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Fight towards the light!!
In memory of Ian Wilkinson 32° KCCH



By Jason D. Rees 32° KCCH

The number of good things that you have in your life depends largely upon your ability to notice them. Our lives are full of trials and tribulations, hardships and sadness, loss and defeat. Each of our problems is unique to the individual. The way in which we think and react to them can either raise us up or can sink us further into the depths.

The darkness that comes along with our problems can make for some of the worst times of our lives. That feeling of total abandonment and the isolation and feeling of forsakenness can be overwhelming. While light has the feeling of warmth and calmness, the darkness can feel heavy and alone, the days and nights can drag out to endless time or feel as if time is moving so fast that it is slipping right through our fingertips.

In ancient folklore, there is a phrase: “the demons come out at night.” This of course relates to the time when someone is finally alone with their thoughts, the house is quiet and they dwell upon their worries and concerns. The nights can feel so long and quiet, thoughts and dreams begin to merge, and we go into the dream world – if you are lucky enough to fall asleep. The hours can feel like days and the days like years. Your light begins to feel like a candle in the middle of a raging storm, flickering with every great gust of wind, attempting to snuff out your soul as if it was that very candle.

Even though the problems are unique to the individual, the feelings are not. Others have felt the same way. Many have stood at the edge of the abyss and stared deep into these endless depths. You are not alone and that is part of the riddle of the abyss and the beast that rules it. The beast tries to convince you that the world does not exist around you and that you have already been defeated. That feeling, that you are more of a burden than a help, is a hallmark mantra from the beast of the abyss.

My brother, I am here to tell you that this is false and this riddle, this mantra, is nothing more than a lie told to confuse and blind you. We must fight the good fight against this. We should not fear it but embrace it with all the strength that we have remaining within us. Let me reassure you that this strength is sufficient to fight back against the darkness, and the light that feels like it is going out is in fact pushing back against the abyss.

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Master of the Symbolic Lodge 20°



By Jason D. Rees 32° KCCH

What are your duties as Master of a Symbolic Lodge? Many brothers might not have heard the terms “Craft Lodge” or “Symbolic Lodge.” These terms are synonymous with one another and refer to the first three degrees in masonry: the Entered Apprentice, Fellow Craft, and Master Mason. The Encyclopedia of Freemasonry, written by Albert G. Mackey and Charles T. McClenachan, defines a Symbolic Lodge as “a Lodge of Master Masons, with Fellow-Craft and Apprentice Lodge worked under its constitution, is called a Symbolic lodge, because in it the Symbolic degrees are conferred.”

As a brother moves through his masonic journey to the East to become Master of his Symbolic Lodge, there are some duties that he must attend to while he is Master of his Lodge. First is the allocation of light and knowledge to his fellow brothers who bestowed upon him this great honor by electing him to the east. A Master of a Symbolic Lodge must be well versed in Masonic virtues both within the lodge and without. Our Masonic behavior should be the same within the Lodge and without the Lodge. Of course, we are all human and suffer weaknesses and temptations, and we can become frustrated or let our anger take the best of us. The true Mason will seek restitution to those whom he may have wounded and will practice self-reflection and self-discipline, always learning and bettering himself through life’s day-to-day challenges.

Another sometimes overlooked duty of the Master of a Symbolic Lodge is to preserve Masonry in its primitive purity. What this means is that we should not cheapen the experience of the degree work and the opening and closing rituals. Maintain a solemn attitude from all members and practice proper decorum before, during, and after a tiled meeting. Remember that our patriarchs created the ritual and perfected it to instill in us how we should be treating others and ourselves, and we must seek out and learn all that we can from the symbolisms within those rituals.

In the 20th degree (Master of the Symbolic Lodge) we find lessons about ensuring that your life counts, and you are admonished to make the most of your life by embracing and putting into practice the philosophies of our ancient and magnanimous order. We should always treat others with dignity, and we must listen closely to and be patient in our dealings with others. We should never assign motives to others’ opinions without first asking them. And finally, we should weigh our

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You may not love the life you are living right now, but you are alive and you still have time to change it. Do not focus only upon the things that are missing from your life, or else you will always feel empty. The bravest thing you can do is that which reflects the most courage: reach out and ask for help. Even the bravest warriors call for aid. Allow the dawn to have its chance to rise and chase out the darkness. God is coming; you must wait, take a breath, and hold on a moment longer.

If you feel God is not there, always remember that the teacher is silent during the test. The great lie of "I don't matter anyways" is just that: a lie. You matter and you are more blessed than you think. We are all interconnected in this journey of life; never forget how much you matter to those around you. You are the light in someone else's darkness. When it feels as if you give everything you have and life hits back harder than ever, you are in a season of proving and strength. Think about all that you have accomplished and overcome up till now; you are a conqueror. Tests are meant to reveal who it is that you are becoming.

