

Templum Fidelis Lodge No. 746

Templum Fidelis, Latin for Temple of Fidelity.

Fidelity (oxford dictionary) /fidelliti/ .noun

- 1. Continuing faithfulness to a person, cause or belief.*
- 2. The degree of exactness with which something is copied or reproduced.*

Address by R.W. Bro. Thomas W. Hogeboom, Charter Master of Templum Fidelis Lodge No. 746, to the Winter Solstice Celebration of Runnymede Lodge No. 619, West Toronto Masonic Temple, Annette Street, Toronto on Wednesday, December 14, 2011

First off I want to tell the Brethren of Runnymede Lodge what a distinct pleasure it is to have the opportunity to address you once again. It was just over three and a half years ago when R.W. Bro. Andrew Downes, having just three months before heard the pronouncement of M.W. Bro. Allan J. Petrisor that a new Traditional Observance Lodge was being formed in Bath, invited me to come and explain the process to his fellow members of Runnymede Lodge. Last month I had the good fortune to break bread with your Worshipful Master, W. Bro. Michael Correale, prior to the Ceremony of Installation and Investiture of the Officers of The Heritage Lodge at the Renforth Lodge Building and he invited me to return and offer a recap and update of our progress and to be a witness to the changes made in Runnymede Lodge in the last three and a half years.

First the background of our Lodge – Templum Fidelis Lodge is a Traditional Observance Lodge No. 746 in Bath, on the shores of Lake Ontario, operating in the jurisdiction of The Grand Lodge of Canada in the Province of Ontario. This is very important to our acceptance and survival for we would never have been granted permission to meet under dispensation without assuring the Grand Master, and through him, the Past Grand Masters and Grand Lodge Management Committee whom he consulted, that we would in no way be altering “The Work” as detailed in

the Grand Lodge of Canada in the Province of Ontario Book of The Work. We were very careful to assure all that we would have a separate and distinct protocol before the Lodge was opened and after the Lodge was closed as per the Book of The Work, but that when the Lodge was open in the formal sense, there would be no alterations or innovations to The Work as laid down by our Grand Lodge.

As I previously mentioned, Templum Fidelis Lodge was granted permission to meet under dispensation on January 10, 2008; Warranted during the 154th Annual Communication of our Grand Lodge on July 16, 2008; followed by the Consecration and first Ceremony of Installation and Investiture by Grand Lodge on June 6, 2009. Other significant milestones have been receiving our District Deputy Grand Master on December 13, 2008 who was a Charter Member of the Lodge; our first Initiation was conducted on September 19, 2009; we made our first Fellow Craft Mason on September 18, 2010; we made our first Master Mason on September 17, 2011 – over three years from the date of his application for Initiation; and at our September meeting, we had the pleasure of receiving another of our Charter Members as the District Deputy Grand Master of Frontenac District and a Charter Member as the Deputy Grand Master of the Grand Lodge of Canada in the Province of Ontario.

Templum Fidelis Lodge is characterized by a solemn approach to holding stated communications and conferring degrees, periods of personal reflection, education through Masonic music and Masonic education in Lodge and discussion and debate during the Agape, the use of the Chamber of Reflection as part of the initiation ceremony, and slow and

demanding candidate advancement. We maintain our high standards by working within guidelines developed by the Masonic Restoration Foundation and within the context of our Grand Lodge regulations. Templum Fidelis Lodge incorporates higher dues, festive boards, a strict tuxedo dress code and very high expectations for ritual and decorum.

This observance is characterized by a solemn approach to holding stated communications and conferring degrees, the use of the Chamber of Reflection as part of the initiation ceremony, forming the Chain of Union after the meetings, longer time between degrees and the requirement for candidates to present a paper before the lodge on the lessons of each degree prior to advancement. We use the term Agape rather than Festive Board to describe the meal that follows the meetings. The exception to this being after a meeting to conduct the Third Degree – it is after this meeting at high 12 when our the legendary builder Hiram Abiff was slain, that the members close the Lodge, conduct the Chain of Union and then retire to their homes without further words.

Our members believe very strongly that the foremost purpose of Freemasonry is to provide an atmosphere where good men can unite together in a common pursuit of virtue and create an atmosphere where the members can learn the lessons of Freemasonry and how they can be inculcated into their daily lives, not to review minutes or bills, or plan social or philanthropic activities. Our objective is to develop an ever-continuing process of spiritual and intellectual formation that all Freemasons must undergo in order to improve themselves in Masonry. It is a constant transformation through the use of Masonic symbols, rituals, and teachings.

