

2025 Grand Oration
R.:W.: Antonio C. Chavez
W.: Grand Orator

Most Worshipful Grand Master, Elected and Appointed, Grand Lodge Officers, Revered Past Grand Masters, Distinguished Guests, Brethren, ladies, and gentlemen..... good afternoon!

“I am glad to be here not alone. This is an opportunity we long have sought “.

First and foremost, I'd like to thank you, Most Worshipful Grand Master for the honor, confidence, and trust you have bestowed upon me, as the Grand Orator and to be able to serve the Craft under your leadership. Indeed, a remarkable and rewarding experience of Brotherly Love and Fellowship, as well as the opportunity of traveling with you throughout the state, visiting many Lodges, advancing your Grand Master's Theme of Leadership, Commitment, and Accountability. And today, I am honored to stand here in front of you my Brethren, delighted and humbled by the privilege of speaking on this very special occasion, our 196th Annual Grand Communication as evident by the many members, Brethren, and guests present, who have traveled from afar with a common goal of commitment we all share, to strengthen that harmony, love, and affection bonding us as friends and Brothers, “with one aim —to please each other and unite in the Grand Design of being happy ourselves, promoting and communicating happiness”.

Today, by the Grace of the Great Architect of The Universe, I stand here before you, as testament to the unconditional love and support I receive from my family who are present here today. My two amazing daughters: my eldest, Gina, along with her partner Rodney and son, Bryson. And my youngest, Alex, along with her husband, Eric (also a Master Mason) and their 4 year old daughter, my granddaughter, Yael. A especial thank you, to my partner and sweetheart Theresa, who could not be here but is very supportive.

To you my family, the perfect mixture of all the things one love, respect and admire... I am so incredibly blessed to have you in my life and I am grateful that I get to experience so many wonderful and happy times together as family. Though your Mom is not physically here, I'm quite certain she is with us in spirit, looking down so proud of you. I cannot imagine my life without you in it. I love you all from the bottom of my heart.

I also couldn't let this opportunity and day end without acknowledging the many friends and Brothers, with whom I have the privilege of knowing and serving with throughout my Masonic Journey. And while there are too many to name, I am deeply touched and owe you a ton of gratitude...for your inspirational words of wisdom, mentoring, and guidance, sharing interesting stories and experiences that have impacted me and made a profound difference in my Masonic life and helped made me who I am today.

And so this afternoon, I would like to express to all of you my friends and Brothers...my warmest and heartfelt Fraternal Greetings and appreciation as we celebrate our 196th Annual Grand Communication, as we continue our commitment as careful custodians of our Fraternity's time honored tradition. To pass down the truth and wisdom of the ages and the sacrifices borne of our Ancient Brethren, transmitted to us with pride and honor by so many illustrious men who've gone this way before us. A sacred obligation incumbent upon us... to be watchful sentinels of its respectable name, to strenuously support, obey, and cultivate the great moral virtues and precepts laid down on our “Masonic Trestleboard” by becoming zeal to practice with diligence, the excellent principles and tenets frequently inculcated by our Order.

Today as we renew our dedication and obligation to this great and important undertaking, I ask you my Brothers that we all join together with gratitude, in recalling to our remembrance the commitment and devotion of those Brethren who paved this way before us...by working together in close harmony in our never ending quest of service to humanity... achieving Fraternal Excellence as we get closer in celebrating the 200th year of our Grand Lodge time honored existence.

As we celebrate this Annual Grand Communication traditionally held in this time of the year, we also celebrate Memorial Day. A day of remembrance honoring the brave men and women of our Armed Forces whose unselfish act of service to our great nation paid the ultimate sacrifice of patriotism. On this Memorial Day and every other day, we enjoy and cherish peace and freedom. Thanks to those men and women, heroes who exemplified true honor and patriotic fidelity. We thank you and appreciate your service to our beloved country. We are eternally grateful.