Remember that all of the biblical heroes had flaws: Jacob was a liar; Gideon was deeply afraid; Moses was a murderer and had a stutter; Elijah was suicidal; Peter denied Christ three times; even David, whom God calls a "man after my own heart," committed murder and adultery. We are all deeply flawed, but God can use you to change the world for the better. You are what makes the world special to someone. It is always the darkest before the dawn, but the dawn is coming – God is coming!

"A brother does not offer you a hiding place from life. He stands beside you until you remember you were built to stand in the open"
Marcus Aurelius

"Journey Passport" Program

The Houston Valley is participating in the "Journey Passport" program which includes 33 challenges that allow participants to earn six unique Scottish Rite challenge coins. The passport program is designed to take brothers throughout the Valley of Houston and the Southern Jurisdiction of the Scottish Rite. To learn more and get a passport, contact Brother Jason Rees 32° KCCH at: acompass@yahoo.com

The Houston Valley Herald Email List

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The Houston Valley Educational Program Master Craftsman Zoom study group. If you are interested in taking classes please email acompass@yahoo.com. Open to any Master Mason in good standing.

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Please like and subscribe to our channel, it helps promote the Scottish Rite and allows us to continue this great work.

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Check out our latest episode of the Houston Valley Podcast, the interview of the Michael R. Poll, a New York Times Bestselling writer and publisher. He is a 50-year Mason and a member of several lodges, including Perfect Union Lodge #1, Etoile Polaire Lodge #1, Cervantes Lodge #5, Germania Lodge #46 (New Orleans, Louisiana), and Hiram-Takoma Lodge #10 (Washington, D.C.). Michael is a noted Masonic author and historian. He has served as a Past President and Founding Fellow of The Masonic Society; a Fellow of the Philaethes Society and the Maine Lodge of Research; a member of the Society of Blue Friars; and a full member of the Texas Lodge of Research. He has contributed papers to Heredom. (cornerstonepublisher.com)



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decisions deliberately and dispassionately, and make our conclusions impartially.

In this degree we are also taught about the ancient philosopher of Hermes whom the Egyptians called "Thoth" and the Romans referred to as "Mercury." The degree makes its way through beliefs of different faiths such as Zoroastrianism, and the teachings of Confucius, Manu, and Socrates. We learn of the ancient lawgiver of the Babylonians, Hammurabi, and how all men should act with moderation, equity and integrity.

The degree ends with this: "As such a Master, you are to bring up square work and square work only. Like a temple erected by the plumb you are to lean neither to one side or the other. Like a building well squared and leveled, you are to be firm and steadfast in your convictions of right and justice. Like the circle swept with the compasses, you are to be true. In the scales of justice you are to weigh the facts and the law alone, nor place in either scale personal friendship or personal dislike, neither fear nor favor. The Power, the Wisdom and the Justice of God are on the side of every just thought, and it cannot fail, any more than God Himself can perish."

ALWAYS A MASON

BY DOUGLAS MALLOCH

LET NO KING QUITE PUT OFF HIS CROWN!
I STILL WOULD HAVE HIM KINGLY WHEN
IN SOME OLD INN THE KING SAT DOWN
TO BANQUET WITH HIS SERVING-MEN.

I LOVE A MILD AND MERRY PRIEST,
WHOM BROTHERS TOAST, AND NEIGHBORS
PROD;
YET WOULD I HAVE HIM, AT THE FEAST,
A LITTLE OF THE MAN OF GOD.

SO WITH A MASON: I WOULD SEE
HIM SOMEWHAT OF A MASON STILL,
THOUGH FAR FROM LODGE-ROOMS HE MAY
BE,
IN COURT, OR COUNTING-HOUSE, OR MILL.
WHATEVER GARMENT HE MAY DOFF,
WHAT MARK MASONIC LAY ASIDE,
I WOULD NOT HAVE HIM QUITE PUT OFF
THE CRAFT HE LATELY GLORIFIED.

A SOLDIER IS A SOLDIER, THOUGH
HE LAYS THE SWORD ASIDE AWHILE.
THE TIME, THE PLACE, I DO NOT KNOW
MAN MAY NOT SERVE, OR MAY NOT SMILE.

I KNOW NO MOMENT ANYWHERE,
WHATEVER PLACE THE PLACE MAY BE,
A MASON MAY NOT ALWAYS WEAR
A LITTLE OF HIS MASONRY.



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