

## **Traditional Values and the Traditional Lodge Model**

**It's about time.**

**Presented to the Members of Templum Fidelis**

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Whenever the opportunity to make a presentation comes along, something reminds me that I should watch the time. And this brought to mind the story of the Preacher whose sermons were legendary to his loyal parishioners, for their length. Well one Sunday morning he arrives in his robes with a huge bandage on the side of his face. Sermon time, he steps to the Podium and launches into an interesting, but guaranteed to be lengthy lesson. About twenty minutes into his story, he stops and tells the congregation that while shaving he was concentrating on his sermon and cut himself very deeply. Hence the bandage. Then he rambles for another 30 minutes and closes. After the service as is traditional the preacher is at the door thanking everyone for coming. A little old lady and regular approaches him and offers her condolences for his accident. As she turns to leave she says, Reverend perhaps next week you could concentrate on your shaving and deeply cut your sermon.

Bearing this lesson in mind, the subject for tonight is Traditional Values and the Traditional Lodge Model, with a subtitle. It's about time.

The Traditional Values referred to are those which I believe, have attracted good men to Freemasonry for over 400 years.

### ***Fraternity***

Masonry is a Fraternity known for Political and Religious tolerance and for Intellectual Pursuits. Indeed, the most influential leaders from any era, more often than not, have been Freemasons

### *Mystery & Privileges*

There seems to be no question, that the mystery, secrecy and anticipated privileges were very appealing.

### *Membership*

Applicants must be Good Men, believe in a Supreme Being and seek admission. The process was very selective. Not all men found Masonry consistent with their personal goals. Further, on examination by three skilled and objective masons some men were just not suitable. Either they did not in fact believe in a God or their interests lie in anticipated material gain.

*Admission* By Initiation.

### *Meetings*

Lodges met in local Taverns or Inns, were relatively small and were ruled by a Master and his Wardens.

### *Lessons*

The lessons were conveyed through Ritual involving symbols, allegory and prose.

### *Education*

Education was paramount as the lessons contained in each degree had to be thoroughly understood before advancement. Memory work was essential.

*Socializing* Time...lots of time, was allocated to discussion, over good food and drink.

### *Cost*

Masonry was relatively expensive. Prior to 1940, Initiation represented up to four weeks wages; Annual dues, up to two weeks wages. Today this would approximate \$1,000 for Initiation and \$250 to \$500 for Dues.

### *Charity*

Masons were known for their charitable work and had a reputation for “taking care of their own”.

So we had a Gentleman's Fraternity, filled with mysteries and privileges, for men of good reputation, who believed in a God, who met behind closed doors in small intimate Lodges and who only accepted a few men each year. It was expensive to join and remain a member. Ample time and money was provided for both Lodge/Ritual and Festive Board/Socializing. The pace was slow.

What would be the immediate benefit of a slower pace today? Good question.

One of the remarkable things about our fraternity is that one can witness or participate in the ceremonies, month after month, year after year and hear a particular word or phrase over and over. Suddenly a light goes on and that word or phrase takes on a whole new meaning or significance. This would seem to support an old Buddhist saying, "*When the student is ready, a teacher will appear*". That teacher is most often a person, but could simply be a word or a phrase. Time seems to be the essential factor in the process.

We tell our student/candidates today that, 28 days must elapse before he can advance. Further, he must demonstrate an understanding of the degree and prove his proficiency. Apart from the fact this exiting information leaves most candidates a little apprehensive. Proof of proficiency today seems to be singularly a matter of memory work. Further it seems the emphasis comes at the end of questions required by constitution for Proving in each degree, when the Master asks; "Does anyone have anything further to ask of our Brother?" In virtually every lodge in Ontario, a Past Master will drawl "Does he know his Obligation". There is absolutely nothing in our constitution that requires this test. So why do we continue the practice. Who knows?

Each and every Master is required to know all three, but here we are dealing with anew Mason.

Wouldn't it be better to scrub this question and ask his sponsors and/or the education committee; does the brother understand the essential points of the whole obligation? Has he prepared a paper on one or more of the lessons through which he just passed? If so then carry

on. Men who can commit obligations to memory might be better served by this approach and asked to work on pieces of Ritual as to their meaning and perhaps their presentation in Lodge.

For the purpose of this presentation I was reminded of one precept or quality that ties together many lessons and cannot be fully appreciated in 28 days.

