an important part of many men's personal lives and growth. Your decision to enter the ranks of Freemasonry had to be your own without the undue influence of others. That makes your membership in Masonry one of your own choice, which is significant. Men join Masonry for a variety of reasons, each valid and important.

Because we are proud of our history and our heritage and because, as a candidate, you are entitled to know the background and nature of the organization you are joining, this introductory section has been prepared to pass on certain thoughts and information before the conferral of your first Degree.

To begin with, you should thoroughly understand that Freemasonry is entirely serious in character. Contrary to what you may have heard, there is no horseplay or frivolity in our Degrees; their primary purpose is to teach and to convey to you knowledge of the principles of our Institution. You should, therefore, prepare yourself to approach the Degrees with an open mind, determined to absorb as much as possible, without fear of ridicule or indignity.

## **WHO ARE MASONS?**

Masonry is large and diversified enough to provide what you are seeking. Masons are men who have joined together to improve themselves. This is accomplished through the principles and ceremonies of the Fraternity. We endeavor to extend Masonic lessons into our daily lives in order to become positive influences in our homes, communities, Nation and throughout the world. We base our efforts on morality, justice, charity, truth and the laws of God. Worldwide, membership encompasses millions of men who believe and support the same fundamental principles.

## **WHAT IS MASONRY?**

What is modern Freemasonry? Masonry, as mentioned before, is many things to many people. Many years ago in England it was described as "a system of morality, veiled in allegory and illustrated by symbols." It is a course of moral instruction using both allegories and symbols to teach its lessons. The legends and myths of the old stonecutters and masons, many of them involved in building the great cathedrals of Europe, have been woven into an interesting and effective way to portray moral truths.

In Masonry, the old tools and ways of the Craftsmen are used to help dramatically portray those moral truths. Two examples are the 24-inch gauge and the common

gavel. Just as the ruler is used to measure distance, the modern Mason uses it as a reminder to manage one of his most precious resources, time. And, as the gavel is used to shape stones, so it is also the symbol of the necessity for all of us to work to perfect ourselves.

One modern definition is: "Freemasonry is an organized society of men, symbolically applying the principles of Operative Masonry and architecture to the science and art of character building." In other words, Masonry uses ageless methods and lessons to make each of us a better person.

Thus, Masonry:

- Has a basic philosophy of life that places the individual worth of each man high on its pedestal and incorporates the great teachings of many ages to provide a way for individual study and thought
- Has great respect for religion and promotes toleration and equal esteem for the religious opinions and beliefs of others
- Provides a real working plan for making good men even better
- Is a social organization
- Has many important charitable projects
- Has a rich worldwide history
- Can help to develop both public speaking and dramatic abilities and provides an effective avenue for developing leadership

## **WHAT FREEMASONRY STANDS FOR**

Freemasonry stands for some important principles and beliefs.

The primary doctrines of Freemasonry are Brotherly Love, Relief and Truth. Its cardinal virtues are Temperance, Fortitude, Prudence and Justice. These principles or beliefs cover a broad field, actually supplying the pattern to meet every experience in human life.

- In the United States, Freemasonry is a strong supporter of:
- Constitutional government
- Quality public education
- The freedom of religion and expression

- The equality of all men and women
- The need for strong moral character
- Meaningful charity

Masonry and the organizations that are within the Masonic family contribute over 700 million dollars every year to helping those with sight problems or aphasia, physically and developmentally disabled children and those with severe burns. Local Lodges work to help their communities and individuals within those communities.

Masonry's charity is always given without regard to race, sex, creed or national origin.

## **THE MISSION OF FREEMASONRY**

*"The mission of Freemasonry is to promote a way of life that binds like-minded men in a worldwide Brotherhood that transcends all religious, ethnic, cultural, social and educational differences; by teaching the great principles of Brotherly Love, Relief and Truth: and, by the outward expression of these, through its fellowship, its compassion and its concern, to find ways in which to serve God, family, country, neighbors and self."*

## **WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF FREEMASONRY?**

Simply put, the overall purpose of Masonry is to provide a way to help each member become a better person. We do not propose to take a bad man and make him good; rather, our aim is to take the good man and make him better.

We try to place emphasis on the individual man by:

- Strengthening his character
- Improving his moral and spiritual outlook
- Broadening his mental horizons

We try to impress upon the minds of our members the principles of personal responsibility and morality; to give each member an understanding of and feeling for Freemasonry's character; and to have every member put these lessons into practice in his daily life.

