



**FREEMASONRY - A WAY OF LIFE**

## **WHAT IS FREEMASONRY?**

The Fraternity of Free and Accepted Masons is the oldest, largest, and most widely known fraternal organization in the world.

## **WHAT TYPES OF MEN BECOME MASONS?**

Members of the Masonic Fraternity come from virtually every occupation and profession - from all stations in life. Fourteen U.S. Presidents have been proud to be counted as Brothers, as have five Chief Justices and scores of Governors, Senators, and Congressmen. Leaders from all walks of life and all corners of the globe have sought Masonic membership.

All Masons meet on an equal basis as friends, regardless of income, political ideology, or religious belief. All believe in a Supreme Being and all are patriotic citizens who obey the governments under which they live.

Over the years, many persons have been fascinated by the fact that many men, from so many different walks of life, can meet together, begin and end their meetings with prayer, conduct their affairs in harmony and friendship, and call each other "Brother."

## **HOW DOES ONE BECOME A MASON?**

One of the customs of Freemasonry is not to solicit members. When someone petitions membership, it is of his own free will and accord. Many men live a lifetime and never know that they, themselves, must seek admission to this Fraternity. They must ask a Mason for a petition.

Masons are most willing to answer questions and share information with those who are not members, and will enthusiastically assist anyone indicating a willingness to petition for membership.

Each petitioner must be recommended by two members of a Masonic Lodge and pass a unanimous ballot. He must be 21 years old, of good moral character, and believe in the existence of a Supreme Being.

## **MASONIC SECRECY**

Volumes have been written about Masonry, yet, to many, the Fraternity remains mysterious and misunderstood. Contrary to what many believe, Freemasonry is

## *Cannon Lodge No. 104*

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not a secret society. It does not hide its existence or its membership. Masons proudly identify themselves to society by lapel pins, rings, and other visible means; they meet in buildings which are clearly identified as Masonic; their constitutions, rules and regulations are open for inspection.

Masons have special modes of recognition, ceremonies, and other information that they do not share with the world, just as other organizations, businesses, and families maintain understandable privacy on certain matters.

### **HISTORY**

Some historians trace Freemasonry to the Tenth Century, B.C., during the building of King Solomon's Temple. Available records reveal that Freemasonry was introduced into England in 926 A.D.

Freemasonry is directly descended from associations of operative masons - the cathedral builders of the Middle Ages - who traveled throughout Europe employing the skills of their crafts.

In the 17th Century, when cathedral building was on the decline, many guilds of stone-masons, known as "Operative Masons" or "Free Masons," started to accept as members those who were not members of the masons' crafts, calling them "Speculative Masons" or "Accepted Masons." The tools and objects that were employed by operative masons are symbolically used today to help teach moral lessons.

It was from these groups of "Accepted Masons" that the Fraternity as we know it today developed. The first Grand Lodge was formed in London, England, in 1717. Today, there are more than 150 Grand Lodges in free countries of the world, with a membership of more than 5 million. In the United States, there are 50 Grand Lodges.

### **ORGANIZATION**

The basic unit of all Grand Lodges is the Symbolic Lodge. It is the Symbolic Lodge that receives petitions for membership and confers the degrees of Entered Apprentice, Fellowcraft, and Master Mason.

There are more than 650 Symbolic Lodges in the Jurisdiction of Ohio, with a total membership in excess of 180,000. Ohio has the largest membership of any Grand Lodge in the United States.

### **WHAT DO FREEMASONS DO?**

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## *Cannon Lodge No. 104*

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The Masonic Lodge has one or two "stated" meetings each month, at which regular business is conducted. Degrees may be conferred on new candidates at either the stated meetings or at special sessions. The degrees are solemn, enlightening, and an enjoyable experience, with no uncomfortable or embarrassing moments. It is in the degrees where the principles of Freemasonry are taught. These lessons include respect for God, for each other, and for ourselves. They also teach that Freemasonry is not to interfere with a man's family, his necessary vocation, or his church.

Masonic meetings often include a speaker, or some special program of interest to the members. Traditionally, refreshments are served following meetings, and it is here where Masonic fellowship is strengthened. No profanity or alcoholic beverages are permitted in a Masonic Temple.

Lodges frequently plan social activities, like picnics, dinners, dances, and programs, where the wives and families of Masons can enjoy the Fraternity with them.