This Quality is emphasized in the General Charge at Installation. In the first paragraph it says *“we should unite in the Grand Design of being happy and communicating happiness”*. In the fourth paragraph it is expanded, *“and then will be attained the chief point in Freemasonry, namely, to endeavor to be happy ourselves and communicate that happiness to others”*.

The Chief Point in Freemasonry then, is to be happy.

So what is this happiness Masons can have? How do we define it?

More importantly, how do we get it?

There is absolutely no doubt, in my mind, our Masonic lessons can lead us to happiness. To illustrate the simple yet profound process and the importance of time, I refer to a book by Dr. Dan Baker titled, *“What Happy People Know”*.

Dr. Baker states that most people have a very narrow view of happiness, thinking it’s a mood – as in I feel good all the time, or an emotion – as in experiencing the joy of your child’s first step or word, especially if it’s Dada.

But Dr. Baker’s studies show that happiness is neither a mood nor an emotion. Mood is a biochemical condition and emotions are transitory. Happiness is an overriding outlook, comprised of Qualities such as; Love, Fulfillment, Courage and Optimism. It is simply not skipping through the sun flowers of la-la land and it’s not something that changes every time your circumstances change. This outlook is nothing less, than cherishing each and every day to the point it becomes a *“Way of Life”*.

In masonry we hear this often. Isn’t Masonry, in fact, a way of life?

Contrary to popular assumption, happiness is not common among industrialized countries, and according to studies is rarer today than it was in earlier, less affluent times. Such a very sad paradox; the more we've accumulated the emptier we've become.

Dr. Baker suggests that fear is the main reason for this depreciation and is therefore the greatest enemy to happiness. A fear not brought on by today's news headlines (that's an additional fear), but a primal fear imbedded deep in our brain that helped us survive our early days, as humans.

The good news is we also have the capacity to overcome fear and as Baker says "*rise from Darkness into Light*". Isn't this amazing, Baker must surely be a mason. He concludes that happiness is the by-product of twelve indispensable qualities. These qualities are not required in equal amounts but most, if not all must be abundant enough to experience happiness through the tough times which, on occasion, life throws at us. He also stresses happiness does not happen all at once. Rather it is a slow cumulative process that requires time.

Lots of time.

So if we can acquire the following qualities, Happiness and a better Way of Life will ensue. Furthermore, these qualities are inherent in our lessons and you will, no doubt, be able to identify the specific Masonic lesson that applies to each quality;

### *Love*

We speak of it constantly in Masonry. The fourth paragraph from the General Charge comes to mind. A Freemason's Lodge is the temple of peace, harmony and *Brotherly Love*. You may be interested to know that VW Bro Otto Klotz, Master of Alma Lodge #72 Galt, delivered this address on December 27, 1864 at their Ladies Night.

In its most ample sense, Love is the source of all happiness, renewable and everlasting. We often think that being loved is the best feeling in the world. It is in fact the second best. The very best feeling is loving someone else. Love is the antidote to fear and the first step to happiness.

### *Optimism*

Provides the power over painful events. Many might feel it is simply an attitude; seeing the glass half full versus half empty. Too simple. Everyone in this room has suffered a loss. Father, mother, brother, sister, relative or friend. The despair can be overwhelming. Time heals and with it come the understanding that hurtful events have a common thread. A legacy of love that can never be taken from you. It follows that this optimism is the power over the fear of future and the regrets of the past.

### *Courage*

Allows us to overcome fear and in fact allows us as humans, to thrive.

### *Sense of Freedom*

I am sure there absolutely nothing that makes us feel better than freedom. Freedom is choice and choice is what makes us human. Choice defines who we are. Everyone has the power of choice but it takes courage.

### *Proactivity*

Happy people participate in their own destinies. They do not wait for events or other people to make them happy.

### *Security*

Happy people know that nothing lasts forever. Not money, not approval, not even life. So they don't measure security with a calendar or a bank account. They simply like who they are and know that security comes from within. The lessons of the *Mosaic Pavement* and the *Emblems of Mortality* fit rather nicely here.

### *Health*

Happiness and Health are interdependent. Without health it's very difficult to be happy and it is even harder to healthy if you're not happy.

### *Spirituality*

Happy people are less concerned about their inevitable end and more concerned about living.

### *Altruism*

Happy people know how good it feels to give. In addition to making you feel good, it connects you to other people, it gives you purpose, it expands the mini-me within.