We try to build a better world by building better men to work in their own communities.

Freemasonry believes in universal peace made possible by teaching its doctrine through the Brotherhood of Man and the Fatherhood of God.

## **WHAT ARE LODGES?**

The local Lodge is a group of Masons granted a Charter by the Grand Lodge of Maryland. There are specific guidelines set by the Grand Lodge as to how this local Lodge may function and what it can and cannot do. These guidelines are set forth in books of constitutions and ritual. The leaders of the Lodge are elected by the Lodge membership each year.

A Lodge is a meeting place for Masons. Masons may use it for regular business meetings, Degrees, social activities, other Masonic groups or even community activities. Lodge buildings are prominently marked and are often recognized as special landmarks in the cities and towns of our State.

## **ORIGIN OF FREEMASONRY**

We are not sure when our Craft was born. Hundreds of Masonic scholars have investigated this question, but no conclusive answer has been found and perhaps never will be. We do know that the earliest written record of the term "Master Mason" appears in the Regis manuscript, written about 1390 and now kept in the British Museum. Its mention of the "Master Mason" refers to the stonemasons of the Middle Ages. The tools of the stonemason date back, of course, to the earliest periods of history and are lost in the mists of time. This is also true of the geometry and geometric symbols used in the Craft of building.

Over the ages Freemasonry, as we now know it, slowly took form. It has evolved into a comprehensive and effective form of fraternal teaching of basic morals, truths and personal fulfillment. It ranks the development of the individual's reasoning capabilities highly and encourages the questioning mind.

## **THE TWO TYPES OF MASONRY**

There are actually two kinds of Masonry. One we call "Operative" and the other "Speculative."

Operative Masonry and its Lodges can be traced back to the early Middle Ages. Operative Masons formed groups with Lodges organized similarly to ours today. We have officers similar to theirs. Men were admitted only after they had served a number of years of apprenticeship. This is the origin of the first or Entered Apprentice Degree. In Operative Masonry, Masons actually did the physical labor of building. They were the best at their Craft and they kept secret their methods of building.

When the organization became what is called Speculative Masonry, men were accepted into the Craft without being actual builders; that is, they were spiritual builders. Speculative Masonry adopts the terms and concepts of the actual builders, but substitutes men for stone and mortar and works toward self-improvement rather than the actual construction of buildings.

## **“ANCIENT FREE” AND “ACCEPTED” MASONS**

### **How did the words "Ancient Free" and "Accepted" originate?**

The ancient Craftsmen were very skilled and their Craft was considered to be indispensable to the welfare of both church and State. They were the men who built castles and cathedrals. For this reason, they were not placed under the same restrictions as were other workers. They were "free" to do their work, travel and live their lives in a manner that was in line with their duties.

The Masons organized into “guilds,” something akin to a trade union and individual companies or groups of Masons contracted for specific construction projects. In the England of that time, various Crafts (carpenters, distillers, pewterers, ironworkers, etc.) also organized into guilds, but most of the population worked under bond to the owners of the land on which they lived.

The word "Accepted" also goes back to the time of the Operative Mason. During the later years of the Middle Ages, there were few men educated outside the monasteries of the church. The "accepted" mason was originally a man who, in a Lodge operative in origin or still partly so in character, was for all practical purposes of membership accepted as a Mason. From this practice grew in course of time the use of the words "Accepted" and "adopted" to indicate a man who had been admitted into the inner fellowship of symbolic masons. Candidates were "accepted" into Freemasonry no earlier than the mid-seventeenth century. We first meet the phrase "free and accepted" in 1722.

By the late 1600's the demand for the type of architecture that lent itself to the guild type of operation was declining. Architecture itself was changing; and the number of men, as well as the number of Operative Lodges, was declining.

Increasingly, Masonry adopted the legends and habits of the old operative Lodges for spiritual and moral purposes. As time went on, there became many more "Accepted" members than there were Operative members. Sometime in the eighteenth century, the "Accepted Masons" outnumbered the "Operative Masons" and Masonry gradually became exclusively a speculative organization rather than an operative one.

