

Grand Lodge of Free and Accepted Masons of Florida  
194<sup>th</sup> Grand Communication  
R.: W.: Antonio C. Chavez  
W.: Grand Orator 2022-2023  
Grand Oration

Most Worshipful Grand Master, Right Worshipful Deputy Grand Master, Elected and Appointed Grand Lodge Officers, Revered Past Grand Masters, Distinguished East, Guests and my Brethren..... good afternoon !

I am honored to stand here in front of you, humbled by the task before us, and thankful for the privilege and opportunity to serve the Craft with ***“Fidelity in our Journey to the Future.”***

Most Worshipful Grand Master, I am grateful for the trust that you and the Brethren have bestowed upon me, and I am grateful for the truth, wisdom, and sacrifices borne of our Ancient Brethren who have gone this way before us.

I am standing here today by the grace of God, as testament to the love and support I received from my family who are present here today. My oldest daughter Gina, the wonderful and amazing model of kindness and generosity. My brilliant youngest daughter, Alex, is the pillar of compassion and strength. And her loving husband, who is my son in law, Brother Eric Bialik. Joining them is their adorably cute and smart two and a half year old baby girl, Yael Quinn. My pride and joy, full of energy, my daily fitness trainer! It’s truly an honor and pleasure to have you all here today. Thank you for coming. I cannot thank you enough for your unconditional love and unwavering support throughout my Masonic journey. I am so blessed and inspired to have you in my life. Your Mom is looking down and so proud of you. I love you all. I thank you from the bottom of my heart.

I am also blessed with many friends, Brothers, mentors, and numerous people, with whom I have the privilege of serving and knowing at the onset of my Masonic journey. And while there are too many to name, I owe gratitude to many of you for your inspirational words of wisdom and guidance that have impacted me and made a profound difference in my life, and have made me who I am today.

My Brethren, there is a little known fact about me, that I don’t often share. But given my esteemed audience, I will oblige. Some of you may be surprised to learn that I have earned and obtained *“my PhD”* by the age of seventeen in the Philippines.....Yes!...PhD as in *“Public High school Diploma.”*

Which brings us to one of the most frequently asked question about me throughout the State, from the Panhandle to the Keys. How have I become known as ***“the Irishman?”*** Well, today is your lucky day. I will confess. You see, I was really born and raised in waycross, ***“NO...oh no!”*** not Waycross, Georgia! it’s ***“way across the ocean”*** *the Pacific Ireland”*.....I mean, the **Pacific Island** of the Philippines.

That brings me to a story that happened in Ireland in 1830, over the River Shannon, in Limerick County, when a four arched bridge was being replaced. During the excavation work for the new structure, a surprising discovery was made. Beneath the Northeastern, corner of the bridge’s foundation, a **stone mason’s square** was dug from the clay. Measuring 5 7/8” from tip to tip, it was badly corroded, but clearly inscribed with the date and text. The text engraved on the sides of the square and still legible, reads; ***“I will strive to live with love and care, upon the level by the square”*** and the square *bears the date 1507*. The inscription as well as the location which it was buried indicates, that a Masonic custom was being practiced in Ireland, more than 500 years ago. At present, the square is carefully preserved by Union Lodge No. 13 in Limerick, Ireland.

I love this story because it illustrates the tradition and longevity of Freemasonry, and as the *“Irishman,”* I appreciate the story and location.

We are here together in unity, to reaffirm and recommit our **fidelity** to promote and cultivate the greatness of our Fraternity. We all understand that greatness is never given, but rather earned. We earn it by our zeal for our Institution, *“by steadily persevering in the practice of those truly commendable virtues, Brotherly Love, Relief, and*

*Truth.*” Honoring and preserving unsullied the reputation of our Order, as delivered to us in the Opening Charge, that we should “*act with a dignity, becoming the high moral character of our Venerable Fraternity.*”

Today as we celebrate our 194<sup>th</sup> Annual Grand Communication, we also celebrate Memorial Day. A day of **remembrance, honoring** the brave men and women of our Armed Forces who **paid the ultimate price with their unselfish acts of courage.** They are the “**true heroes**” who after taking their Oath of service and duty, without any equivocation or mental reservation, wrote a blank check of “*up to including their lives*” to serve and safeguard the Constitution of the United States of America. Because of them, our nation and its citizens are protected from harms way against all enemies foreign and domestic. On this Memorial Day and every other day, we enjoy and cherish peace and freedom, *thanks to the heroes who exemplify true honor and patriotic fidelity.*

With your kind permission Most Worshipful Grand Master, I’d like to ask all those who have served, past and present, to please rise in honor of those true heroes. **To you, my fellow Veterans, thank you and appreciate you for your service to our beloved country. We are eternally grateful.**

