

**What I Would Like
My Friends to Know
About Freemasonry**



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WHAT I WOULD LIKE MY FRIENDS TO KNOW ABOUT FREEMASONRY

Freemasonry is a fraternal society of men that are bound together by invisible and indissoluble ties of brotherly affection; unselfish care and concern by which personal pride is taken in honoring the worth and dignity of all humanity.

The doors of Freemasonry are open to all men who seek harmony with their fellow creatures, who feel the need for self-improvement, and wish to participate in the adventure of making this world a more congenial place in which to live. The conditions for membership are few. A man can become a Freemason only by personal desire. Of his own free will he must make his desire to become a Mason known to a member who will be privileged to act as a sponsor and see that a petition is provided from a Lodge of the individual's choice, usually nearest his home.

Every man desiring to become a Freemason must believe in a Supreme Being. Freemasonry is not a religion and therefore every member is free to follow the Faith or Denomination which best agrees with his personal religious conviction. The necessity to believe in one Supreme Being is an ancient requirement to insure that if an individual recognizes the Fatherhood of God he can readily accept the concept of the Brotherhood of man.

Freemasonry does not support any particular political position. It has long stood for separation of Church and State, and a champion of Free Public Education, but politics are never discussed in meetings because this would infringe on an individual's personal persuasion. Members are encouraged to be good citizens and if a man is considerate of others and interested in what is best for Society then surely the country will benefit regardless of the individual's political affiliation.

Freemasonry encourages awareness of a man's responsibility to his Creator, his country, his neighbor, and his family, fortifying and intensifying these relationships. The Fraternity is as ancient as civilized

society. No one is sure of the origin, but its precepts are reflected in the

history of all great civilizations which held respect for the worth and dignity of its citizens. Written records have been kept since 1717 with the formation of a general governing body in England called a Grand Lodge, and all recognized Masonic Lodges today can trace their descendancy to this founding body. However, regardless of the antiquity of the Institution, it is as timely as tomorrow's sunrise. The pure principles which motivated men like William Shakespeare, Rudyard Kipling, Benjamin Franklin, George Washington, Theodore Roosevelt, and Harry Truman are present in Gerald Ford, the 40th Vice President, and Edwin Aldrin, the second man to set foot on the moon, as well as many other prominent members of contemporary society. Of the more than four million members, men of every country, sect, opinion, and honorable profession are represented.

Freemasonry is a society of builders, equating the principles required to erect the great Cathedrals and edifices which have endured the centuries, to the building of strong temporal structures, or moral fiber, whereby each reflective member is strengthened in character, virtue, morality, and truth. The doctrines of Masonry are the most beautiful that is possible to imagine. They breathe the simplicity of the earliest ages yet convey a philosophy in step with the most sophisticated and technological society. The ritualistic ceremonies beautifully portray lessons which reflect growth in awareness from youth and manhood, to the maturity of age.

Men who are Freemasons take great pride in their membership for many reasons, prominent among which is the feeling that they are a part of a great force dedicated to worthy purposes. It is of course possible for an individual to be singularly devoted to self-improvement, but with the knowledge and awareness that one is a part of a brotherhood in which common goals and aspirations are shared, the load is lighter and the objective more attainable. Freemasonry is a system of living, it seeks nothing for itself but to make its members wiser, better, and consequently happier. There are no campaigns bent on institutional glorification. The leaders who sustain the local Lodges are elected by the members and are charged to promote the pure principles of Freemasonry, to cultivate social virtues, and promote the general good of society. It is the individual members' actions then which must speak for the worth and dignity of the institution.

Joseph Fort Newton, a noted author, theologian, educator and Freemason, has beautifully defined the circumstance that exists when a

man is a Mason: ^{t4}A man is a Mason when he can look out over the rivers, the hills, and the far horizon with a profound sense of his own littleness in the vast scheme of things, and yet have faith, hope, and courage—which is the root of every virtue. When he has learned how to make friends and to keep them, and above all how to keep friends with himself. When he loves flowers, can hunt the birds without a gun, and feels the thrill of an old forgotten joy when he hears the laugh of a little child. When he can be happy and high-minded amid the meaner drudgeries of life. When no voice of distress reaches his ears in vain, and no hand seeks his aid without response. When he finds good in every faith that helps any man to lay hold of divine things and sees majestic meanings in life, whatever the name of the faith may be. When he can look into a wayside puddle and see something beyond mud, and into the face of the most forlorn fellow mortal and see something beyond sin. When he knows how to pray, how to love, how to hope, how to meet defeat and not be defeated. When he has learned how to give himself, to forgive others, and to live with thanksgiving. When he has kept faith with himself, with his fellow man, with his God; in his hand a sword for evil, in his heart a bit of a song—glad to live, but not afraid to die! Such a man has found the only real secret of Masonry, and the one which it is trying to give to all the world.”

In a world where strife and derision are common and moral values so easily set aside, every Mason has at his immediate disposal the strength of the institution’s precepts and the encouragement and support of his fellow members to persevere. As it has been proclaimed by many, it is not possible for a good Mason not to be a good man. What a great feeling to be part of a way of life in which each member is not content with his present state but ever striving for self-improvement, and with every member, regardless of location, cheering him on.