

Education & Enlightenment

A Special Committee of

The Ancient & Accepted Scottish Rite of Freemasonry of Canada



The Practice of every Moral and Social Virtue

In the many rituals that Lodges use, the word 'virtue' crops up often i.e., "...the practice of every moral and social virtues...", "...principles of morality and virtue...", "...square our actions by the square of virtue...".

In the Canadian Work the word can be found about fifteen times. In Emulation work about sixteen times, and those with the Ancient work approximately thirteen times. It can also be found in ceremonies of installation numerous times as well.

Virtue, by definition, is the moral excellence of a person; "he is a virtuous man." To be considered a good man, for example, we might say he is honest, respectful, discrete, generous, and kind. By having these 'labels' given to him one would expect him to demonstrate the virtues at all times. No matter what the situation, through these virtues – acting like a sieve if you wish - he can decide how he will respond in words and in action.

If our rituals have the word virtues printed so often, then it has to be assumed that the meaning of the word is important to us. Yet, interestingly the ritual is relatively silent on what the virtues are. It identifies some, for example:-

Wisdom, Strength, Beauty
Temperance, Fortitude, Prudence, Justice
Peace, Harmony
Duty
Brotherly Love, Relief, Truth
Faith, Hope, Charity

What may come to the mind of the student of Freemasonry might be: "What are the Social Virtues and the Moral Virtues?" How many are there? Are they different – Social Virtues compared to Moral Virtues? Are there more than the seventeen shown above? If there are where do we find them?

Ms Linda Popov wrote a program for schools titled "The Virtues Project." Teachers would select a virtue each week of the school year, define it, explain it, and use the virtue throughout the week – a multisensory approach to the words. By the end of a 40-week year, students would be exposed to 40 virtues – characteristics of being a good person. Ms Popov also wrote a book titled "A Pace of Grace – The Virtues of a Sustainable Life." In this book she lists ninety-six virtues, a collection of virtues found through her research in many cultures of our world. They appeared to be common to all cultures she studied. The book takes sixteen virtues and explains why they should be used to maintain a wholesome healthy life. For example for Moderation she identifies signs of success when you:

- know what you need and get enough – no more no less
- take care of your health by getting enough of what you need
- use self-discipline to stop yourself from overdoing
- balance work and play in life
- set boundaries for yourself
- are content with enough ¹

Virtues: The Gifts Within.

Ref: Popov Linda K., 2004, A Pace of Grace – The Virtues of a Sustainable Life, Penguin Books, Toronto. p.13.

Acceptance	Flexibility	Patience
Accountability	Forbearance	Peacefulness
Appreciation	Forgiveness	Perceptiveness
Assertiveness	Fortitude	Perseverance
Awe	Friendliness	Prayerfulness
Beauty	Generosity	Purity
Caring	Gentleness	Purposefulness
Charity	Grace	Reliability
Cheerfulness	Gratitude	Resilience
Cleanliness	Helpfulness	Respect
Commitment	Honesty	Responsibility
Compassion	Honour	Reverence
Confidence	Hope	Righteousness
Consideration	Humanity	Sacrifice
Contentment	Humility	Self-Discipline
Cooperation	Idealism	Serenity
Courage	Independence	Service
Courtesy	Initiative	Sincerity
Creativity	Integrity	Steadfastness
Decisiveness	Joyfulness	Strength
Detachment	Justice	Tact
Devotion	Kindness	Temperance
Dignity	Love	Thankfulness
Diligence	Loyalty	Tolerance
Discernment	Mercy	Trust
Endurance	Mindfulness	Trustworthiness
Enthusiasm	Moderation	Truthfulness
Excellence	Modesty	Understanding
Fairness	Nobility	Unity
Faith	Obedience	Uprightness

Faithfulness	Openness	Wisdom
Fidelity	Orderliness	Zeal

This list is not the complete list of all virtues. Any search on Google will bring up lists with more virtues identified.

If the ardent student reviews the list and reads through his ritual he will find more than the seventeen (those identified above) - some are printed, others are implied in context. A brief study of the ritual of the writer's has found approximately 65 of 96 are either named or inferred.

But more interestingly, I think, is that Scottish Rite Freemasonry ritual names more of them and hints at even further virtues. For example:

Lodge of Perfection Degrees

4th degree.

silence, obedience, and fidelity

5th degree

honesty and industrious, and trustworthiness the cornerstone of the foundation of Masonic Honour

6th degree

Zeal,, and fidelity to duty

7th degree

Impartiality, equity, and justice – let justice be our guide in all your actions

8th degree

Charity and benevolence – demanding that we correct our own faults and those of others

9th degree

Enlighten, instruct, vigilance – Ignorance is the principle enemy of human freedom

10th degree

Tolerant and liberal – war against fanaticism and persecution with education and enlightenment (creation and building of Wisdom)

11th degree

Earnest, true, and reliable – a Mason's work is never complete

12th degree

Wisdom, through knowledge

13th degree

Seeking knowledge – motivated by duty and honour

14th degree

Bound and free – bound by their obligations and free from prejudice, intolerance and envy

Masons meet on the level because in our lives, authority and liberty are in equilibrium

Perhaps a '*selling*' point of Scottish Rite Freemasonry to Master Masons is the sound development of the virtues from Craft Ritual that are the Characters of a Good Man and which are built upon in Scottish Rite. Having checked for virtues in Perfection Degrees only, I believe that all 96 virtues listed by Popov would be found somewhere in the 29 degrees of Scottish Rite.

We have heard often the cliché – *We take a good man and make him a better man.*

The sentence might now take on deeper understanding.

For example:

- **“we take a good man”** – when we interview a prospective man for Freemasonry, we determine from that interview if he should go forward to be balloted upon. Essentially we are looking to see if he exhibits some virtues already part of his character.
- **“make him a better man”** – implies that if he is accepted, it is our work to show him more virtues which as a good man he needs to acquire. We make him better.

Craft Masonry will identify some virtues but not all. It is however in Scottish Rite that more virtues are presented. Where are they exactly in our work? In the lectures of the Scottish Rite degrees. For example in the 8th degree, the drama portrayed, the words spoken in the degree and the lectures of that degree will identify virtues – the lecture alone identifies reference to about 25 virtues.

When speaking about Scottish Rite to Master Masons, it can be truly said that our Rite builds on the Craft Degrees, demonstrated through drama, in writing, and especially in its lectures. Scottish Rite really is a Course on Virtues.

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Ref:

Popov, L. (2004) *A Pace of Grace – Virtues of a Sustainable Life*, Penguin Group, Toronto.

¹ Ibid p. 152