

## Civility for February 2020

This month we continue with our discussion of **Tolerance** and **Patience**. This month we will take a broader and separate view of these very Masonic virtues. Tolerance is that state of inactivity and silence in the face of dissention. The lack of tolerance in the areas of religion and politics is the very reason we have the Masonic landmark or prohibition of discussing them in Lodge. Pick any subject and there are almost as many opinions and beliefs as there are people in the world. Don't you find it interesting that all the major religions profess that tolerance is a good thing which we all should embrace and practice in our everyday lives and yet, fanaticism is on the rise and violence is the result? Where faith and facts have the same influence, there will always be a difference of opinion. Our intolerance has led to the widest possible separation in people, even on the most mundane and trite subjects. Ask yourself, "What difference does it personally make in my life if the person next to me has a different understanding of the universe?"

Freemasons around the world are comprised of nearly every religion, political stance, economic background or orientation. How like a homecoming it is when we find a Brother in a different city, state or country. It's an immediate homecoming! And do we ask first what church, political affiliation or model of car that Brother may have? Then why does it matter that the individual or sect or race has a different view or faith? In truth, it does not. And if you don't think that true, how many relationships have you surrendered after learning that a friend has a different view of a political candidate WHERE we exercised a bit of TOLERANCE (and maybe a bit of restraint). My own family is sharply divided on nearly every issue that gets discussed around the dinner table. My friends all have very different opinions on most topics, especially on how to adjust a carburetor, but in the age of fuel injection, does it really matter?

Masons express the concept of acceptance at every meeting and yet some never make the connection. If we all meet on the level, isn't that the personification and demonstration of Tolerance? Isn't the Level one of the most basic and fundamental Masonic attributes of our institution; a tool that is as absolutely necessary in the building of a physical structure as it is in building a personal relationship? As often as the level is exemplified in our rituals, symbols and ceremonies, the level should remind us to be tolerant of all whom we encounter.

Like Tolerance, **Patience** is that state of mind that accepts that we don't all have the same brain. It is our recognition that even with the same facts or circumstances, people's brains process information differently. Patience is why friendships last (some for a lifetime) and keeps children in the world. (Tolerance is why we keep having more.) Patience is that stepping on the breaks when revenge and anger are driving our emotions. You can hardly miss a news cast that does not present a segment of the results of someone losing patience and reacting before thinking.

For the Freemason, patience is demonstrated by his ability to accept (not necessarily adopt) the view, action or opinion of a Brother and is exemplified by the *transition* from the rough to the perfect ashlar. Beginning as the imperfect man, many of us have developed ideas or concepts about the world around us that have changed, improved and refined as we evolve toward the perfect ashlar. During that advancement we all must be patient with ourselves and (more especially) with those all those around us. As they are undergoing the same journey as we, let us be reminded that the distance to be separates the rough and perfect ashlar is different for each of us and not let it separate us from our Brethren.

Our Patience and Tolerance has the ability to make that a much smoother and satisfying journey for ourselves and those around us.

Next when you are in lodge, look at the ashlar and the separation in their placement. Be mindful of the fact that although one may be North and the other South, both are in the East. (Interesting that in order to get from one to the other, one must circumnavigate around the Holy Scriptures.) Each of us is at some different point in our transition, and as Masons, be patient of a Brother and be willing to help them (and be helped) in their trip.

It is permissible, even encouraged, to use this article as a discussion topic or an Educational program in your Lodge.

March is National Civility Month. Our next discussion will be about *Civility* and why it is so important for Masons to lead the way to restore our civil society. For an entertaining start, look into George Washington's 101 Rules for Civility and Wikipedia's definition of Civility.