

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. How 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. 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. 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 or offers support to others. How Masons through 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 mutual respect for one another. Consequently, Justice was born, reinforced by Fortitude, the practice of patient pursuit when meeting obstacles, which 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do what is right, even when others criticize us perhaps in the majority, taunting us that our actions or beliefs are “outdated”. Most recently we discussed Temperance: individual restraint by practicing humility and modesty instead of arrogance, from extravagant show of luxury, and restraint from rage (through calmness and self-control). The structure of a Masonic Lodge is meant to promote Temperance through its harmony and tranquility.

Prudence on the other hand is the perfection of reason; the perfection of the natural capacity of the soul to see reality *as it is*, and not merely *how we would wish it to be*. More than just a view of the physical reality around and about us, Prudence sees the spiritual and relational reality around us. Another way to describe Prudence is *discernment*. Prudence is more than just an ability to see or assess, fundamentally it is also the ability to act upon these assessments. Thus, a prudent person *discerns what is a right act and acts upon it*. Prudence does not see reality as isolated bits and pieces, but holistically, under the rubric of the Great Architect’s revealed Word in the Volume of the Sacred Law. Prudence is the deliberative, judicial, and decisive means by which Charity manifests itself. Therefore, Charity motivates every portion of the prudential process. Only because we are motivated by love of the Great Architect can we sense that, we must deliberate, decide what to do, and act upon that decision. Yet Charity does not take the place of Prudence but undergirds it. We need Prudence to properly make decisions that are loving towards the Deity and Man. We must act without injury to ourselves or our family, *Prudence grounds us and guides us*.

Prudence does not imagine every situation ahead of time and assign a rightness to it in advance, for we cannot conceive of every possibility, and it would take away from our present duty to do so. Instead, Prudence relies upon the situation at hand to determine the rightness of an act. How, then, does Prudence avoid rigid, inflexible doctrine? First of all, though every situation is different, the underlying reality is *objective*. This means that though there may be an infinite variety of acts that are produced through Prudence. Reality limits the kinds of decisions that can be made in any situation. The reality described is not just the reality of the physical world around us, but the reality described in scripture.

Therefore, the general aspects of the Volume of the Sacred Law limit the variety of responses obtained in any given moment. Learning what those boundaries are is **why** a Mason must become familiar with the Volume of the Sacred Law, the physical world, and the people in it.

What becomes difficult is when one encounters situations not mentioned in the Volume of the Sacred Law, or the teachings of the Craft. This is where Prudence particularly outshines pre-decision: pre-decision is limited by the number of scenarios one has imagined ahead of time and is **mechanical**, but Prudence is a virtue of the **heart**. A Mason's duties are to his Creator, his family, then to his occupation, however, we need humility to give attention especially to three things: 1) the Word of the Great Architect, 2) outside expertise, and 3) prayer. We must **read** the Volume of the Sacred Law regularly to instill in our minds and hearts what the realities of our world are of (both physical and spiritual). Where needed, **consulting others with an expertise** or with experience in a particular area may be necessary; we need the humility to **trust** the knowledge and abilities of others. Finally, prayer is a prerequisite for a Mason's Prudence. Without prayer there can be no objective vision of reality. The Great Architect is the only one who has an objective "All-seeing eye" view of reality. He not only can grant supernatural wisdom to us, but influences outcomes, if we **choose** to listen for Him. In all instances of difficulty and danger it is to Him that we place our trust. It is an act of **Freewill**.

As with all virtues, however, it must be emphasized that Prudence is a **goal** to pursue and not an **achievement** to be had. One becomes able to make prudent decisions quickly only through **practice**. Without expertise or practice, there is a gap in one's knowledge of the situation and prudent decision-making is rendered impossible. Prudence also differs from the other cardinal virtues in that it is not an end, but a means. One must be prudent to pursue justice, fortitude, and temperance. Without Prudence these other three cannot come into existence, no matter how many other requisite characteristics are present. In this sense, Prudence is the mother of all moral virtues