## **ORIGIN OF THE GRAND LODGE**

In 1717 four Lodges in London met together and decided to form a Grand Lodge, possibly for no other reason than to strengthen and preserve them. In 1723 they adopted a Constitution. Their success led to the establishment of still other Grand Lodges. In 1725 some of the Lodges in Ireland formed a Grand Lodge and a similar body was instituted in Scotland in 1736. Moreover, the original Grand Lodge in England did not remain without rivals and at one time in the eighteenth century three Grand Lodges existed in England in addition to the one organized in 1717. Two of these died out without influencing the history of Masonry in general, but the third had a great part in the spread and popularizing of Masonry throughout the world. It called itself the "Ancient" Grand Lodge. The two surviving Grand Lodges were long and vigorous rivals,



but they finally united in 1813 into the present United Grand Lodge of England. Thus, from one of these two Grand Bodies in England, or from those of Ireland or Scotland, all other Grand Lodges in the world today are descended.

Titles of Grand Lodges in the United States also vary. Some Grand Lodges are called A. F. & A. M., which means Ancient Free and Accepted Masons like that used in Maryland, or F. & A. M., or Free and Accepted Masons which is used in some other jurisdictions.

Masonry was established in France sometime between 1718 and 1725. The first Lodge in Spain was established in 1728. A Lodge was established in Prague in 1729, in Calcutta in 1728 and in Naples in 1731. Masonry came to Poland in 1734 and Sweden in 1735.

The growth of Freemasonry and its ideals and beliefs were not without opposition. Masons are taught that all men are equal; we meet upon the level. Individual freedom of thought and action, as well as morality and ethics, are the concepts and ideals upon which our Order is founded. The teachings are a condemnation of autocratic governments, who in turn condemn Freemasonry.

## **MASONIC HISTORY IN THE UNITED STATES**

It was inevitable that Freemasonry should follow the colonists to America and play a most important role in the establishment of the thirteen colonies. Freemasonry was formally recognized for the first time in America with the appointment by the Grand Lodge of England of a Provincial Grand Master in New York, New Jersey and Pennsylvania in 1730. American Masons worked under foreign jurisdiction until 1731, when the first American Grand Lodge was established in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. The Grand Lodge of Maryland received its Charter from the Grand Lodge of Pennsylvania in 1787 and Brother John Coates became the first Grand Master of Maryland.

One of the most romantic portions of all Masonic history lies in the story of the part played by Freemasons in the formation of our country. Without exaggeration, we can say that Freemasonry and Masonic thinking contributed most significantly to the founding of this great Republic. Many of the signers of the Declaration of Independence, as well as the drafters of the Constitution, were members of the Fraternity. George Washington was a staunch Freemason. He was the first of fourteen Masonic Presidents and the only one to serve as Worshipful Master of a Lodge and President at one and the same time. The others after Washington are Monroe, Jackson, Polk, Buchanan Andrew Jackson, Garfield, McKinley, Theodore Roosevelt, Taft, Harding, Franklin D. Roosevelt, Truman and Ford, of whom Truman and Jackson served also as Grand Masters.

In the struggle for independence many well known patriots, such as Paul Revere, Benjamin Franklin, John Hancock, the Marquis de Lafayette and Baron Von Steuben were members of the Craft. No doubt Freemasonry was responsible for and shared

much of their thinking and opinions. Much has been written about the participation of the Fraternity in the Revolution and the founding of America and it is an episode of which we can be proud. Ever since that period, Freemasonry has grown and flourished, following closely the growth and expansion of the United States.

## **WHAT WE ARE NOT**

### **We are not a secret society!**

A secret society is generally one that wraps itself in a cloak of absolute secrecy. That means no one knows whom the members are, where they meet, what they do or what they stand for.

That is not Masonry at all! Masonry may have "secrets," but it is not a secret society. Masonic secrets are few in number and deal with the general method of initiation, the ways we recognize each other and very little else. These parts of the ritual, which are called the esoteric side of Masonry, have been handed down by word of mouth for centuries.

Masonry's purposes, ideals and principles may be learned by anyone who inquires. There are numerous books on these subjects, which are available to the public. Masonry often has public notices in the newspapers and our members are usually numbered among the more prominent citizens in the community.

### **We are not a Religion!**

Masonry, as an organization, is understanding and tolerant of all religious thoughts. Masonry has no specific creed, no dogma and no priesthood. There are no requirements as to religious preference in becoming a Mason.

Masonry does ask you to state your belief and trust in a Supreme Being. Nonsectarian prayers are a common part of all our ceremonies, but are not offered to a specific deity.