### *Perspective*

Happy people know how to prioritize issues and never lose sight of life's big picture during tough times.

### *Purpose*

Happy people know why they are here, what they are meant to do and are satisfied with their lot in life.

### *Humor*

Humor is the shift in perception that gives people the strength to go on when life looks its very worst.

Masonry also provides other important qualities that go hand in hand. Self esteem, peace of mind, fulfillment and confidence. This quality list isn't really that long and perhaps you will agree that time, patience and dedicated effort, by both member and candidate are essential, if we are to take the first step on the journey to happiness. Individually and collectively, we must accept the responsibility and provide time for training each candidate and officer.

M.W. Bro. Eric Nancekivell, as chairman of the 1977 Grand Masters Conference in Washington had this to say about training:

*...the past is secure...but what of the future? Joseph Fort Newton, the great Masonic scholar, wrote fifty years ago "to go on making men Masons...without giving them an intelligent and authentic knowledge of what Masonry is...is for Masonry to lose, by*

*ignorance or neglect, what has been distinctive in its history and genesis and invite degeneration, if not disaster. It is therefore important that in our lodges and in Grand Lodge we stress proper, efficient and knowledgeable Masonic Education so that our time is devoted, to a greater extent, to teaching the great moral precepts of Masonry and not just to the usual and sometimes only activity of Initiating, Passing and Raising. Entire meetings could and should be devoted to Masonic teachings”.*

Where are we today? Are we taking the time to make Masons or are we simply Initiating, Passing and Raising and then pushing them into the Chairs they are not prepared for, or pulling them into Scottish Rite, Chapter or the Shrine, on the basis they need more light?

Let’s review some interesting data.

**Population**      Year after year our membership continues to shrink.  
 1946 – 99,500. 1961 – 130,000. 1979 – 110,000. 2005 – 52,000.  
 In this regard we are consistent with every service and charitable organization in the world.

**Facilities**      The buildings in use today were designed, built and maintained by an expanding membership three times larger than our current shrinking population. The majority, were built prior to 1960 and many are now approaching closure, suffering from financial and/or structural fatigue.

**Candidates**      The good news is we continue to attract 1100 to 1300 new members annually. The bad news is contained in data summarized from our Annual Proceedings. It begs our consideration.

Year	Candidates	2 <sup>nd</sup> Initiated	Dropout	3 <sup>rd</sup> Dropout	Total Dropout
1961	3200	2%	1%	3%	

2000	1082`	20%	6%	26%
2003	1136`	27%	6%	33%
2005	1313	28%	10%	38% (did not take 3 <sup>rd</sup> .)

Is it any wonder that our boomers are turning into doomers? Masonry is dead some claim, or at the very least being sucked into the Tar Pits with the dinosaurs.

I ask how can anyone really believe a 400 year old fraternity that has survived; scandals, hoaxes, legislation, dictators and dormant periods could be on its way out? It may be musty, dusty and in need of a bath perhaps, but it is definitely very much alive. It seems to me, a matter of perspective, planning, participation and patience.

Do we need to change? Will change bring back the mystery, the privilege, the attendance?

M.W. Bro. Robert Davies, PGM and G.S. Emeritus in 1977 spoke of our need to move with the times. Quote....*"I observe a significant number of young men coming into our order. Let us be mindful of their needs and listen as they speak, for they are the vehicle for growth in the future. Change for the sake of change is not what I advocate. However, change when necessary to meet man's ever changing viewpoint is essential to ensure our future."*

Brethren, I suggest that losing 28% of new members before Passing and 38% overall is not only very significant but totally unacceptable. These numbers which are increasing each and every year must prompt us to action.

Is the Traditional Lodge or the European Lodge Model the answer? There are lodges in Australia, the USA and Winnipeg and today in Bath, that are giving it a try and it appears to be working in Europe.

Today I am so very pleased to be a member of Templum Fidelis as we move to show that a change is style, not content, may be necessary for masonry going forward.

While there may be a few style differences between the Traditional Observance and European lodges. The importance for this evening is the similarities in their respective agenda's.

*Small Lodges*      40 – 60 members. Attendance is often mandatory to remain a member.

### *Membership*

Joining is difficult. Candidates are carefully screened as to suitability. In some European jurisdictions it is reported that on occasion 40- -50% of applications have been turned down. Yet there is no shortage of new applications.

