

## **Tolerance, Faith & A Temple Not Made By Hands**

By: Bro. Jim Lanciault 32°

W.J. Dunlop Lodge #675 Peterborough, On. Canada

The virtue of tolerance is not only a cornerstone of our fraternity, which enables us to come together as brothers regardless of our political and religious differences, it may also hold a deeper significance when internalized and applied to the walls we have erected for our Temples within. These walls symbolize our actions, our acquired knowledge and our faith. As our Craft is allegorically tied to the building trade, the concept of tolerance has a wider and deeper significance when viewed in the context of structural integrity. One definition of tolerance defined by Webster's is "sympathy or indulgence for beliefs or practices differing or conflicting with ones own. However, for our purposes we must consider the broadest definition of this word, as defined by Webster's, as a "capacity to endure pain or hardships, the allowable deviation from a standard and the relative capacity of an organism to grow and thrive when subjected to unfavorable environmental factors." Thus, in the construction of our Temples, we must take care to build a structure able to withstand a 'deviation' from personal long held beliefs, to be both strong yet flexible enough to 'endure pain' as well as 'grow and thrive' as the inevitable forces of life and our evolving knowledge requires. A Temple not made by hands is an edifice constantly under construction in the hope of ultimate perfection. Its walls a metaphoric paradox, not meant to contain the self, but to envelope the All in a unifying beauty with strength realized through an evolution in wisdom.

It is the primary concern of every Mason to spend his life in the tireless pursuit of constructing 'a Temple not made by hands'. As each stone is carefully squared and placed one on top of the other, we must take care to engineer the walls so they may be able to carry the weight and strain placed upon them. If we build the structure too rigid it will easily crack at the first instance of stress upon the stones. Of course in an age where the science of construction was constrained by the knowledge of antiquity, buildings of stone, while solid, were limited in scale. As mankind's knowledge has blossomed over the centuries, we have acquired the technology and skill, which enables us to build modern skyscrapers that reach up into the heavens. This amazing feat of engineering is only accomplished by the ability of the structure to tolerate the stress and strain exerted upon it. Even the gentlest breeze could prove disastrous if the building was not able to sway and bend with the unseen forces of nature. So too, our personal Temples must be built to withstand both unseen and unknown forces, to carry the weight of previously unknown truths. Can the weight of truth be supported by our faith? Is our faith so rigid that it would crack and shatter at the first contradiction, the first evidence of error; or is it built to tolerate new knowledge discovered through archeology, science and reason?

Freemasonry, has for me, been a spiritual journey, a journey through ancient myth, religion, symbolism, philosophy, science and most importantly faith. The universality of our Masonic allegory and symbolism illustrates the multicultural reality and condition of our own human nature; and it is through the application of tolerance that we are able to discover the strength and flexibility of its unifying power. It is through tolerance that we

are able to delve into the depths of our unknown, unrealized selves, that we are able to liberate ourselves from the darkness of fear and that we are able to search out truth no matter what preconceived notions it may shatter. It is through tolerance that the human mind evolves and the human spirit finds a home built for eternity.

Our Masonic philosophy, the very essence of our doctrine is illustrated by three profound principles, which are brotherly love, relief and truth. These characteristics would be impossible to realize without embracing tolerance in its fullest meaning. Without tolerance we would be unable to love selflessly, we would be unable to give charity unconditionally, and we would be unable to accept and embrace our self-realized truth. To understand the meaning of that 'truth' beyond our material world represents a higher spiritual quest at the heart freemasonry, and tolerance may very well hold the key to unlocking the hidden secrets within. Tolerance enables a person to adapt to a new environment, adjust and broaden his knowledge to encompass newfound truth, to see light where once there was only darkness and uncertainty. It unifies our human nature with the Divine by the simple realization that its possession is a necessary characteristic if we hope to evolve and work toward perfection. It is that mystical ingredient whereby the Masonic alchemist will be able to transform the lead of materialism into a spiritual Temple of gold.