Masonic ritual does incorporate lessons and examples from the Bible, but they are given as representative illustrations.

Masonry does not require you belong to a church, synagogue or mosque although many Masons are very active in their religious organizations and among our members are leaders of many denominations.

Freemasonry accepts your right to belong to any church or religious organization of your choice and does not infringe on that right. Neither does Masonry try to be a substitute for your church. Masonry wants to unite men for the purpose of Brotherhood, not as an organized religion.

## **WHAT WE DO NOT DO**

Sectarian religion and partisan politics are not discussed in Lodge and there are very good reasons why. When we meet in a Lodge, we are all on a common level and are not subject to the classes and distinctions of the outside world. Each Brother is entitled to his own beliefs and may follow his own convictions. Our objective is to unite men, not to divide them. These two subjects can cause honest differences of opinion that might well cause friction among Brothers. No member running for political office has any right to expect the support of any other member because of Lodge affiliation. This does not mean, however, that matters which concern them with the nature of government or individual freedoms are not proper concerns of Masons as good citizens.

There will be subjects concerning the Lodge's business that have to be discussed. These discussions should be kept within the bounds of propriety and everyone should show tolerance for the opinion of the other. Every Master wants harmony in his Lodge; and, once a matter has been put to vote in the Lodge and a decision made, the decision should be accepted by all members regardless of how they voted.

Masonry teaches every Mason to be a good citizen and to perform his civic duties. We do not try to keep anyone from expressing his opinion, or from serving his city, county, State or nation in an honorable manner. Anyone who serves in political office should not act politically as a Freemason; nor should he act in the name of Freemasonry in exercising his rights.

To sum up, as a Mason you will never introduce into the Craft any controversial sectarian or political question. You will pay no heed to those, from without, who attack the Fraternity; and in your life as a member of the State you will ever be loyal to the demands of good citizenship.

## **QUALIFICATIONS OF A PETITIONER**

Our Grand Lodge has decreed that a petitioner for the Degrees of Masonry must be a man, at least 21 years of age, able bodied, a believer in a Supreme Being and of good moral character. It further decrees that no one who belongs to any organization subversive to the government of the United States or the State of Maryland is eligible for membership.

In addition, it is generally understood that there are internal and external qualifications necessary to become a Mason. The internal qualifications refer to those not apparent to the world outside of the Fraternity and include the petitioner's attitude toward the Fraternity and his motives and designs in seeking entrance into it.

The outward qualifications refer to his physical fitness to participate in the Degrees and perform the duties of a member, his reputation in the community and his financial ability to conform to the requirements of membership. The applicant must act of his own free will; he must first be prepared in his heart and must act uninfluenced by friends and unbiased by mercenary motives.

The petitioner must have been a resident within Maryland during the twelve months preceding the date of his petition, except in cases of men serving in the Armed Forces. Two members of the Fraternity, both of whom must be members of the Lodge to which he is petitioning must sign his petition and he must have been personally known by each of them.

He must be a free man in the fullest sense. He must be a peaceable citizen, loyal to his country and its laws.

## MASONIC ORGANIZATIONS

You have asked to join a Masonic Lodge, or "Symbolic Lodge" or "Blue Lodge." It is the basis of all other organizations requiring Masonic affiliation, one or more of which you, or a member of your family, may want to join sometime in the future.

We are not sure where the name "Blue Lodge" originated. One theory is that blue is generally regarded as the color to characterize friendship. Colors have a large place in the traditions of the Craft. Today it is generally agreed that the American usage is derived from English Freemasonry. We know that the United Grand Lodge of England, in choosing the colors of its regalia, was guided mainly by the colors associated with the Noble Orders of the Garter and the Bath. When the Most Noble Order of the Garter was instituted by Edward III in 1348, its color was light blue. Worldwide, in many cultures, blue symbolizes immortality, eternity, fidelity, prudence and goodness. In Freemasonry in particular, blue is symbolic of universal Brotherhood and friendship and "instructs us that in the mind of a Mason, those Virtues should be as extensive as the blue arch of Heaven itself."

## CONCORDANT BODIES

Two of the organizations that require that their members be "Blue Lodge" Masons, the York Rite and the Scottish Rite, expand on the teachings of the Blue Lodge, or basic Masonry and further explain its meaning. In each, the lessons are in the form of Degrees often called the "higher Degrees" of Masonry although there is, in truth, no higher Degree than that of Master Mason.