*Meetings*              Meetings are limited. Templum Sion in Winnipeg meets 6 times per year.

*Ritual*                  Excellence is expected.

### *Education*

Education of both Candidate and Officer is serious business. All candidates must pass examinations and present a paper in each degree to an Education Committee. Templum Sion officers serve for two years in each chair.

*Degrees*              In most cases 12 months must elapse between each degree.

### *Lodges*

In lodge, activity is restricted to degree work and education. Business, finances and reports are dealt with effectively outside of the lodge. Lodges are closed early to allow for socializing and education.

MW Bro. C. Edwin Drew once said. *“In Lodge we do ritual, outside of the Lodge we make Masons”*.

### ***Cost***

**I have always worked on the premise, that only two subjects were taboo within the Lodge – Politics and Religion. May it ever remain so. However in many lodges today there appears to be a third. This is to suggest that “we may need to increase Initiation fees and Annual dues to cover operating costs?”**

**The traditional model accepts that higher initiation fees and dues are necessary. For example in Templum Sion Winnipeg, Initiation is \$650 and Dues are currently \$230 or \$260. No shortage of applications.**

**I must also congratulate the Templum Fidelis committee for their refreshing view of a lodge’s financial need. And the “no need” to apologize for their upscale recommendations. Every lodge should have an annual budget, a “no deficit” clause in their bylaws, covering all operating costs including maintenance. A depreciation account which actually has money to cover the replacement of a part or all of the building and associated equipment. In this regard Maple Leaf in Bath has demonstrated their ability to plan and execute a new building program and we should all be very proud of them.**

**Yet across Ontario the cry goes out, that to increase Initiation fees will cause applications to drop off. Increase dues and members will quit.**

**Hello. In 2005, 38% of our new members didn’t take their Third degree. Do we dare mention also that sixty percent of our membership never, ever attend lodge.**

**Perhaps it’s not about Cost – Perhaps it’s about Value. It may also be about Mystery, about Privilege, about taking care of our own.**

**Perhaps it’s about time; to blow a little dust off our meetings and proceedings and slow the whole process down.**

**Young men, I firmly believe, want to be associated with;**

**\* something ancient, something mystical and secret and which has an admirable heritage.**

**\* the greatest fraternity of men for 400 years.**

- \* a world wide fraternity that welcomes all faiths and all religions.
- \* a lodge that is solidly based and respected in it's community.
- \* a lodge where men are evidently happy and successful at home and in business.

Perhaps it's about time; to be more selective in accepting candidates.

Perhaps it's about time, to accept only excellence in our ritual and incorporate the best audio-visual technologies for our presentations. Masons have always used the best technology available to teach the lessons of each degree. Chalk on the floor gave way to floor cloths, tracing boards, electricity and special lamps. We are in the twenty first century. Have we kept pace with technology or have we passed because there is no money available.

Perhaps it's about time; to be out of Lodge by 9:30 – 10:00 at the latest and available for coffee or other libations and discussion after lodge.

Where Masons are made.

Perhaps it about time we had great food. Each meal a memory.

Perhaps it's about time; to be more concerned about our aging meeting and dining facilities and to develop plans for the future. Small can be good. Not every Lodge building can be an historic masterpiece. We have too many old buildings with too few lodges attending.

Wouldn't it make more sense to have a few strategically located Masonic Centres, used by a greater number of smaller lodges?

Perhaps it's about time; we trained and educated our members and officers at a much slower pace. Instead of 28 days for advancement perhaps we should advocate 6 to 12 months between degrees. Further, no member should be elected to the Deacons Chair without proof of his knowledge, ability and commitment.

**Perhaps it's about time; we charged fees according to yesterdays standards. Let's remember we are one of the greatest fund raising organizations in the world. Maybe we need to prioritize our requirements.**

**Perhaps it's about time, we allowed new candidates to become knowledgeable dedicated Craft Masons...before they advance anywhere.**

**Perhaps it's about time we dignified the dress code once again.**

**Perhaps it's about time we actually required attendance...within reason of course.**

**Perhaps, just perhaps, there is room in Ontario for a Traditional Observance or European style lodge or at the very least the elements that make them work.**

**Perhaps, just perhaps, Templum Fidelis will set the example by which some or all of our 600 Ontario Lodges will revitalize and retain new members.**

**Brethren, I thank you for your attention and leave you with this quote from Aristotle,**

***“Happiness is the whole aim and end of human existence”.***