

Just What is This Thing Called Unity?

Of course I read the newspaper every day, and yes I read the comics first....because after that it's all 'down hill'. I recall from an old Peanuts cartoon...now, picture this.....Lucy demands that Linus change TV channels, threatening him with her fist if he doesn't do what she wants. "What makes you think you can walk right in here and take over?" he asked. "These five fingers," Lucy replied. "Individually they're nothing but when I curl them together like this into a single unit, they form a weapon that is terrible to behold."....and Linus responds..."Which channel do you want?" Turning away, he looks at his own fingers and says, "Why can't you guys get organized like that?" Sometimes it may seem as though our fraternity is like that – we just can't seem to 'get organized'. No working together...no unity.

As I thought about the implications of the theme of unity, I was reminded of the scripture we use in the Entered Apprentice degree; Psalm 133 – "Behold, how good and pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!" You can see that unity is one of the underlying principles of Freemasonry. My Funk & Wagnall's Dictionary defines 'unity', in part, as: 'the quality or state of accord or agreement, the combination or arrangement of many parts into a whole: unification, and oneness of purpose: concord (or continuity). Masons begin their journey with a pretty high degree of unity. Our Entered Apprentice lecture notes that Masons are linked together by an indissoluble chain of sincere affection.

There are at least five things that help unify and bind Masons together. The first thing is that Masons believe in God. Masonry doesn't admit atheists because no obligation taken by an atheist would be considered binding upon him. The second is that a Mason offers himself to the service of God. Because of this, you know that a Brother believes in striving to live an upright and moral life. The third thing is that his faith in God teaches him to believe in the immortality of the soul, which is clearly professed in our funeral ritual. This is the fourth thing that helps us be unified.....a Mason desires to be of service to mankind because charity is a founding principle of our order. He learns in the Entered Apprentice degree that charity extends beyond the grave, throughout the boundless realms of eternity. The fifth is his pledge to assist and protect one another. One of the first lessons taught in the Entered Apprentice degree is the requirement to assist one another. Protection of one another is specifically taught in the Master Mason degree.

Other civic organizations exist with charitable objectives, Kiwanis, Rotary, and Lions Clubs come to mind, but they require only that you be civic minded to become a member. They don't emphasize living a moral life, supporting and protecting one another, or belief in the immortality of the soul.

Thus, Masonry is more than just a fraternal gathering of men. We are indeed linked together by that indissoluble chain of brotherly love and affection. It's actually quite difficult to put words to paper to describe what that concept really is, but I would describe it as the harmony of a tune that we all know, but could not hum, or could not say, but, we all know the 'feeling', don't we?

Unification was part of the definition I just shared with you. The Family of Freemasonry is a good example of this unity principle. Based on the principles of Masonry, Job's Daughters, Rainbow, and De Molay all teach love of God, respect for adults, and charity outside of the group. They also teach life skills of leadership and public speaking that are not as readily available elsewhere...as well as grace, poise, and intellect...certainly not skills taught today in the public schools. The Order of the Eastern Star joins together husband and wife so they might share in the quest for a moral life, a charitable life. The Scottish and York Rites exist to extend a Mason's quest for additional moral teachings as well as satisfy his desire to be of service to mankind. The Shrine is dedicated to the rehabilitation of children, a goal on which we all can agree.

Taken together, this Masonic Family of ours is dedicated to the assistance and protection of one another. Our Masonic community is dedicated to the service of mankind. This charitable work by all the branches of our family links us together for a common purpose and contributes to unity among the members.

Speaking of unity....I love analogies....behold the tiny snowflake, one of nature's most beautiful and fragile things. Each one different from the other, but just look at what they can do when they stick together! Much the same as Lucy's fingers! Or, consider one of the emblems of our order...the Beehive. Filled with so many workers, constantly moving toward one goal. The inhabitants of that hive are so classed by nature, working and living in unity so that their goal of preserving their leadership, keeping the hive safe, and working toward making honey for the benefit of others will be accomplished. Those bees, indeed, present a united front! A Lodge is a lot like that beehive...the inhabitants must work in unity to achieve their goal. Oh, there is plenty of work to go around, but there must also be peace and harmony within. Let us continue our quest as brothers to stick together like snowflakes, become a tightly knit group of fingers, and become as bees in the hive, well organized and working for the good of others, toward one common goal, and 'dwelling together in unity'.

Those who want to exercise their own authority in a limited scope usually follow the maxim of "divide and command." A better motto, and one that speaks to the core of Freemasonry is "unite and guide." We must not just *follow* the ideals of Freemasonry, but we must *build on them*. Our task is great, but together we can work to achieve the success we envision. I found these words of Henry Wadsworth Longfellow to be most appropriate for the occasion.... *All your strength is in your union; all your danger is in discord.*

Perhaps the one thing that contributes to unity more than any other is enthusiasm. You know, each morning when you first open your eyes and you realize God gave you one more day; you have the opportunity to choose your attitude for that day. You can choose to be happy, or you can choose to be sad and grumpy. Some days it's a really tough decision for me. Those of us who still have to work for a living may sometimes find it difficult to be really happy about the approaching workday. But I'm working on doing better.

Those who choose to be happy attack the day with gusto, they're optimistic, and they are usually leaders. Enthusiastic Masons, workers, and volunteers have a very positive effect of those around them. Organizations with enthusiasm try harder, accomplish more, and seek results rather than processes. Organizations with enthusiasm have more members to share the load because people just naturally like to associate with enthusiastic people. They call it fun! We all like to do things that are fun.

So, when you show up for a meeting, practice, degree work, banquet, or picnic and you radiate enthusiasm, people do notice. They're affected by your enthusiasm and often pick it up and radiate it to others. All of a sudden you have an entire group of enthusiastic can-do people ready to go out and conquer a problem or project, and they'll have fun doing it.

I just shared with you one of the secrets to unity.....did you catch it? It's the *Enthusiastic Mason*. People judge your Masonry by your actions, not just your words. The actions of an enthusiastic Mason will match your words and then you, as well as those around you, can 'dwell together in unity'.

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