

Passing The Outer Door

In the Tiled hall of a well regulated Lodge, we should encounter a stark contrast between the atmosphere inside the Lodge room and the “profane” world left behind. To the casual observer or newly made member the style of language used and the sharp execution of movements may seem unusual or trite, but one of the objectives for this is to produce a sense of group unity and to demonstrate that our approach to Masonry should teach us something about our approach to life.

This approach is demonstrated by the sense of reverence the Brethren exemplify when performing the business of the Craft. From the declarations given and the implements engaged in opening the Lodge, we can conclude that the Lodge room is a sacred space meant for the work of the Craft and in new initiates “to light” in the truest sense of the word. Every Tiled Lodge has an open Book of Law and therefore, we are reminded to be on our best behavior while in its presence.

One of the more apparent displays of this respect is used when we enter and leave the lodge room. The Outer door is attended by the Junior Deacon from within and Tiler from without, is the door used to enter and exit the Lodge when at Labor. Every necessary precaution should be taken to avoid being late to meetings, but on occasions when it is unavoidable the following procedure should be used to enter. First, notify the Tiler of your presence and that you wish to enter the Lodge, and then the Tiler will signal the alarm at the door. The officers of the Lodge cannot allow you to enter while they are in the process of opening the Lodge or during balloting, so be patient until the Worshipful Master sends the Junior Deacon to the door to ascertain the cause of the alarm. Once a brother is admitted the Junior Deacon will inform him on what degree the Lodge is laboring so that the entering Brother (Brethren) may advance to the altar and give the proper salute. Remember, you are an entering Brother who was not present when the Junior Deacon ascertained that all present were worthy of being so, therefore, it will be necessary for you to initiate the proper sign at the altar which the Master will return to you. Once that has been properly established you will be formally greeted by the Master who will then direct how to proceed in joining the Brethren.

Leaving a Lodge during a meeting is never encouraged, but the reality is that it sometimes needs to occur. If you know before the meeting that you will need to leave, it would be a great courtesy to tell inform the Worshipful Master, and the Senior and Junior Deacons before the meeting begins. To leave the Lodge, a Master Mason should arise and proceed to the position west of the Altar and give the sign of the degree. When the Worshipful Master arises and returns the sign he is then granting permission to leave. If the brother is an Entered Apprentice or Fellow Craft, the Senior Deacon will arise and meet the brother west of the Altar, and they will give the sign together, and then await the sign from the Worshipful master. (The departure of a Master Mason is the same procedure used in sending a substitute for the Tyler to participate in balloting. Just remember that it must be done prior to balloting as no interruption is allowed to take place once a ballot has commenced. Any Missouri Master Mason may relieve the Tyler to allow him to participate, but he is the only member not required to vote.)

The next time you're running late or need to leave early remember that knowing the protocol for entering and exiting the Outer door while the Lodge is at Labor goes a long way in preserving the sanctity and unity of the Lodge.