Success is viewed as effectively imparting the traditional teachings hidden within Masonic symbols and the spiritual unification of the brethren in such a pursuit.

We feel our mandate is to retain and engage our members with meaningful human fellowship, stimulating discourse and enriching programs; to make Masonic teachings and philosophy accessible and interesting to the members and not shy away from dealing with the spiritual issues and questions that many men begin to find more meaningful as they mature; to create an ambience where true learning can occur by taking the members inward to the core of their being rather than outward toward the profane elements of life.

Our typical meeting goes as follows. The brethren, all properly dressed according to the dress code (i.e. - tuxedo), will arrive at the lodge hall, which will be dimly lit by candlelight, with classical music softly playing in the background. If there is a degree, we encourage the brethren to minimize their conversations to greetings, if at all possible, and prior to a Third Degree, to maintain complete silence prior to and after the ceremony.

The members who are not Officers and the visitors are directed to their seats by the Director of Ceremonies. Once the lodge officers have ceremoniously marched in and have been seated, there is a period of silence for self reflection usually lasting several minutes. The Worshipful Master and his Officers will then formally open the Lodge to conduct the minimum amount of business necessary to comply with the Constitution – the Summons is read, the minutes and accounts approved as distributed

and receiving petitions. All other business of the Lodge is conducted as a separate business meeting of the Committee of General Purposes. Following this the Master will call for the scheduled papers and related pieces of music to be presented in an arranged order.

The music that is presented is usually of a contemplative nature and is viewed as an important component of every meeting as it contributes to the overall beauty and solemnity of the atmosphere. The music is also intended to acquaint the brethren with the spectrum of Masonic music composed during the 18th Century and to educate them on the profound history of the classical musical tradition and its relationship to the Masonic Mysteries. Our Organist, equipped with his i-pod and surround sound of a Bose wave music system, has delighted us with music of the Renaissance from Byrd, Beethoven, Handel, Du Fay and Bros. Arne and Mozart; from the Modern era with Billings and Bro. Burns; from the Contemporary era with the sounds of McFerrin and Correa doing Mozart, Hykes, Hurst, Kostabi, Clannad, Stevie Ray Vaughn, Simon and Garfunkel and Bro. Ellington; to Tibetan mantras and chants with the bowls and cymbals of the Buddhist Monks of Maitri Vihar Monastery.

The presentation of papers is viewed as an essential aspect of the life of the lodge and promotes the continued study of Masonic lessons by the brethren. The topic of the papers must be relevant to the interests of the lodge and papers of a strictly historical or biographical nature are rarely entertained in the lodge room, those being reserved for presentation during the Agape. Topics considered appropriate for the lodge room are symbolism, initiation, ritual, metaphysics, philosophy and art. Our papers in

Lodge have ranged from presentations touching on the relationship of Freemasonry with Buddhism, Agnosticism, Kabala and the Jacobites to apron and jewel symbolism.

Before the Lodge is closed, the Worshipful Master calls for another period of silence. Once the lodge has been formally closed the brethren gather around the altar for a ceremony known as the Chain of Union, which is meant to symbolize the common commitment to Masonic ideals and connection with other Masons from all over the world. The brethren will then retire to the Agape, which is a catered meal with formal toasts and where a discussion of the in-Lodge paper takes place followed by a lengthier paper at the end of the entire course. Our papers at the Agape have ranged from presentations on Arithmetic, famous historical Brethren, United Empire Loyalist and Freemasonry, Freemasonry in Upper Canada, Freemasonry and the War of 1812 and a comparative analysis of the Ancients vs. the Moderns.

Traditional Observance Masonry has given our members the opportunity to partake in a ritual and sociability that they cannot find anywhere else. Traditional Masonry allows brothers to move their minds from the mundane to the mystical, away from life's petty particulars to attention on its transcendent meaning. While this type of Freemasonry does not appeal to everyone, it is proving to be a successful and enjoyable to our membership.

