



## Notes from a Preceptor's Handbook

### A Preceptor:

(OED) 1440 A.D. from Latin *praceptor*

one who instructs, a teacher, a tutor, a mentor

“Let brotherly **love**  
ever distinguish us  
as men and masons”

**Let brotherly love ever distinguish us....**

If there is one aspect of human behaviour which we all find unacceptable it is surely the very unpleasant manner in which some individuals treat one another, what we generally refer to as 'being unkind', and whilst we would hope that this would never apply to our Brethren in Freemasonry, very sadly sometimes it does, although it is a very rare event.

**Kindness, (noun):** the quality of being friendly, generous, and considerate.

The dictionary offers a simple explanation of the word. But what the definition doesn't reveal is how to actually *be kind*.

I was recently quite surprised to discover that there is a designated annual Kindness Day UK, and even a World Kindness Day, which falls on November 13.

One of the first and very significant lessons taught to a newly made Freemason is the important virtue of charity, and when using this word we should remember that in its original sense, which was still relevant and in use in the 18th century, meant much more than the act of buying raffle tickets or signing a five year covenant to the Charity Chest. These acts of giving, generous as they are, represent only one aspect of an inner sense of morality, which can best be said to reflect what we refer to as the grand principles on which Freemasonry is founded 'Brotherly Love, Relief and Truth'. Brotherly love (of one another,) relief (of those disadvantaged) and truth, the courage to live and be true to high standards of morality.

At the initiation of every Freemason the following words are spoken but sadly not always heard. '*Be especially careful to maintain in their fullest splendour those truly Masonic ornaments, which have already been amply illustrated – Benevolence and Charity*'

**Benevolence** - the quality of being well meaning; kindness.

**Charity** - the voluntary giving of help. But in biblical terms used as a substitute for the word love.

In the VSL we are reminded 'And now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three; but the greatest of these is charity.' In many contemporary translations of the VSL the word charity is also referred to as love (taken from the Greek 'agape' which when translated into Latin gives us the word 'caritas' which in turn became anglicised into the word 'charity') and is said to be the pre-eminent of the three graces. But should this term be considered relevant to our attitude towards our fellow Brethren or is brotherly love on the wane?

Brotherly love, relief and charity therefore all have the very same meaning – to give to another

If we believe Freemasonry to be a 'family' we would surely accept that from time to time there will be familial fall outs, differences of opinion and occasionally outright hostility; however, as with most families, seemingly intractable problems are usually short lived and peace and harmony is eventually restored. Occasionally the 'issues' whilst not necessarily warranting it, are a little more difficult to resolve and lead to medium and even long term disquiet. Such situations are at best very sad and at worst damaging to the very moral fabric of our Order.

One of the great advantages of a Lodge is that men rub shoulders with each other and learn that each is not the sole person in the Lodge, but that others have their rights and are entitled to consideration. The friendly social inter relationship which comes from membership is of real value in helping to mould the character of every member of the Lodge. We are taught to subordinate our wills to the general good and to think and act unselfishly and for the good of the Lodge as a whole, rather than to simply go our own way ignoring the interests of others.

We all 'sign up' to the proposition that we will attempt to 'settle our differences amicably' in the earnest expectation that we will 'enter the Lodge and work with that love and harmony which should at all times characterise

Freemasons.' And yet, is that really what we aspire to, or is it simply a form of words which we repeat and hear repeated, but believe only applies to the Entered Apprentice?

'Sadly discord and a lack of harmony are all too apparent in some Lodges. How can this be? What heinous offence can occur which justifies such intemperate behaviour? How can we stray so far from the ideal expressed in the Address given to the Brethren at every Installation ceremony: '*May brotherly love and affection ever distinguish us as men and as Masons. May the principles and tenets of our profession which are founded on the principles of religious truth and virtue, teach us to measure our actions by the rule of rectitude, square our conduct by the principles of morality, and guide our inclinations, and even our thoughts, within the compass of propriety.*'

And if we are so disposed as to be acting outside of the principles and tenets of our profession, then surely there can be no merit or virtue in donating money towards a charity outside your Lodge if you are not in charity, or are at variance, with a Brother within it. Charity truly begins at home.

Brotherly love is the foundation of true Masonic happiness and if there is one truth of which I am most certain it is that the purpose of our Masonic life is to be happy and to communicate and share that happiness – but don't simply take my word for it, consider the injunction to the Brethren of the Lodge at the Installation of a new Master – '*that we shall have but one aim in view, to please each other and unite in the grand design of being happy and communicating happiness*' and if that wasn't sufficient to convince you of this inalienable truth consider the entreaty to the Master '*the happiness of the Brethren will be promoted in proportion to the zeal and assiduity with which you promote the genuine principles and tenets of the craft*' and I believe we are all of one mind that the genuine principles referred to are those based on religious truth and virtue and must be those on which Freemasonry is founded – Brotherly Love, relief and truth.

So there we have it, as plain as can be, it is 'brotherly love and affection' which distinguishes us as men and as Masons, and it is 'by a uniformly kind, just, amiable and virtuous deportment, that we prove to the world the happy and beneficial effects of our Ancient and Honourable Institution.' If, therefore we experience some incident which should cause offence, hurt our feelings or simply ruffles our feathers, let us stop and remember the final entreaty found in the First Degree Long Closing; an eloquent and yet sadly underused piece of ritual – 'Finally Brethren, be of one mind, live in peace with one another' .

And why not try a little harder to 'be kind to one another!'

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