

The Three Great Tenets of a Mason's Profession

The “three great tenets of a mason's profession” are detailed in the lecture of the first degree and this is also the first mention of the “profession” of a Mason. While the tenets are explained we are left wondering just what is the profession of a Mason and what does it have to do with the tenets?

The word profession is defined as an occupation that requires extensive education or specialized training. An individual trained in the finer points of his field of endeavor. We as Mason's have established ourselves as cultured individuals with high standards. A Mason is a very polished individual with impeccable character and knowledge of the world's inner workings or higher teachings.

The profession of a mason is the taking of the action step, which is the practical application of these higher teachings. When they lead by example, they appear to be different, in a positive manner, to those in the profane world. Masons seasoned in their profession are often referred to as “men of character” in the communities in which they live.

The monitor of the Grand Lodge of Alaska defines the Three Great Tenets as follows.

Brotherly Love – “we are taught to regard the whole human race as one family—the high and the low, the rich and the poor; who, created by one Almighty parent and inhabitants of the same planet, ought to aid, support and protect each other. On this principle, Masonry unites men of every country, sect and opinion, and conciliates true friendship among those who might otherwise remain perpetually at a distance.”

Relief – “of the distressed is a duty incumbent upon all men, but more particularly upon Masons, who are linked together by an indissoluble chain of sincere affection. To soothe the unhappy, to compassionate their miseries, and to restore peace to the troubled mind, is the grand aim we have in view. On this basis we form our friendships and establish our connections.”

Truth – “is a divine attribute and the foundation of every virtue. To be a good man and true is the first lesson taught in Masonry. On this theme we contemplate, and by its dictates endeavor to regulate our conduct; hence, while influenced by this principle, hypocrisy and deceit are unknown among us, sincerity and plain-dealing distinguish us, and heart and tongue join in promoting each other's welfare and rejoicing in each other's prosperity.”

As you can detect from the language used this was written quite some time ago. I would like to take the opportunity to offer a modern day interpretation of the above definitions. But before doing that I would like to state that it is my belief that the Three Great Tenets are the bedrock, the very foundation of Masonry. All of such equal importance that masonry could not exist without even one of them.

Brotherly Love is what I like to refer to as the all-encompassing tenet. It allows us to put into practice many attributes that we find challenging and in some cases, didn't think we had. With Brotherly Love we are patient with a brother whose behavior we find offensive until he grows as a mason and learns a better way. We ignore a brother's political rant until he learns to subdue his passions, even if it takes a little longer than we would like. We spend time with men of vast age differences than our own knowing full well that we have nothing in common other than masonry and discover that every man has some wisdom to pass on. With Brotherly Love we learn to subdue our own passions and to be pleasant to be around. Brotherly Love gives us the opportunity to discover things about ourselves we did not know about and to grow in ways we never imagined.

Relief is often viewed as being charitable but it takes on other forms as well. Relief is not a hand out but a hand up. When you relieve a brother you voluntarily and enthusiastically take either a part of or his entire burden, even if only temporarily. You carry the load when he cannot and help him to get strong enough to once again take control. Relief is raking a yard for a sick or older brother who can't move as well as he once could. Relief is babysitting for a young brother new to fatherhood who needs a little time to decompress. Relief is counseling a brother who may have made an unwise decision and helping him correct the matter. Relief is teaching a brother a new skill to aid in his development.

Truth is wisdom attained through self-discovery and experimentation. Truth is deciphering the symbols of Masonry for the purpose of incorporating them into your life. Truth is our guide. Truth is recognizing your own shortcomings and marching forward to correct them to further develop your character. Truth is the most difficult tenet because the man in the mirror is constantly working against us. The search for truth is the ultimate goal of masonry.

Our goal as masons is to be the living embodiment of these tenets, to be those men of character in our communities, to bring honor to our families and our brothers and to enhance the peace and good order of society. Our goal, as Gandhi said, is to be the change we want to see in the world. $\chi \rightarrow \infty$

Joe Dahl

Questions for contemplation:

1. Do you, does your Lodge promote Brotherly Love?
Can you identify negatives that detract from Brotherly Love?
2. Relate Brotherly Love to Peace and Harmony
3. Truth?

Source: Alaska Monitor