

April Masonic Minutes – Meeting Two

“Brethren, you are now to quit this sacred retreat of friendship and virtue...” This is the beginning of one of the most beloved passages of Masonic ritual. At the close of every meeting the Master of the lodge provides an admonition to the Craft that calls each Mason to a firm observance of the duties taught therein. An entire thesis could be written on the admonitions given in this recital, but this brief education will focus on the passage that follows.

“Be diligent, prudent, temperate, discreet. Remember that around this altar you have promised to befriend and relieve every worthy Brother who shall need your assistance. Remember that you have promised to remind him in the most tender manner of his failings and aid his reformation. These generous principles are to extend further; every human being has a claim upon your kind offices.”

What is it then that we are being called to extend further to every human being? It is the virtues recited prior to the call to extend them. Webster defines **diligent** as: “characterized by persevering, painstaking effort.” Its root is from the Latin word *diligere* which means “to esteem, love.” **Prudent** is defined thus, “Wise in handling practical matters; exercising good judgment or common sense.” Other definitions refer to restraint in conduct and being circumspect. **Temperate** is defined as “Exercising moderation and self-restraint.” **Discreet** is defined as “Having or showing a judicious reserve in one’s speech or behavior.” Further definitions of this word provide a connotation of being without pretense and modest.

These four short, yet precise words admonish us to lovingly persevere in our Craft, to use wisdom, to moderate our emotional responses by not reacting too strongly either for or against an issue, and to be humble and modest in our speech and demeanor. Using this as a guide for our conduct among our brethren and outside of the lodge is what “keeps our passions in due bounds.”

“Remember that around this altar you have promised to befriend and relieve every worthy Brother who shall need your assistance.” This is a call to be ever-ready to assist others by emphasizing our obligation to be charitable. *“Remember that you have promised to remind him in the most tender manner of his failings and aid his reformation.”* This statement is one of the most important lessons that we as Masons ever learn—respect for the tender condition of the soul. It is easy to find fault with others and to focus on calling out the need for that fault to be corrected. But, to adhere to the concept of using a “*most tender manne*” forces us to adopt the perspective that every Mason is striving to do his best, therefore the failing act should be addressed as an unintentional oversight. And, the offer to “*aid his reformation*” then affirms and validates the concept of mercy that is only interested in making things right as opposed to assigning guilt.

How these gems of advice get applied is left to the discernment of each Mason. Perhaps we can practice not calling out ritual blunders that even the most seasoned ritualist is prone to make from time-to-time. Wait for a moment to take the brother aside to have him recite the ritual and then if education is needed, take the time to genuinely instruct not only how, but why the ritual is done this way. *“These generous principles are to extend further...”* Our families, our neighbors, and our communities-at-large will all enjoy this more cordial, respectful, and honorable behavior as individual Masons employ genuine intent to express these concepts in all their social interactions. Your life and the lives of those around you are the beneficiaries of Masonic influence when we effectively work on preparing ourselves “as living stones,” “fit for the builder’s use.”

Our email is moed4u@momason.org; we look forward to hearing your feedback.