

IS CIVILITY ALIVE?

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hether or not we can articulate the definition of civility, it is a part of our everyday lives. We are not only witnesses to it; civility is a part of us and has been from our very beginnings. It was evident when we were taught to share, to respect our parents, and to treat others as we would want to be treated: That was civility in the making. It was there when we first learned to talk and continues to be present today in the way we respond each time we are spoken to. (We all understand the phrase, “It’s not what you say, but the way you say it.”)

Civility is in front of us, no matter where we are or what we do. But sadly, it is the lack of civility that seems most apparent.

Waning civility manifests in our schools, as young students cope with peer pressure – and worse, bullying. It is in our workplaces, as we navigate office politics and try to work with others with whom we may not agree. We witness it at the most innocent of places – children’s sporting events – where our kids are taught sportsmanship, teamwork, and fair play, while parents in the stands display the opposite. It is there even in many homes, where what should be our most treasured relationships may be the most hurtful to those involved. When we pick up the newspaper, turn on the TV, or fire up our computers, it is there.

Are we, as Freemasons, more civil to one another? The answer should be yes, but even in some of our lodges, where peace and harmony should prevail, civility does not always come easily.

Being civil to one another can sometimes seem to be more work than it is worth. Yet we must continue to work at it – we must think about our actions, just as we must think before we speak.

Civility should be as simple as the Golden Rule: “Treat others as we would want to be treated.”

Let us remember why we joined this great fraternity, where good men are made better; let us use the tools of our craft. The square provides direction and helps us square our actions by the square of virtue. Virtue is the cement that binds our relationships, and it is by our virtues that we are measured.

Remember – as Masons, we are not measured by our wealth or fame, but by our character, deeds, trustworthiness, and love for one another.

The square and compass symbol that we proudly display on our buildings publicizes that within is a Masonic lodge, the home of Freemasons who act upon the level. When we proudly display that same symbol personally, on our jewelry, car, or the clothing on our backs, it should be a reminder to us to behave in a manner fitting of a Freemason. Our fraternity’s greatness is demonstrated through our positive contributions to the world.

As we reflect upon the notion that a man must ask a Mason to become a Mason, we must ask ourselves: Are we the role models that we strive to be?

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