

Civility April 2020

This month our discussion centers around the concept of INTEGRITY. In simple terms integrity is the quality of a person about being honest and having strong moral principles. But there is nothing simple about having or maintaining integrity on a personal level. Men of renown, famous in many regards, often had their integrity tried and found themselves wanting. Others, like our heroes and martyrs are good examples of persons that held integrity in higher esteem than even losing their lives. That seems to me to be a very high price and it's good that few of us have been called on to pay that much of a bill.

There are many 'quick bites' to remind us that integrity is a critical part of a strong character. Like, "Integrity is doing what is right, even when no one is looking." Or "Integrity is choosing your thoughts and actions based on values rather than personal gain." Both these quotes point to the fact that integrity is a deliberate choice, one that we must make in every instance. It could be supposed that integrity is only applied when others are involved. However, that makes integrity only part-time or conditional and which leaves a soft spot in our character. A 'friend' once told me that they felt that there is a conflict within integrity, stating that having a solid moral sense, sometimes conflicts with the need of absolute honesty. His/her example was that even if they knew something was morally wrong, the honesty of telling someone would be hurtful and disappointing to someone close. You can debate the question in your Lodge. But, while you are having that debate, please have the jewel of the JW, the Plumb, in plain view. How are Masons to act but by being upright in the eyes of God and man?

When integrity is an embedded part of our character, it makes being civil in public society so much easier. On occasion, it might seem to be in disagreement with honesty, but when mixed with respect, tolerance, patience (all the other topics we've discussed) it becomes obvious that civility is the outward expression of a person that has integrity, as well as, a good character.

It might appear that the connection of the Masonic plumb and civility would be difficult to make. Not so! A person so denoted as being civil is also one who also holds truth in high regard. And not just being truthful and honest with mankind, but with himself... in the presence of the Supreme Architect. The plumb should remind all of us that if we do not build perpendicular structures, that at some point the building, the wall or our character will fail. All the lessons about the plumb that we are given in our Masonic journey deal with our outward associations with our Brothers, our family, our society and, lastly, ourselves. I suppose that one could be 'civil' and not be truthful. But that lack of integrity, that insincerity would soon become apparent. They are called hypocrites and are rightfully scorned.

Remember the Plumb as you practice your civility. In the end you will be remembered as the person with integrity.