It is our fidelity and zeal for our Time Honored Institution, that we are assembled here this week. Our Fraternity is in the midst of a changing world. From advancement of modern technology, to socio-economic and political climate. Some of us may agree or not, that our Fraternity is going through some difficult times. And need us to bond together to solidify its strength and greatness. Despite the tireless efforts we put forth, we can all agree to some degree, that the current “**health conditions and soundness**” of many of our Particular Lodges both in its **business operation and or Ritual Work,** are in tough and somewhat concerning situations. They are not just empirical, but fact-based indicators of a brewing unpredictability which we are currently experiencing in our Fraternity. Coupled in our attempt to find a remedy to these circumstances, we find ourselves faced with the task of making difficult and important decisions that will likely **shape the future and direction** of our Lodges.

**Today I ask you, my Brethren, to join me to rededicate and recommit ourselves,** to reenforce our efforts and fortify that greatness by achieving the mission and objective of our Particular Lodge Charters, “*to take good men, inspire and guide them to self improve to become better men.*”

It is incumbent upon us to find ways of creating measures and positive course of action to provide the support and the necessary resources for our existing Lodges. We can start when we initiate “*the unregenerate man, groping in moral and mental darkness and seeking for the Light which is to guide his steps and point him to the path,*” the candidate subsequently taking his Oath and Obligation at our Sacred Altar, now a Brother, amidst the “*rough and rugged road*” he is about to travel...**is the utmost time he needed us.** We must provide him with the proper resources to sustain, support, mentor, and “*to follow us, as conductors to lead him, so he fears no danger...to point him to the path that leads him to duty,*” while he learns to navigate and overcome the challenges of his journey. Thereby, our Lodge Charter’s mission of...taking and inspiring good men to self improve, and the expectations of them to become better men, are met... propelling us to Fraternal Excellence.

My Brethren, **we must not and cannot fail.** We must act now. Our **actions cannot betray our intentions.** And in order to succeed, we must **apply the basic principle** that “**the resources must meet the expectations.**” It is imperative therefore, that we provide the **necessary resources** from sufficient number of engaged knowledgeable Brethren as mentors and instructors, proficient Brethren to confer Degrees, continuity in Lodge Officer preferment, sustained financial stability...to enumerate a few, thus enabling us to **meet our expectations** for that new Brother to **succeed** in his quest to self improve and become a better man, come into fruition.

And from that valuable experience and knowledge he gained, he would be more likely to become an active and engaged Brother and mentor...who will be a component of those important “**resources**” that a Lodge “**must have to meet those expectations.**”

Both are equally important and must align in order to **achieve and sustain** our never ending endeavor of Fraternal greatness and convince the world of its good effects.

**But how?**

First and foremost, we must hold ourselves to the highest Standards of Fraternal Excellence. We can begin by recognizing that **reforms are necessary** in our Noble Fraternity. We cannot cure nor correct any deficiencies or wrongdoing, if we ignore them or pretend they don't exist. Prudent **action** is the **very essence of achievement and success**. Both individually or collectively, like our "true heroes" we too, **with Masonic fidelity**, must diligently keep and perform those promises we made in our Charges, Oath, and Obligations.

I say to you, that **these challenges** we face and the reforms we are about to tackle, are **not hyperbole**, they are **real**. They are many, and important. Some may not be met easily or in a short span of time. But know this my Brethren, that we are "*a society of friends and Brothers, who best can work and best agree.*" With conscious, deliberate, and determined effort of commitment to faithfully discharge our Oath and Obligations, **in our continued** efforts to improve oneself, a belief in the geometric love of truth and service to humanity, a profound adherence to moral philosophy for the betterment of mankind and our pursuit of excellence by a correct knowledge of its teachings in our duties, we owe to God, our country, our neighbor and ourselves...with patience and perseverance...**we will meet them**.

My Brethren, let us **continue to bond together** in close harmony to revitalize with devotion and fidelity, as we strive to achieve Fraternal Excellence. Let us understand and apply the profound **significance and meaning** of those words **Oath** and **Obligation** so we may uphold their integrity.

An **Oath**, as defined by Mr. Webster; is a solemn promise often invoking a divine witness regarding one's future action or behavior....."*in the presence of Almighty God*".....does that sound familiar to you my Brothers?

An **Obligation** is an act, or course of action to which a person is morally bound by a duty of commitment...let me say that again, morally bound by a duty of commitment, "*I further more promise and swear, that I will or will not*.....does that ring a bell?