My Brothers, as Masons there is nothing new about the virtues and character building ways that are strenuously enforced upon us in our personal growth to self improve in becoming better men. They are the same virtues, principles, and morality our parents taught us when we were young during our formative years. The only difference, my Brethren, is as adults and Masons, those values are frequently inculcated and forcibly recommended to us in our Lodges. Reinforced by two measuring tools, the square and compasses, the character emblem-logo of our beloved Fraternity, as displayed and commonly seen on rings, shirts, decals, and buildings to name a few. Their presence acts as our constant reminder “to be always watchful and guarded in our thoughts, words and actions” in our daily lives. Seeking and understanding its deeper meaning, profound significance and the practical application of its excellent principles, is an integral part of the fabric of our journey and experience as Freemasons. For in the process, we learn to strengthen and persevere in the application of those core values that our parents have instilled upon us, and how to live in accord with them. With these foundations, the knowledge shared in the Brotherhood, I came up with an acronym hitch, H.I.T.C.H., my constant daily reminder which some of you may recall I had mentioned in my 2020 Grand Oration,—aligning ourselves along the appropriate path of Honesty, Integrity, Truth, Character, Humility.

As our late Brother General Douglas MacArthur said after he retired from the Army a second time, addressed several groups on Freemasonry and Americanism. And I quote...

“Freemasonry embraces the highest moral laws and will bear the test of any system, ethics, or philosophy ever promulgated for the uplift of men... its requirements are the things that are right, its restraints are the things that are wrong, inculcating doctrines of patriotism, and Brotherly Love, enjoying sentiments of exalted benevolence, encouraging all that is good, kind and charitable, reprobating all that is cruel and oppressive, its observance will uplift everyone under its influence...to do good to others, to forgive enemies, to love neighbors, to restrain passions, to honor parents, to respect authority, to return good for evil, not bear false witness, not to lie, not to steal... these are essential elements of the moral law”.

Wow...indeed a very powerful reminder and compelling words of inspiration.

In the midst of our ever-changing world in the 21st century this week, my Brothers, we embark on a journey to transmit pure and unimpaired what was entrusted to us... traditionally, “to pass the torch”, the torch that continue to light the path of service, which symbolize the end, as well the beginning of a journey that would bring about incredible change and prosperity to our Fraternity for future generations to come.

So, I join the chorus of congratulations and well wishes to all those who are clothed with the authority to direct and govern the affairs of this Grand Jurisdiction. I know and trust that you will continue to further cultivate, spread, and promote with pride and honor the knowledge of Masonry as a worldwide way of life... an organization of morality and excellence, an honorable institution of service making a difference.

I wish you and the Brethren of the Craft, a successful and enjoyable year, as well as the serious work of faithfully serving your office with humility of life, good work and example for all good purposes as we propel the advancement of our venerable Fraternity. Bearing in mind, that “the true success of our undertaking depends more than anything else...on the spirit of the people involved in it. And the spirit of those people is a direct reflection; ...of the spirit of its leaders. Such is the nature of our Constitution, that as some of us must of necessity with humility, lead, rule, and teach so others may of course, learn to submit, follow, and obey”.

On a lighter note, mentioning the words lead and follow, reminded me of a story about a grandma in a hurry driving her six year old granddaughter to school made an illegal right turn, “Uh oh”, she said. “I just made a mistake, I made a wrong turn”. The little girl countered, “No grandma, I think it’s alright. The police behind us did the same thing... they followed us”.

