

## **Bird Watching in Freemasonry**

It's spring time and while we have to deal with the pollen covering everything, it's also a great opportunity to see the budding wildlife and plants that come with this season. Today we are going to do some bird watching that is specific to Freemasonry. Specifically, since we are in the state of Virginia, we are going to turn our binoculars to our state bird, the Cardinal. More accurately, the four cardinal virtues that we learn about in the first degree.

As we begin our trek we come across a gorgeous specimen of a bird. Wearing armor and a helmet this warrior like virtue is often seen leaning against a column or tower where it has slain the dragon of discord. The tower is shown as damaged but still standing symbolizing the triumph of this virtue over vice and disorder. The expression on her face shows some pain which shows that struggle and courage in the face of adversity and pain is how we can best exemplify this virtue of Fortitude.

Continuing along we see our next example, Prudence. Holding a compass in her right hand which details the circumscription of any action with a mirror in her left to exemplify the contemplation and reflection of any of our thoughts against the wisdom of the past, we also see that this virtue has a second face. An old man in the background imparting or implying wisdom from the past with a young woman at the foreground looking to the future. The mirror also represents truth to ourselves, and by reflecting on the weakness seen we can adjust and improve the image there.

Next we see a subdued color pattern on our third cardinal of Temperance. Holding a horse's bridle in her right hand she symbolizes the control of animal energy by reason. Her left hand contains a clock showing that during the passing of times and seasons we must respect this passage and manage our passions accordingly. As a clock measures the passage of time, so too should we measure everything to avoid excess as seen to by our Junior Warden as part of his duties. This virtue is garbed almost monastically to visually express rejection of the temptations of the flesh that could lead to excess.

Finally, we spot a strong and proud bird, Justice. Holding a book in her left hand representing the Law, illustrated with a balance to represent fairness and a sword in her right that while imposing is delicately covered with a piece of her scarf. This is to denote that justice should be delivered and punishment rendered but should not destroy the person and the punishment should be balanced against the gravity of the crime or the weight of the arguments of the involved parties. A crown tops the head of this virtue indicating the role of judge and arbitrator.

I want to thank Hillsborough Lodge #25 of Florida for the inspiration of this topic and some of the imagery and descriptions used herein.

And finally, why is the Cardinal considered one of the smartest of all the birds? Simple, it's because it's.....well.....red.



***'The Winding Staircase - A path to improving yourself in Masonry'***  
***By: Michael J. Caro, LEO, Tuckahoe Lodge No. 347 5-21***