### **ARE THERE OTHER ORGANIZATIONS RELATED TO FREEMASONRY?**

Once a man becomes a Master Mason - that is, a member of a Masonic Lodge - he is free to join a number of related Masonic organizations. Among them are the Scottish Rite, York Rite, Shrine, and Grotto. Similarly, his wife may participate, if she wishes, in a selection of ladies' organizations, like the Eastern Star or Ladies Shrine.

Each of the related Masonic organizations has its own particular attraction. One may appeal to one Mason, but not to another. The York Rite and Scottish Rite confer additional degrees, each teaching additional lessons about what the Fraternity believes. The Grotto and Shrine focus on community service and fraternalism.

### **WHAT DOES MASONRY DO FOR THE COMMUNITY?**

Masonry was founded on the principles of brotherly love, relief and truth, and takes seriously its responsibility to help others. Symbolic Lodge Masonry in Ohio, as well as the related organizations, have adopted numerous charitable programs which they support strongly. In fact, the Masonic Fraternity in the United States DAILY contributes more than \$1.2 million to charitable causes.

In Ohio, Masons support the Ohio Masonic Home at Springfield, where more than 400 elderly Masons, their wives and widows reside. It is an excellent facility

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## *Cannon Lodge No. 104*

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with an annual budget of more than \$8 million. The Grand Lodge of Ohio also awards, on a yearly basis, more than 41 scholarships of \$1,500 each to worthy Ohio college students. Each of the different institutions selects the recipients, based on ability and need only. In recent years, Ohio Masons have become major supporters of the Ohio Special Olympics, contributing in excess of \$50,000 a year to sponsor mentally-retarded young people in this athletic competition. All of these programs are made possible by the individual generosity of Masonic members.

Some of the related Masonic organizations are more visible in our communities than others. The Shrine Masons, for example, have built 19 crippled children's hospitals and 3 burns institutes throughout North America. These facilities were built, and are staffed and maintained, without any government money. Even more incredible, no child has ever been charged for any treatment received at a Shiner's Hospital.

The Knights Templar, one of the York Rite organizations, funds a philanthropic eye foundation; the Scottish Rite is one of the leaders in schizophrenic research; the Tall Cedars of Lebanon assists Muscular Dystrophy research, and the Grotto provides dental care for the retarded. There are other charities that also receive support from Masonic organizations.

In addition, the individual Symbolic Lodge dispenses charity in many ways in its own community, and is always willing to come to the assistance of one of its members in destitute circumstances.

### **HOW DOES MASONRY BENEFIT ITS MEMBERS?**

Perhaps, it is best to point out initially that Masonry is not an insurance or beneficial society; and it sets no political, economic, or social goals.

Masonry is a fraternity whose primary purpose is to make good men better. It is a character-building organization. It assists a man in better knowing himself, and better understanding his role in life.

Freemasonry is not a religion, even though it is religious in character. It does not pretend to take the place of religion nor serve as a substitute for the religious beliefs of its members. However, many Masons acknowledge that Masonry has given them a deeper relationship with God and helped them develop their faith.

Through its social activities, Masonry builds fellowship, often initiating lifelong friendships. Its activities and teachings help strengthen the family unit. It helps build pride and patriotism in our nation, and it promotes better citizenship.

A Mason who becomes active in the workings of his Lodge also has the opportunity for much personal development of management and speaking skills.

Masons acquire the sense of belonging to something that is important, worthwhile, and personally rewarding.

## **THE TEACHINGS OF FREEMASONRY**

Masonry teaches the Golden Rule. It seeks to improve men through its firm belief in the Fatherhood of God, the Brotherhood of Man, and the Immortality of the Soul.

The tenets of Freemasonry are ethical principles that are acceptable to all good men. It teaches tolerance toward all mankind. It dictates to no man as to his beliefs, either religious or secular. It seeks no advantage for its members through business or politics. Freemasonry is not a forum for discussions on partisan affairs.

## **FREEMASONRY - A WAY OF LIFE**

Freemasonry is kindness in the home, honesty in business, courtesy in society, fairness in work, pity and concern for the unfortunate, resistance toward evil, help for the weak, forgiveness for the penitent, love for one another, and above all, reverence and love for God.

Freemasonry is many things, but most of all:

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