

To Adorn with Beauty.....

Most of you who have heard me speak know that I don't usually begin my educational topics with a joke, but for the sake of making a point...here goes!

This man is dining alone in a fancy upscale restaurant and there is a gorgeous 40-something redhead sitting at the next table. He's been checking her out since he sat down, but lacks the nerve to start a conversation. Suddenly she sneezes and her glass eye comes flying out of its socket toward the man. Out of sheer reflex, in one sweeping motion he reaches out, grabs it out of the air, and gracefully hands it back to her. "Oh my, I am so sorry," the woman says as she pops her eye back in place, "Let me buy your dinner to make it up to you."

They enjoy a wonderful dinner together, and afterwards they go to the theatre followed by drinks. They talk, they laugh, and they share their deepest dreams with each other. After paying for everything, she asks him if he would like to come back to her place for a nightcap.....and here's the part where you can tell it's a joke....she asks if he would like to stay for breakfast! Needless to say, they have a wonderful time. Next morning she cooks a gourmet breakfast with all the trimmings. The guy is amazed. Everything has been so incredible! "You know," he says, "you are a wonderful woman....are you this nice to every guy you meet?" "No," she replied, "you just happened to catch my eye."

There's a tie in there to my topic this evening....Beauty. We all know about beauty....usually it's just something that catches our eye. We don't think much about what beauty is but, as the saying goes, 'you'll know it when you see it'. Beauty is a word that's used a lot but the meaning is most often taken for granted; we think we know what it means and figure that the person next to us understands it the same way we do. It gets trickier when we actually have to say what beauty is because we stumble through words that might say something about attractiveness in other people, or the prettiness of a landscape, or the grandeur of a sunset. So, let's think about it for a moment....what does the word 'beauty' really mean?

Webster says that beauty is: "the quality (or aggregate of qualities) in a person or thing that gives pleasure to the senses, or pleurably exalts the mind or spirit." Now, 'exalts' means to raise high, so, beauty in a person or thing pleurably raises the senses, mind or spirit. We also talk about beauty in Masonry. We say, "The three great pillars of Masonry are Wisdom, Strength, and Beauty; it being necessary that there is Wisdom to contrive, Strength to support, and Beauty to adorn every great and important undertaking." Were your ideas about beauty close to what Webster says? Did you think about what Masonry says regarding beauty?

I bring up these questions about beauty because every time I've heard the Entered Apprentice lecture and the reference to the three pillars that the Master and the Wardens represent in the Lodge, I find myself glancing over to our Brother Junior Warden as Beauty is mentioned. Now, my Brethren, I have to tell you that he is not a gorgeous redhead. I have no trouble seeing Wisdom in the Worshipful Master, or Strength in the Senior Warden but, with apologies to the Junior Warden...where's the Beauty?

You know, this says something about the way I, and perhaps most of us, think about beauty and especially about Beauty in Masonry. Masonry tells us to adorn with beauty every great and important undertaking. There's a clue about what this should mean to us in the word, 'adorn'. Adorn means to enhance something by adding something beautiful in itself. When we initiate a Candidate, the beautiful ceremonies are a great and important undertaking; the arts, parts, and points of the ceremonies are beautiful in themselves. We adorn them; we add something beautiful in itself, when we are flawless in the delivery of the ritual, when we add vocal spirit and emotional meaning to a lecture, or a presentation. We adorn the ceremonies by reaching out with the beauty of the Masonic spirit found in each of us and that raises and exalts the spirit of the whole thing.

Let's go back to our three pillars and their representative functions in the Lodge. The Master, in his Wisdom, says do it. The Senior Warden, in his Strength, says who will do it. That leaves the Junior Warden to see to the Beauty in what's being done. We don't usually think that this goes much beyond calling us from labor to refreshment to enjoy fellowship and repast. In reality, his true function is greater than that. Under his watchful eye, he is supposed to see to it that we adorn the beautiful ceremonies. As the representation of the pillar of Beauty, he ensures that we meet the high standards of Masonic Beauty, that we adorn Masonry with our minds, our spirits and ourselves. As the pillar of Beauty, he calls us to order at the opening and closing of the Lodge, and is the first principal officer of the Lodge to determine if we are duly and truly prepared, worthy, and well qualified to adorn this fraternity.

So, whether beauty is appreciated in the redhead I spoke of earlier, or in the adornment of our beautiful ceremonies under the watchful direction of the Junior Warden, the *spirit* of Beauty is indeed 'in the eye of the beholder'.

So, what catches your eye?

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