**We all did**, my Brothers "*solemnly and sincerely promise and swear with a firm and steadfast resolution to keep and perform all those "furthermore" promises, without any equivocation, mental reservation or secret evasion ".....those words mean, that we are morally and legally bound by a duty of commitment to faithfully fulfill our promises...that my Brethren, is the very essence and true meaning of those words...Oath and Obligation, our constant reminder encapsulated in the French word Fidelitas or fidelity, engraved on the Grand Master's official pin...and may God keep us steadfast.*

It also means, when we asked the Great Architect of The Universe, which we promised toward the end of every Lodge Communication to, "*make us sensible in our renewed obligations.....that may each one of us practice out of the Lodge, those great moral duties which are inculcated by our Fraternity and with reverence, study, and obey the laws which Almighty God has given us.*"

Most Worshipful Grand Master, you will recall the U.S. Air Force motto "**AIM HIGH**" so, let us aim high to join and link ourselves with an indissoluble chain of sincere affection. To echo the U.S. Marines...Right Worshipful Deputy Grand Master, "**Semper Fi**"...**always faithful**, in the performance of our duties as careful custodians and watchful sentinels of the sacred traditions of our Honorable Institution.

The day I was initiated as a Freemason, stands out in memory as one of the many profound and significant event in my life. Henceforth, "*I was bound by the ties of a strong commitment to a moral obligation*" to strive and live in accordance with its teachings, to learn to improve myself with honor and humility, ever remembering to **keep and perform with fidelity and honor** my Sacred Obligation.

A part of the Closing Charge, reminds us, "*Forget not the duties you have heard so frequently inculcated and forcibly recommended in the Lodge.*" My Brothers, **remember** the obligations and promises we made at our Sacred Altar. Always cognizant, **never to forget** those time immemorial Charges we received. Most of all, be **mindful** and align ourselves in the appropriate path of the **virtues** in the acronym **HITCH**...which should be our lives' constant daily reminder...**Honor, Integrity, Truth, Character, Humility**.

I came across an article that expounded on the word **virtue**.....It is the stone that builds the man and his temple. Virtue is the stone that binds our relationships and **it is by our virtues that we are measured**. Freemasonry simply, **is the very measure of a man**. Symbolized by the two measuring tools depicted in our emblems; the square and the compasses. Knowing that the true **Seeing Eye of God will take the true measurement** of our **actions**.

**Memorization** is an integral part of the fabric of our Fraternity. Committing our teachings to memory allows us to weave the tenets of our Craft into our lives and the world at large. Though we dedicate time and effort into memorization, I am quite certain that some of us have experienced some degree of forgetfulness, especially when we reach a certain age in our lives.

Which reminds me of a story about three Brothers having a conversation. The first Brother explained that one day he found himself in front of the refrigerator with a bottle of mayonnaise in his hand. He forgot whether he was about to make a sandwich or put the bottle away. The second Brother shared a similar experience. While midway up the stairs in his home, his wife called out his name, and after answering, he couldn't quite remember if he was going up or down. The third Brother then said, "knock on wood, I'm glad I don't have that problem yet," three seconds later he started to walk away, "Excuse me!" he said, "I thought I heard someone knocking at the door."

Joking aside, to paraphrase a statement popularize in the 1700, by Brother Alexander Pope, a British poet, "*the hope that Freemasonry will attain its long-term goal or accomplish its self-imposed mission, which is the eventual emergence of a universal league of mankind or the establishment upon earth of virtuous men under the Parenthood of God, springs eternal in our Masonic breasts.*"

My Masonic breasts cheer and join the chorus of congratulations and best wishes to all clothed with the authority to direct the affairs of this Organization. May everyone continue the fun, as well as the serious work of faithfully serving your Offices with humility and honor as we propel the advancement of this Venerable Institution.

And so today, we continue to focus on our "*never ending quest for nobler deeds, for higher thoughts, for greater achievements,*" a common bond that reaches into the farther most parts of the world.

It has been said that it was "*inspired by men who began it, dedicated men preserved it, perfectionist refined it, and the Craft followed it.*"

Then let us dwell together inspired in unity, dedicate to preserve, meet to perfect and refine these challenges, that we the Craft, may continue to follow and embrace with fidelity and humility our solemn duty with gratitude, the annual commemoration of this inspiring occasion so that the generations to follow will live in a world far better than we have today.

It is with great hope that someday our children's children will be proud to say, that by the Grace of Almighty God, we endured the test of time. That we are at the forefront of Fraternal Excellence, refusing to surrender to hopelessness as we pass and go thru "*life's rough and rugged road of trials and tribulations,*" that with Fortitude, we continued on to travel with all of our might, tirelessly refusing to end our quest and arduous task...and that we carried, with **Fidelity** and greatness, the precious light of humanity in our **Journey to the future**.

*"Let it not be supposed that we have here labored in vain and spent our strength for naught.....let us...all of us, be all of one mind, live in peace. And may the God of love and peace delight to dwell with and bless us always."*

Thank you.