

A Masonic Minute

Universal Brotherhood – Am I My Brother's Keeper?

Freemasonry professes a belief in the Universal Brotherhood of Man and envisions a world where all men live in peace, love and harmony. We are also taught that “a Mason's charity should know no bounds except those of prudence.” We cheerfully accept the responsibility of “relieving the necessities and soothing the afflictions” of our fellow human beings – to do unto others as in similar circumstances we would wish they would do unto us. The Golden Rule runs like a thread through the fabric of Freemasonry.

This has been beautifully expressed in these lines by the American poet, John Greenleaf Whittier (1807-1892).

*O brother man, fold to thy heart thy brother;
Where pity dwells, the peace of God is there;
To worship rightly is to love each other,
Each smile a hymn, each kindly deed a prayer.*

The evening news provides graphic images of young men and children living and dying in intolerable conditions. Do we, as Freemasons have a duty to attempt to alleviate their misery and distress? What should we do? What can we do – collectively or individually?

These questions present a dilemma requiring soul searching by each one that true to the principles of Freemasonry. As this international situation has developed and escalated, it has taken on political implications. In the midst of a federal election campaign in Canada, these implications have been amplified by the leaders of the principal parties, taking stances, all hoping to curry favour with the electorate. Strongly held opinions inevitably surface within the Fraternity, often based upon deep seated prejudice, dividing us and fracturing the harmony of the Lodge. As Master Masons we are admonished to abstain from all religious and political discussion in the Lodge. Yet, in this instance, where is the line to be drawn? Surely compassion for our fellow human beings in distress must take precedence.

Be ever mindful that we all meet on the level. “*Let us act as the dictates of right reason prompt us*” and rise above personal prejudice to apply the means at our disposal to alleviate this intolerable situation.

The Disclaimer that is appended to these Masonic Minutes suggests that they are designed to give the Brethren ‘something to think about.’ The topic presented here

is the greatest challenge to serious, unbiased, open minded discussion. May Brotherly Love triumph over bigotry, and may compassion overcome prejudice.

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