

THE FOUR CARDINAL VIRTUES.
By VWBro. Rev. F. T. F. Sweeting, PGC, WM

An Address Presented at his Installation
7 August 2000.

Brethren! If you cast a glance down at your apron you'll see two tassels, each with seven chains attached. I'd like to remind you that one of the tassels represents the seven stars of the starry firmament and alludes to the seven Freemasons needed to make a lodge perfect, without whom no candidate may be initiated.

The second set of tassels represent the seven Cardinal Virtues of Prudence, Fortitude, Justice, Temperance, Faith, Hope and Charity. The first four - Prudence, Temperance, Fortitude and Justice - are categorised as the natural virtues, whilst the other three - Faith, Hope and Charity - are known as the theological virtues.

This evening, I wish to draw your attention to the first four, only.

PRUDENCE - Prudence teaches us to regulate our lives and actions according to the dictates of reason and is that habit of mind whereby men wisely judge and prudently determine all matters relative to their earthly and eternal happiness.

These virtues ought to be the distinguishing characteristic of every Free and Accepted Mason. No, I'll go even further brethren, to say that it **MUST** and I repeat, **must**, be the mark of a true Mason, who must not only regulate his own life and actions, but, as an example to the rest of the world who are not Masonic, demonstrate the value of prudence.

A Mason is enjoined never to let drop, or let slip, the least Sign, Token or Word, whereby our Masonic secrets might be illegally obtained and to always remember that period in time, when he was placed before his Worshipful Master in the East, properly prepared, with his right hand resting on the Volume of the Sacred Law, which, in all probability, was his own Bible, later presented to him on the occasion of his being raised to the Third Degree.

TEMPERANCE - This is that due restraint of the passions and affections which render the body tame and governable and, also, relieves the mind from the allurements of vice.

And to-day, brethren, when there seems to be an ever growing ignoring, or mind-shutting, of this virtue, do we need to be ever watchful to see that our own temperance is not pushed into the furthest recesses of the mind?

For temperance ought to be the constant companion, the constant practice, of each one of us. Our teaching tells us, brethren, to avoid excess - excesses of any and every kind - and to be ever watchful that no habits enter into our lives whereby we might unwarily be led to betray our trust and subject ourselves to the penalty referred to, either in or, after, our Obligations ... depending upon the form of ritual used in your own particular Lodge.

FORTITUDE - When one looks into the Oxford dictionary, one finds, brethren, that the definition of this virtue, fortitude, is.... *courage in pain or adversity*, but I want to expand upon that this evening. I would hope that, to every Mason, fortitude is that noble and steady attitude of the soul, of the spirit, of the man - describe it as you wish - which is at the other end of the scale from rashness and cowardice.

Fortitude should enable each one of us to undergo pain, labour, danger or difficulty, when such a state is necessary or deemed prudently expedient. We need to show that we don't give up and neither, brethren, do we give in, when the going gets tough or difficult.

Fortitude ought to be deeply marked, figuratively, on the breast of every Mason as a fence, as a protection, as a security, against any attempts which might be made by threats, by violence or by coercion of any kind, to extort from him any of those Masonic secrets he has solemnly engaged himself to conceal and never, improperly, to reveal.

Remember your initiation, brethren, when the point of the sharp instrument was an emblematic torment to your body, when it was extended to your left breast.

Fortitude is courage at all times. Brethren, remember that always.

JUSTICE - The last, but, necessarily the least important virtue. Far from that being so.

Justice, brethren, is that station, or boundary, of right by which we are all taught to render, without distinction, to every man, whatever is his station in life, his race or his creed, his just due, his just rights. This virtue, brethren, is not only consistent with Divine Law, with Human Law, but is the standard by which our society today can be united. For without justice amongst all people, there cannot be unity and we certainly need unity of thought and action in the world today.

Without the exercise of justice, there would be universal confusion in society, the principles of equity would no longer exist and there would be chaos in the world. Unfortunately, this is what is happening in so many parts of the world today, brethren. Justice for all mankind has ceased to exist in the world's trouble spots, I believe.

As justice, in a great measure, makes or constitutes the really good man, so it ought to be the invariable practice of every Free and Accepted Mason never to deviate in any way at all from its principles. Ever having in mind, that time, when he was placed in the North East part of the Lodge, with his feet in the form of a square and his body erect and upright, then to hear that excellent injunction, that memorable charge, to be just and upright in all of his actions and activities in life.

We as Free and Accepted Masons must - again I emphasise the word *must* - consistently practice those cardinal virtues of Prudence, Temperance, Fortitude and Justice, at the same time as we put into practice the three grand principles of our order of Brotherly Love, Relief and Truth. If you and I do that, then the world in general will see and know, that Masonry is indeed worthwhile, something to be worthy of knowing about and participating in. An organisation of merit in today's society.