

## **Third Annual Stanley Weeks Law Day Lecture**

Good Evening!

I am pleased to have the opportunity to address this gathering - as the featured speaker for the third annual Stanley Weeks Law Day Lecture which is hosted by the Scottish Rite Valley of Jamestown and the Robert H. Jackson Center. I see from my research that the first two men who previously spoke here have extensive professional backgrounds and distinguished careers centered in the practice of law.

Illustrious Brother Stanley Weeks - whose memory we honor in this Law Day Lecture - practiced law right here in the Jamestown area. And while I do not possess any background in the practice of law, Illustrious Brother Stanley Weeks and I do however - share a great similarity in Masonic experience and affiliations.

Our mutual Masonic experience and connections enfold deep and abiding philosophies of life and a value system agreeably to the theme of this Law Day Lecture.

A simple review of the life of Illustrious Brother Stanley Weeks will reveal his deep commitment to his community having served in a multitude of public service vocations including Mayor, and The Board of Education, and numerous boards and associations to name a few.

His charitable works also include volunteering for such organizations as the Cerebral Palsy Association, Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts and Historical Society as well as his active participation in his church.

These things represent the epitome of a Master Mason, a way of life, a carriage of behavior as embodied by our teachings. It manifests itself in a way a man acts in his community, his place of business, his house of worship, his circle of friends; his family and in the privacy of his home.

We have traveled from the Buffalo area this evening to - in some small way - pay homage to this distinguished Man and Mason and to perhaps - use this Brother to illustrate - as a striking example of one who abided by the Moral Law and one which we all should emulate...and it is my privilege to present this address for your contemplation.

### **“Freemasonry, the Moral Law, and Civility...A Force for Good”**

As a Freemason, we make this assertion: The world desperately needs what Freemasonry has to offer! Our very existence on this planet would be more agreeable and uplifting if the world around us would simply embrace the gentle behaviors and resulting actions which emanates **“As a force for good”** from our gentle Fraternity. As part of this address we necessarily need to explore these three aforementioned qualities.

## **Freemasonry**

As a Mason - I refer to Brother Stanley Weeks as my Brother. The title Brother is Masonically given because of the Fatherhood of the Supreme Being. And when are made a Mason - we enter into a new tie with the Almighty Father and look to Him as our Fraternity's God.

From the very beginning of our initiatory journey we believe that Masonry teaches men to:

- practice charity and benevolence
- to protect chastity
- to respect the ties of blood and friendship
- to adopt the principles and revere the ordinances of religion
- to assist the feeble
- guide the blind
- raise up the downtrodden
- shelter the orphan
- guard the altar
- support the government
- inculcate morality
- promote learning
- love man
- fear God
- implore His mercy
- and hope for happiness.

All of the above stated attributes were certainly a part of illustrious Brother Stanley Weeks internal make-up. What a challenge it is for each of us today- to emulate and expand these virtues- as we chart and navigate ourselves across this tempestuous modern culture in which we live.

## **What is the Moral Law?**

A review of texts will reveal that Moral Laws are described as rules of behavior by individuals or groups that flow from personal conscience and that are not necessarily part of legislated civil law.

It is a system of guidelines for behavior. These guidelines may or may not be part of a religion, codified in written form, or legally enforceable. For some people- moral law is synonymous with the commands of a divine being. For others, moral law is a set of universal rules that should apply to everyone.

Ethical principles held primarily by the followers of Christianity have greatly influenced the development of U.S. secular law. As a result, Christian moral law and secular law often overlap in many situations.

In 1954- Pope Leo XIII stated that the Moral Law is engraved on Man's Heart. That man participates in the wisdom of God and in the goodness of God, and has the sense to discern good and evil.

The moral law generally exerts a far loftier level of expectation of conduct than civil law and holds the person to a higher level of accountability.

### **What is Civility?**

*Tomas Spath and Cassandra Dahnke, Founders of the Institute for Civility in Government state that "Civility is claiming and caring for one's identity, needs and beliefs without degrading someone else's in the process."*

Civility is about more than just politeness, although politeness is a necessary first step. It is about disagreeing without disrespect, seeking common ground as a starting point for dialogue about differences, listening past one's preconceptions, and teaching others to do the same. Civility is the hard work of staying present even with those with whom we have deep-rooted and fierce disagreements.

It is political in the sense that it is a necessary prerequisite for civic action. But it is political, too, in the sense that it is about negotiating interpersonal power such that everyone's voice is heard, and nobody's is ignored. ***And civility begins with us.***

Masons have become increasingly aware of the growing uncivil culture which has become magnified through movies; TV programs and society in general and have begun initiatives to address civility in the world.

The erosion of the belief of treating others with respect, grounded in the Golden Rule –of doing unto others as you would like others to do unto you - seems to have escaped the entertainment media which is on a quest to erode that standard - with publicly abusive foul language, public sexual conduct that belongs in private, and disrespectful behaviors toward others as if nature gave them the right to do so.

For this reason Civility Projects are springing up nationwide attempting to return civility to society – not only personally but professionally as well. Several Grand Lodges (including the Grand Lodge of the State of New York) have also initiated Masonic Civility Projects as well.

### **"Freemasonry and a Force for Good"**

Brother Stanley Weeks was Worshipful Master of Mount Moriah Lodge in 1965. An excerpt of our public installation ritual would charge him thus:

- You agree to be a good man and true and strictly to obey the **moral** law?
- You agree to be a peaceful citizen, and cheerfully conform to the **Laws of the country** in which you reside?
- You promise not be concerned with plots or conspiracies against the government but **patiently to submit to the law** and the constituted authorities?
- You agree to pay a proper respect to the civil magistrates. To work diligently, live creditably and to **act honorably** by all men?

These four questions - to which Brother Stanley Weeks and each Worshipful Master of a Masons Lodge must give his assent is an incredible assurance for the promotion Civility, the compliance to Moral Laws, the civic laws of our Country and as a pledge to live a creditable and civil life with our fellow man!

Can you think of governments and cultures throughout the world where the above four questions cannot be answered in the affirmative? I know that I can!

As stated in the beginning of this lecture- The world desperately needs what Freemasonry has to offer! Our very existence on this planet would be more pleasant and uplifting if the world around us would simply embrace the gentle behaviors and resulting actions which emanates "As a force for good" from our gentle Fraternity.

Brother Stanley Weeks, was lawyer, community servant, elected official, church vestryman, military veteran, and upright man a leader and a 33<sup>rd</sup> degree Mason. He passed this earthly life in January of 2010, at the age of 97 years old.

His life stands as a bright beacon, A true example of a Freemason, who obeyed the moral law, and with civility...was a force for good. Our fraternity holds in its ranks many men just like Illustrious Stanley Weeks and invites all men of good report (*who are not in our fraternity*) to join us in our noble work.

We thank the Scottish Rite Valley of Jamestown and the Robert H. Jackson Center - for the invitation to speak with you on this Third Annual Illustrious Stanley Weeks Law Day Lecture, and extend our fondest best wishes and approbation on behalf of the almost 38, 000 Masons which comprise the Grand Lodge of Free and Accepted Masons of the State of New York.

May God Bless our Men and Women in the Armed Forces, May God Bless America- and May God's Richest Blessings be yours!