

Brethren,

In my first presentation we began the discussion of the WHY for our Brethren to have as their “elevator speech” if someone asks them about the Craft, for our new Candidates to better appreciate and fully embrace the Craft as members. We examined how society is still catching up to our ideals of LIBERTY, EQUALITY and FRATERNITY, even in recent years, that began centuries ago, passed through OUR oral tradition, refining good men into better ones through safe and respectful discourse from generation to generation. Mutual exchange of SECRETS if you will that nurtured the notions of mutual respect and honest dealings between men of affluence and power and those of common modest means. Then as before we must be on guard for charlatans who attempt to make a mockery of our good intents, and who like the COWANS of old seek to profit at others expense and leave carnage in their wake through their self-serving incompetence. This is why we safeguard our proceedings.

We next pictured ourselves in Lodge with this Brother Rudyard Kipling, feeling the warmth inherent in his poetic words, the equity and the power of their message: of brotherhood, loyalty, unity between races and classes, and memory, expressed in plain informal language. This led to a discussion of FRATERNITY and its interrelationship with Benevolence, an act of kindness or an inclination to be kind, the quality of someone who volunteers in a soup kitchen, tutors children for free, or helps someone in difficulty cross the street. This is where compassion and social decency promote flourish in a community

Most recently, we walked through 600-years of history that began with common citizens having no direct connection with their Creator, no property rights, no legal protections, and little prospect for self-improvement shackled by a brutal class system. How Masons though the benefits of what we now call networking, gained and promoted the benefits of education, governance and justice. Groups of like-minded men, of varying classes, politics and religious beliefs hoping for a better tomorrow met in secret, found common ground and a mutual respect for one another. Justice and opportunity were born.

Throughout this personal growth, came advancement of communities, and even what some would call “nation-building”. Personal and social change is not easy, opposition to change by those we might term COWANS can be brutal and even violent, toward Brethren practicing virtuously shattering the walls of greed and disparity in the world. We might ask ourselves, what common attribute sustained our Brethren then as now? The attribute they all possessed in ample measure was Fortitude.

Fortitude is the practice of patient pursuit when meeting obstacles. It allows us to overcome our fears, and remain resilient even in the face of adversity. To do what is right, even when others criticize us. Prudence and fortitude are the virtues through which we decide what needs to be done, while fortitude gives us the strength to do it. Fortitude is the moral courage against the evil of the times, against trends or improper fashions of the day, against disrespect towards others, whether in the workplace or the common square, and to avoid the comfortable expedient path when our conscience warns us to take the difficult path. In other words Fortitude is the virtue that helps us stand up for what is right, even when others, perhaps in the majority, say that our actions or beliefs are “outdated”.

Concurrently, Fortitude brings control over impulsiveness, daring or audacity. A Mason does not do what is right for glory, popularity or advantage. Fortitude shields him against foolhardiness, pride, greed, or boastfulness, through reasonable patient efforts. He then fades back into the multitude having done the good deeds, not for himself, but for the cause of good.