

Civility for March 2020

At the end of last month's article, I said that we would explore National Civility Month. Well, Civility Month occurs in May and I'll be the first to inform everyone that this is NOT the first mistake I've made... today. So, we have a bit more time to think on how we can make a national (or global) civil impact in May.

Rather, this month we will discuss the civil and Masonic characteristic of RESPECT. Respect is truly the embodiment of civility. Try to think about civility without including respect. Think of a world without respect and you get a global picture of much of what is going on in the world today. The surprising component of respect that many people never realize is its multi-faceted, multi-dimensional nature.

Most of us would define respect as the consideration of others. But respect is a seed within each of us that must be cultivated; planted in the soil of self-regard, watered with empathy, fertilized with open-mindedness and placed in the light of awareness. It grows better when planted in a garden with few weeds and nurtured with care. Now wasn't that a deep thought! But it's true if you think about it.

A few years ago, there was a person dressed in unwashed and dirty military fatigues, boots that had not seen polish in years, open front fatigue shirt (I think the Marines call it a blouse) with sergeants stripes on the arm and a Masonic Grand Lodge jewel pinned to the pocket. His pants did not cover his undies (could have been pajamas) and obviously a razor was not a part of his kit. Because I am a Mason and a veteran, I approached the individual and will include an abbreviated and censored version of the conversation.

Me: "Are you a veteran?"

They: "No, what's it to you?"

Me: "Are you aware of the impression that you present to the people around you? I mean especially to the Vets. It shows a lack of respect."

They: "SO?!"

Me: "And do you know what that medal is and what it represents?"

They: "No! And you can just kiss my 'pajama bottom' (Literary license here)."

They: "A whole dissertation on their lack of concern about my opinion, my heritage, parentage, IQ and education"

There was more, but it was here that I discovered that they really did not care... about anything. They had little if any self-regard, self-respect and their job was not only to demonstrate that to the world but to offend and solicit a disrespectful response from everyone around them. And sadly, in this they were very successful. Now, I respect a person's right to live, pray/not pray, dress or vote as they please. But since that time, I have noticed that people that disrespect others, generally have little or no regard for themselves or anything, including the world around them. Their world – our world.

We all have heard that respect must be earned. And I will add that it's not cheap. Beginning with ourselves, we must earn our own self-respect. We do this by making our actions the expression of our thoughts and words in real life. Being of sound mind and pure of heart promotes our self-respect and

personal happiness. Projected into the world around us, we begin to earn the respect of others as we expand that respect to all the other aspects of the world, it's wildlife, the environment and to our society.

And in our Fraternity, Masons express this respect by the simple act of a handshake, a grip while looking directly into a man's eyes. The grip between two men demonstrates the fidelity that only be shared with respect. It does not intrude on the opinions, beliefs, habits or diet or choice of vehicle of another Mason. Do not let us take another Mason's hand without remembering the respect that we are paying to that man. Then let Masons take that respect out of the Lodge and into the world, one person, place or thing at a time. Start with the dog. They like you for who you could be.

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