

Grand Master's Theme

The Grand Master, M.W. Bro Gary Dowling, has taken as his theme for the next two years "Believe in Masonry". One of the statements he made was that;

Believers in Masonry will embrace and enjoy the following;

First: they will expand their own Masonic horizons by pushing the boundaries on Masonic learning

Second: they will re-energize the experienced Masons around them by encouraging them to broaden their existing knowledge

Third: they will engage the new masons by helping them tap their apparent limitless thirst for knowledge

To those ends I would like to talk about something I hope will push those boundaries, broaden the existing knowledge and hopefully encourage newer as well as older Masons to search for knowledge, which today certainly seems limitless with the easy access to the many books written about Masonry and the endless writings on the subject available on the internet.

My subject this evening is: The Religion of Masonry

The Religion of Masonry

Presented at Blyth Lodge #303 19th September 2011

Now I know what you are all thinking; “Masonry is not a religion”. We are all taught that throughout our Masonic life. But if we believe we are not a religion we need to understand what a religion is!

The Dictionary says ;

- A man’s expression of an acknowledgement of the divine; Masons say a “belief in the Supreme Being”
- A system of beliefs and practices relating to the Sacred; Masons say “principles of the purest morality though veiled in allegory and illustrated by symbols”, we also have many other beliefs and practices
- Something which has a powerful hold on a persons way of thinking; is that similar to “ our meetings are intended to cultivate and enlighten the mind, to induce the habit of virtue and to strengthen the fundamental principles of our Order, Brotherly Love , Relief and Truth.

Very similar expressions and thoughts.

Now, when we think of religion most of us if not all of us here tonight think of Christianity but Christianity is one of the newer religions. Christianity started 2000 years ago while;

Hinduism and Shintoism, 3rd Millennium BC,

Judaism 13th Century BC

Zoroastrianism 7th Century BC

Taoism, Confucianism, Jainism, Buddhism 6th Century BC

and then we had Christianity 1st Century AD

So in reality we are fairly young

Another description of religion is;

- Uniting its adherents in a community such as Christianity or Judaism.
This we don't do "form a community based on religion" as we accept all men who believe in a Supreme Being, irregardless of so called religion.

During a discussion about religion the Dalai Lama was asked a question by Brazilian theologian Leonardo Boff, which the questionnaire admitted himself, was malicious, believing the answer given would be Tibetan Buddhism or the more ancient Eastern religions.

After some thought the Dalai Lama said:

The best religion is the one that gets you closest to God, it is the one that makes you a "Better Person"

Isn't that something we try to do? Take a good man and make him better. Now I don't believe that we can make a person better we can only guide him and point out the correct path, but that is a subject for another night.

Feeling embarrassed the man asked another question, "What is it that makes me better?"

The Dalai Lama answered:

What ever makes you

- more compassionate
- more sensible
- more detached
- more loving

- more humanitarian
- more responsible
- more ethical

The religion that will do that for YOU is the best religion.

He then said “I am not interested about your religion or if you are religious or not. What is really important is your behavior in front of your peers, family, work, community and in front of the world.” “Remember” he said, “the Universe is the echo of your actions and your thoughts.”

Don't we say “The universe is the temple of the Deity whom we serve”

If we believe that, then all our actions and thoughts are in that Temple and before the GAOTU. As Masons we should be trying to live our principles all the time and acting as a Mason in our daily actions throughout our public and private lives.

There were other things he spoke about, which I may speak about another night, but his final statement was;

“There is no religion higher than Truth.”

My Brethren, Masonry and Religion have many things in common but Masonry is not a religion but we must admit that it is religious.

- Freemasonry supports religion.
- Freemasonry is not indifferent to religion.
- Without interfering with religious practice, it expects each member to follow his own faith.

- We have no dogma or theology, we offer no sacraments, we do not promise salvation, and as a result men of different religions can meet in fellowship and brotherhood under the Supreme Being in which they individually believe. But if we were all to follow the distinguishing characteristics, tenets or fundamental principles of our order we would be following many of the teachings of whatever religion we follow and we could all say we were members of the “Best Religion”.