A familiar phrase to all of us, “harmony, the strength of all societies, especially ours”. My Brothers, the power of harmony and unity is derived from our diversity. A diverse group of great influence that will make a difference...a positive impact. A universal institution of brotherly love and affection. The question would then naturally arise...if a person cannot treat someone with dignity and respect, demean others because of the way they talk, their race, the color of their skin, then it is time to face the mirror and reevaluate oneself. My Brothers, the strength of our bond and unity comes from the power of diversity...it comes from all walks of life, from all parts of the country. It comes from all races, from all make up, from all religion, background, and upbringing. It is the very essence of strength and harmony in Freemasonry; this very gathering is a reflection of our diversity...a universal Brotherhood of Men under the Fatherhood of God. As we are reminded in one of our Lectures “we are taught to regard the whole human race as one family, the high, the low, the rich, the poor; who being created by one Almighty Parent and inhabitants of the same planet, ought to aid, support and protect each other. On this principle, Masonry unites men of every country, sect, and opinion and conciliates true friendship among those who might otherwise have remained at a perpetual distance”.

The boundary line of our behavior is reiterated in the Opening Charge; “Let all private animosities if any unhappily exist, give place to affection and brotherly love. It is useless parade to talk of the subjection of irregular passions within the walls of the Lodge if we permit them to triumph in our intercourse with each other”.

At this very moment, my Brethren, I want to direct your focus and attention to that Sacred Altar... where we took that great and important undertaking in the presence of Almighty God...our Oath and Obligation. When we sincerely promised and swore, as we recited our first “Masonic abc, ABC... Agreement of Binding Commitment”. And C B A, if spelled backwards or reversed, still means the same...continuing to ascertain a promise...“Commitment to a Binding Agreement”, when we were Passed as a Fellow Craft and Raised to the Sublime Degree of Master Mason.

Focus and attention in our daily lives is equally important. I remember the day my granddaughter Yael was only two years old, going up the stairs in our house. Midway up the steps, I started a conversation with her. My daughter, Gina, interjected, “Dad, don’t talk to Yaya while she is going upstairs... she needs to focus for her safety”. Hearing this, Yaya immediately turned her head, looked at me and confirmed, “Lolo, I need to concentrate!” I needed that reminder that day – that no matter our age or our challenge at hand.... Our focus is paramount.

With that anecdote...Most Worshipful Grand Master, and with your permission I would like to conduct a simple exercise about focus and attention. I would like to indulge everyone present to join me in performing this 30 second simple exercise of how well individuals concentrate.

“Raise your left arm with open palm...wave...make a fist... place it on your chin!”

I’d like to close in the words of a late famous writer, Ernest Hemingway, with his unique style and inspiring words about life. He once wrote:

“The hardest lesson, I’ve had to learn as an adult is, the relentless need to keep going, no matter how broken I feel inside. The truth is raw, unfiltered and painfully universal. Life doesn’t stop when we are exhausted, when our hearts are shattered, or when our spirits feel threadbare. It keeps moving – unyielding, indifferent – demanding that we keep pace. It teaches us that survival is rarely poetic. More often than not, it’s about showing up when you’d rather disappear, smiling through pain no one sees, and carrying on, despite feeling like you’re unraveling from the inside out. And yet, somehow, we persevere. That’s the quiet miracle of being human. Even when life is relentless, even when hope feels distant, we keep moving, we stumble, we break, we fall to our knees – but we get up. And in doing so, we uncover strength we never knew we had. We learn to comfort ourselves in the ways we wish others would. We become the voice of reassurance we once searched for. Slowly, we realized that resilience isn’t always about

grand acts of bravery; sometimes, it's just a whisper – “KEEP GOING”. Yes, it's exhausting. Yes, at times unfair. And yes, there are days when the weight of it all feels unbearable. But every small step forward is proof that we haven't given up. That we are still fighting, still holding on, still refusing to let the darkness consume us. That quiet defiance – choosing to exist, to try, to hope – is the bravest thing we can do”.

So let us all “KEEP GOING”, join me my Brethren and with great hope 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, we “KEPT GOING”, continuing to travel with all our might, tirelessly refusing to end our never-ending quest and arduous task of service ... that we, the Craft...prevailed and carried with pride and honor the precious light of humanity for generations to come.

Thank you and may Almighty God delight to dwell with and bless you, our Fraternity, and the United States of America.