The idea of Templum Fidelis Lodge came about by a group of young Masons who were not satisfied by what they were seeing in lodge and

wanted to get more out of their Masonic experience. They started by forming a '40 Below Degree Team' which consisted of Masons under 40 years of age who wanted to do, see and be a part of meticulous Lodge Work. From there, the interest rose to forming their own Lodge, but with a twist - using the Traditional Observation model to maintain the integrity, solemnity and protocol that they had reconfirmed in their love of the Craft.

We were looking for an experience where the focus is on the Work, protocol and the candidate rather than what some Lodges had become. We strive for quality being more important than quantity. We strive for only one voice in the lodge room - the Master and only anyone he has given the floor too - no side bars, no private meetings, no cell phones or electronic planners. We expect our candidates to learn more about Masonry as they go along, who will not only prove themselves before advancing in the current method we all know, but also present a paper on their experiences and significance of the former Degree before they advance to the next Degree. Our objective is to create a lodge where the focus is on candidate development rather than a Mason-making-machine – to this end we have set the minimum period between a candidate's Degrees to be a year. We all dress in tuxedos and white gloves. The Lodge room is marked with candles and solemnity that make a lasting impression on the candidate and our members. It is in no way intended to be something elite, or superior to our current Craft Lodges, simply another expression of the Masonic experience.

The black and white of the ritual can be conveyed in any Lodge, but ultimately so much of the power of Freemasonry is an “experiential” phenomenon that cannot be conveyed through mere words. Only through

engaging all of the senses, successfully creating an atmosphere where time and place disappear by creating a sanctuary completely cut off from the profane world outside, can every Mason therein “experience” the presence of “the sacred.” So that while we share our brief time together in our meetings, engaged in the ritual and appealing to every man’s mindful reason, through the “experience,” we are ultimately speaking the language of the soul.

The original 18 members of the Templum Fidelis Masonic Club have now grown to 24, with four of these Brethren being new members to the Craft. In the beginning we made the decision to apply to the Grand Master for dispensation to meet and be recognized as a lodge in Frontenac District in the Grand Lodge of Canada in the Province of Ontario. This was done in such a fashion, rather than The Heritage Lodge model, so that we would not limit the number of such lodges in our Grand Jurisdiction. We well expect that this experience will grow to other centres of the Province such as Ottawa, Toronto and beyond. Hence our Charter membership was not developed exclusive to Frontenac District. We are very proud to have a Past Grand Master and Custodian of the Work, M.W. Bro. Don Mumby and the Deputy Grand Master, R.W. Bro. Don Campbell as Charter Members invited to join from beyond Frontenac District to assist with the communication of the Traditional Masonic experience.

The most challenging step in our evolution, which I am sure would be the same in any District, was to garner the support of the majority of the lodges in our District to form a new lodge as per the Constitution. We got several very pointed questions, most often questioning the perceived

elitism that this lodge might create with our higher than normal dues structure, dress restrictions and visitor protocol. We were able to skate through with the support of every lodge in the District by reminding them that we would still be bound by the same Constitution as they are, that our By-laws would have to be approved by the Grand Master as were their By-laws.

To date, all of our current members have maintained their interest, membership and support of their respective Mother Lodges with one exception, and that was because he moved out of the country. The fact that we meet only quarterly on or near the solstices and equinoxes of the Sun, plus a January Installation and Investiture Ceremony, motivates current members to maintain their Mother Lodge membership. As I mentioned, we have Initiated four young men into Masonry in the last three years and expected that with only five meetings a year, they would want to Affiliate elsewhere to expand their Masonic experience – but we haven't seen this yet – in fact, to the best of my knowledge, only one of these four new Masons have been to another Lodge and that was only once when a special Degree Team came to Kingston.

We have now been meeting as a regular operating lodge for the past three and a half years, incorporating the Traditional Observation Procession into the Lodge room, the Chain of Union and the Agape Ceremony. We expect Templum Fidelis Lodge to continue to make new Masons and accept applications for Affiliation and to have our membership capped off at 72 members – maybe not in my lifetime, but it is in the By-laws.

Before I open the floor to questions, I want to again thank W. Bro. Correale for his invitation to visit this special meeting of Runnymede Lodge this evening to share our experiences of our new Lodge and to enjoy your Winter Solstice Celebration.

Would anyone have any questions regarding our initiatives at Templum Fidelis that I might answer?

I invite all of you to visit our web site – templumfidelis.com – to understand the visiting protocol and come out to visit us – you won't regret it.