## APPENDANT BODIES

The Ancient Arabic Order of Nobles of the Mystic Shrine, commonly called the Shrine, is not formally connected with Masonry, but has, as its own requirement, the restriction of its membership to members of the York Rite and/or Scottish Rite. This organization is socially oriented and has as its major project the funding and operation of nearly two dozen hospitals for crippled and burned children. In addition, the Mystic Order of Veiled Prophets of the Enchanted Realm (Grotto) and Tall Cedars of Lebanon are also socially oriented organizations who have their own charities which they support.

Research Lodges do academic study on Masonry. There is currently one Research Lodge in the State of Maryland and membership is open to any Master Mason. The

Masonic Service Association, whose headquarters are in Silver Spring, MD, issues Masonic publications and sponsors visits to patients at Veterans hospitals.

The Order of the Eastern Star, White Shrine of Jerusalem and the Amaranth admit both men and women. Many other



Concordant and Appendant Masonic bodies will welcome you and your family as members once you become a Master Mason. All you will need is the time and energy to participate.

There are three youth organizations; The International Order of DeMolay for Boys, The International Order of Job's Daughters and The International Order of Rainbow for Girls.

## WHAT TO EXPECT

First of all, relax.

All of the ceremonies of Masonry are serious and performed in a dignified manner. There is no horseplay, no hazing.

Enter the Lodge with an attitude that will help you appreciate the serious and solemn ceremonies that you will experience.

The Degrees, or teaching lessons, are done in the form of short plays, in which you play a part, prompted by a guide. The language is beautiful and the content both meaningful and interesting.

When you receive the Degrees, as well as when you attend Lodge, it is suggested that you dress respectfully, as in a business setting. Suit or Sport Coat with shirt and tie are the normal lodge dress in Maryland. When you arrive at the Grand Lodge for your Degrees you will be asked to wait a short time in an outer room while the Lodge prepares to conduct the Degree. A small committee will meet with you informally. You will be asked a series of questions to ascertain your motives and confirm your free choice in joining our Fraternity. The Exemplar Candidate will then be prepared to receive the Degree by temporarily exchanging his street clothes for the plain garment of a candidate.

The Degree itself will be recited to you, always from memory, by a team of Masons. Listen to the content of what is being said. These are spiritual lessons given with great dignity.

You should have no worries about entering a Masonic Lodge. The Degrees are simply lessons and you will be treated as the friend and Brother that you are becoming.

## **YOUR DUTIES AS A MASON**

You will become a member of the Fraternity when you have received the three Degrees, sign the register of your Lodge and receive a copy of the by-laws.

Your duties will always be loyalty to Masonry, faithfulness to your superior officers and obedience to Masonic laws, These are fundamental conditions of membership.

As a Mason, it will be your duty to hold membership in a Lodge. If necessary you may transfer your membership to another Lodge. In Maryland, it is also possible to hold membership in two Lodges. This is termed "Plural Membership" and again membership is determined by ballot.

Membership in a Lodge necessarily requires some monetary obligation. Dues should be paid promptly as an imperative condition of membership. While the Lodge is not an organized charity, it teaches love and charity for all mankind and especially for Brother Masons, their widows and orphans. It will, therefore, be your duty to stand ready to lend a helping hand to a Brother Mason in sickness or distress and to aid in the charities of the Lodge so far as your conscience will guide and your means permit.

As a Master Mason, if you are present at your Lodge when a ballot is taken on an application for membership, you must vote. Voting on prospective members is not a right or privilege to be exercised at your choice, but an obligation and a duty. This is only another way of saying that the responsibility for deciding who shall be Masons rests on every member.

You may be summoned by the Worshipful Master to attend a meeting of your Lodge for some special purpose, or to discharge some duty required of you as a Mason and, unless circumstances at the time make it impossible, it will be your duty to obey. A Lodge differs from any other organization in many fundamental respects. Duties and Obligations may not be laid down or taken up at pleasure and membership is not a mere gesture of honor or an idle privilege. A member may not stand aside until an opportunity occurs to secure something from it for his own selfish purpose, nor may he evade his responsibilities by shifting his burdens to more willing shoulders. The Mystic Tie that binds him to his fellows holds him fast.

