

Symbols

** = brother or brethren stand and then sit*

+ = rise and remain standing

WM and Brethren all, Brother ...

Today, Bro ... you have become a Brother amongst us – and I refer not only to the Brethren here today. There are several million Freemasons world-wide and so you now have millions of new Brothers, spread over the four quarters of the globe.

As a mason, you will be welcomed into lodges in an A to Z of countries: America, Bulgaria, Canada, Denmark, Estonia, France, Germany, Hungary, India, Japan, Korea, Latvia and countries throughout the rest of the alphabet.

In England and Wales there are some 200,000 masons, many of whom you will meet once you start visiting other lodges, one of the great pleasures in Masonry. Today we are honoured by the presence of many visitors to this lodge, all of whom are here to witness your initiation and bid you welcome.

Today's event must have been a little overwhelming for you. It is for each one of us. Every brother here has his own memory of his initiation, an event none of us ever forget. To help you savour it a little, let me introduce the Brethren who assisted in the ceremony.

Our Tyler, Bro ... (*) looked after you outside the lodge and prepared you for the ceremony. You were divested of all monies and left poor and penniless. Our Inner Guard, Bro ... (*) received you inside the door of the lodge and attested that you were properly prepared to be made a mason.

He declared that fact to the Brethren and you were brought into the lodge by the Junior Deacon Bro ... (*) and the Senior Deacon, Bro ... (*) Then the Chaplain, Bro ... (*) expressed the hope that you would so dedicate yourself as to become a true and faithful brother amongst us and you were guided you around the lodge.

You were introduced to the Junior Warden, Bro ... (*) and then to the Senior Warden ... (*) as a candidate properly prepared to be admitted to the mysteries and privileges of Antient Freemasonry.

You were finally presented to the (Past Master) who conducted your initiation, Bro ... (*) You recited your obligation as a Freemason, which you sealed with your lips on the VSL, in your case the Bible opened at I Kings 7:13-14.

And King Solomon sent and fetched Hiram out of Tyre. He was a widow's son of the tribe of Naphtali, and his father was a man of Tyre, a worker in brass: and he was filled with wisdom, and understanding, and cunning to work all works in brass. And he came to King Solomon, and wrought all his work.

You will discover that the ceremonies that we enact are based upon the allegory of the building of the first temple in Israel.

The Master then communicated the token, sign and word of a mason. Bro ... do remember what he said: those secrets you must *never* communicate to anyone who is not a mason.

You were then taken to the Junior and Senior Wardens again to rehearse what you have been told by the Master and finally, at the Master's command, our Brother the Director Ceremonies, Bro ... (*) brought to the Senior Warden's pedestal, that badge of innocence and bond of friendship, the white lambskin, the apron of an entered apprentice Freemason.

As you looked around the lodge, you may have seen many different aprons, some highly decorated and none more so than the aprons of the Grand Officers (*) honouring us with their presence here today. But no matter how decorated those aprons may be, none are worth more nor are more honourable than that white lambskin.

You were asked to give to charity when we all knew well that you could not. This was not done to embarrass you but to give you a moment in which to feel the pain of poverty so that you will understand all the more powerfully that charity is the distinguishing characteristic of a Freemason's heart.

Then Bro ... (*) presented the working tools of an entered apprentice Freemason, the first of many lessons in which we moralise upon the working tools used by our ancient forbears. You were then invited to retire outside, there to adjust your clothing and when you returned, Bro ... (*) charged you with those duties which define a Freemason: to God, your neighbour and yourself.

Bro ... it is too much to expect that you took all these moral exhortations to heart in one afternoon but you will witness other initiations and you will hear the same words repeated. You will also learn them by heart for, as you will have seen, all our ceremonies are carried out from memory.

From this day forward, Bro ... , you are a Freemason, something to be very proud of. I'd like to read you some words from Bro. William Preston, who wrote Illustrations of Masonry as long ago as 1787.

Masonry stamps an indelible mark of pre-eminence on its genuine professors, which neither chance, power or fortune can bestow. When its rules are strictly observed, it is a sure foundation of tranquillity amidst the various disappointments of life; a friend that will not deceive, but will comfort and assist, in prosperity and adversity; a blessing that will remain with you at all times circumstances and places and to which recourse maybe had, when other earthly comforts sink into this regard.

Lovely words are they not? Written as I said, over 200 years ago.

There is another passage which I'd like to read to you if you don't mind. It is suitable to you as a young man and indeed to those of us who are a little older.

In the youth (hand on lay brother's shoulder) it governs the passions and employs usefully our most active faculties; and in age, when sickness, imbecility (hand on PM's shoulder!) and disease have benumbed our corporeal frame and rendered the union of soul and body almost intolerable, it yields a fund of comfort and satisfaction.

Bro ... we look forward to many happy years spent with you in fraternal love and we will watch with interest and pride your growth and daily advancement in Masonic knowledge.

I have introduced you to those who took the major roles in your ceremony but every Brother here took part. Our Master and all his officers (+) will do their utmost to assist you Masonic career. Every member of ... (+) welcomes you warmly into the lodge and each and every one of our visitors (+) is here today to welcome you warmly into the fraternity of Freemasonry.

Brethren, the toast is to Brother Initiate. Good Fire ...