

Leadership - It Must Be Given Away

MWBro Vern Wertz

There are those who believe we have entered the last age of man. The last because we, unquestionably, have the capability of destroying every living thing on earth, and we can do it in a multitude of ways. Of greater concern is the fact that every day it seems more and more likely that some fanatic will light the fuse of total destruction.

And what should we do about this?

I believe there is only one answer! We should take the lamp of truth and walk among our neighbours. We should continue to search for those good men who obey God and serve his children. We should look for men with fire in the heart and wings on their feet who will show other good men the pathway of brotherly love that we call Freemasonry. We must, each one of us, continue to lead in the advancement of our gentle Craft.

Most of you in this room are leaders; and what is truly important, you are leaders by election. So, as gently as I can, I suggest that you lead! Lead by setting the example; lead by truly educating your Brethren in the meaning of Freemasonry; lead by allowing others to make use of their God given talents. Some of the best brains in the world are yours to command; some of the noblest spirits; some of the most inspirational teachers — all at your beck and call!

As a leader it is not your function to ignore these men, and thus make them passive instruments, dull and broken and useless. Rather you must inspire them to share their nature and their talents in the greatest arena possible.

You must not wait for some command to do good to all. God delivered that command eons ago! Do not surrender to either the fear of innovation or the suffocating comfort of custom and tradition. Freemasonry is not now and never has been static — and thank goodness for that; because, obeying an immutable law of nature, things that do not change become extinct. And so, each day in each Mason's life there should be change resulting in growth. As a leader, you must provide the setting for that change and that growth.

Since most of you in this room have been, are now, or will be a Grand Master, I would like to, for just a moment, touch on that leadership position.

Grand Master is a most paradoxical office. It is one of the most absolute, and yet, one of the most limited. While it is certainly the richest in personal gain, it is absolutely the poorest in revenue gained.

If a Grand Master tells you that he doesn't have fleeting thoughts of autocracy, he probably lies. If he doesn't sometimes walk in terror, and does not pray often, he is almost certainly a fool.

At times he is alone on the desolate mountain of doubt and those he would serve seem not to know him.

Like all positions of leadership, it seems at times you stand alone; and yet, a Grand Master will gather a lifetime of friends from all across this great nation. And, of course, he is granted great power, great authority; but he must use it with some caution lest he be a leader with no followers.

I think that we all understand that the knowledge of power is one thing; the use of it is quite another matter. Whatever your plans are for Freemasonry, you have no choice, you must use the tools at hand - your Brethren and the organization that was so lovingly given by those who preceded you and [me]. Understand this, if we lose contact with our Brethren, both past and present, then we are lost, negligent shepherds who in the end will have lost much and done nothing.

Being a leader is never easy, and I believe that is particularly true within Freemasonry. We are, after all, each one dedicated to the full limit of our talent and ability to what looks like folly. A folly that seems to offer little hope for a successful completion - and yet, we continue the preparation of a good man to become a better man. And we do that in the midst of a world filled with evil's temptations. I do not have enough facility with the English language to describe how essentially necessary it is that you men, our leaders, continue this work!

For our work is not done, and with support from the Great Architect of the Universe it will always be ongoing; an act of brotherly love that never ends.

Know this, where we become defensive, where we hide Freemasonry's light in the Lodge room as though it would become tarnished goods because of contact with the world — there we fail, and we should! Where we hold it up as a beacon of hope, a torch of truth, and where we boldly proclaim it as relevant to every human life, every human act — there we succeed, and we should!

As we look toward and plan for our future, we must review and remember our past. The study of our past is the key to the pattern of events that will form Freemasonry's future. And this is an essential truth because all history shows that the only justification for yesterday and today is the tomorrow that comes from them.

Our Creator gave us a thinking, reasoning mind so that we would not build our future by some accidental, some purposeless plan. Planted deep within our genes is the need for unity and harmony in all that we do. If we abandon this, and we sometimes do, the result is near suicidal chaos.

If Freemasonry speaks to anything, it speaks to the essential necessity of utilizing that harmony which God implanted everywhere in his creation. After all, all that we can observe in nature demonstrates that all creation obeys fundamental laws of harmony.

The great goal of Freemasonry is to have a man lift his eyes up from the dirt at his feet, look ahead, and see the glorious possibilities, the wondrous harmony that waits for him in that mysterious realm that we call the future. The future I want, the future I work for has Brotherly love as its capstone. I suppose there are two sides to the coin of Brotherly love. The giving side is the one that proves the worth of the original minting. Sadly, the obverse side of giving is taking. I believe that he who constantly takes is the unhappiest, the emptiest of souls, for he has nothing to give.

How sad that is, after all, the only things that cannot be lost to us, that are truly ours, are the things we give away — freely give away. Love has no value, no meaning, until it is given. Freemasonry can never truly belong to you until you have given it to another man.

And here is one of God's greatest miracles — giving actually renews its source; over and over, and at ever greater levels.

How grateful I am that my life has been graced by so many good men who, without thought of recompense or desire for credit, gave me the gift of Freemasonry. They gave it freely, willingly. It came with no strings, no demands; only the hope that I would receive it freely, willingly and let it work a miracle in my life. They were simple men, humble men; neither rich nor clever. Many were uneducated; most were closely connected to the good soil of the Willamette Valley. I'll say it again, they were simple men, and yet how great. Each possessed a spark of greatness and it was that wellspring from which came all that they gave to me.

And if you good men in this room would truly be the leaders of our gentle Craft, then you too must fan that glowing ember of greatness that lies within you — fan it into incandescence, and then... and then you must give it away.

At the Conference of Grand Masters held in Portland, Oregon, in February 2007, MW Bro Vern Wertz, PGM of the Grand Lodge of Oregon, shared the following with the Grand Masters present. Although the paper speaks directly to the Grand Masters, the ideas expressed hold true for any Mason placed in a leadership position.