When among strangers you will have certain means of recognition. Committing to memory the modes of recognition, the requirements of your Obligations and the possession of a valid dues card, provides you with the necessary information to prove yourself a Mason when visiting other Lodges in this as well as other jurisdictions. To know that wherever you go in the world and whatever your financial or social position, you will find Brothers ready to extend to you the hand of fellowship, is one of the greatest of all the privileges of membership.

Your mentor will discuss with you the portions of our ritual that should not be discussed with those outside our Fraternity.

## **YOUR REWARDS AS A MASON**

If you go through the Degrees, receive the work, decide that Freemasonry is a fine Institution and then do nothing about the teachings presented to you, then you are wasting our time as well as your time and money. If you recognize the opportunity which is yours, take the various doctrines and truths presented to you, study them, analyze them, contemplate their meanings and apply them to your own life, then your investment of time and money will be richly rewarded.

Do not adopt a double standard of conduct, whereby you apply Freemasonry to a part of your life, but feel that it doesn't apply to other phases. The thoughtful Freemason will apply the teaching of our Institution to each and every phase of his life and we sincerely hope that you will see fit to follow such a practice. This great opportunity for self-improvement is one that you should grasp to such an extent that the principles of Freemasonry will eventually spread through every facet of your life; when you do you will have allowed Freemasonry to become one of the greatest of your personal experiences. As a member of a Lodge you will be eligible for any office in it. It will be your right to visit other Lodges in this or other Grand Jurisdictions, provided always that the Worshipful Master is willing to admit you after you have been properly identified. In case of sickness or distress you have the right to apply for relief.

These Statements are not exhaustive. We have just touched the fringe of a great theme, but it is our hope, with such light as may have been given you, that you will go forward with a livelier understanding of what Masonry will mean to you and also of what you mean to Masonry.

## **THE PROFICIENCY**

The proficiency is evidence that the candidate is qualified for advancement, just as in the days of Operative Masonry, when the worker had to show that he was qualified to do more complicated tasks. Your Lodge will be responsible for administering all proficiency requirements.

In Maryland, candidates are asked to stand an examination in the catechism of each Degree. For this special One Day Class, the catechism has been waived for the first two Degrees. However, it is required that you learn certain portions of the symbolism of these Degrees. In addition, it will be necessary that you stand an examination in open Lodge, within a period of one year, on the proficiency of the Master Mason catechism. A mentor has been assigned to you to help you learn the material, answer any questions that you may have and see that you pass smoothly through the process of becoming an informed mason and an active Lodge member. You are expected to meet with your mentor as often as necessary in order to acquire this basic knowledge of Masonry.

If you so desire, there will be optional material available for you to participate in that will help you become more comfortable and familiar with your new Lodge and Fraternity. As in all endeavors, you will receive as much from the experience as you put into it.

Upon completion of the three Degrees of Masonry you will be provided with a book containing valuable information for each of the Degrees you will have taken. Upon your completion of the reading of each chapter a written test will be administered.

- You must pass each written test with a score of at least 70%. The test may be taken with the reading material available to you at the time of the test. Once the tests have been successfully completed, you are then eligible to give the Master Mason proficiency at a Lodge meeting. This Master Mason catechism involves committing to memory the catechism of the Master Mason and standing an examination of this catechism in open Lodge within the period of one year.
- You will also be required to learn the modes of recognition of the Entered Apprentice and Fellowcraft Degrees. Upon completion of the Degrees your mentor or catechism instructor will answer any questions that you may have regarding this requirement.

When you pass the proficiency, you will be eligible to make application for any concordant or appendant body of your choosing. In addition, you will be eligible to assume one of the officer's stations to progress "through the line" of your Lodge, with the goal of becoming Worshipful Master. This is an extremely rewarding endeavor for those who pursue this goal.

Attendance in your Lodge is strongly encouraged, as here is where you will enjoy the Brotherhood and camaraderie that this Fraternity has long enjoyed.

## **INTERROGATORIES UPON ADMISSION**

- Do you seriously declare, upon your honor, that unbiased by friends and uninfluenced by mercenary motives, you freely and voluntarily offer yourself a candidate for the mysteries of Freemasonry?
- Do you seriously declare, upon your honor, that you are prompted to solicit the privileges of Masonry by a favorable opinion conceived of the Institution, a desire of knowledge and a sincere wish of being serviceable to your fellow creatures?
- Do you seriously declare, upon your honor, that you will cheerfully conform to all the established usages and ancient customs of the Fraternity?