

Education & Enlightenment

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A Masonic Moment – Remembrance Day

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As Remembrance Day occurs every November, it is appropriate that we as Masons commemorate this special day. We should consider it an honour and a privilege that we are able to look back and reflect on its special meaning.

On the eleventh hour of the eleventh day of the eleventh month, Canadians come together as one nation to pause for a moment to remember. In this moment of remembrance, we are honouring the heroes of our country who gave everything to defend and maintain the security of not only Canada but the world. November 11th is a reminder for us all, to pause and reflect on the efforts of many of our friends, family members and brethren who have served, or presently serve, our Country.

It has been said that Freemasonry has forever been a peaceful art. It has suffered in the great debilitating wars that have swept across the land, but it also has helped to heal the bleeding wounds of conflict and rebuild a better world. This peacefulness, however, is not derived from weakness. The legends of the Craft include such hostile confrontations as the slaughter of the hapless Ephraimites, the deliverance from Pharaoh at the Red Sea crossing and our Noble Architect Hiram Abiff defying his assassins to maintain his trust.

In the brotherhood of mankind, we understand that war and conflict is a civil war within the human race itself. Men facing fear and death are often drawn together in a union which is closer to the spirit of the Craft than any other institution in society. From 1915 to 1955, the growth of Freemasonry kept pace with the global population growth. Why was Freemasonry so successful during that period? It could have been due to a surge in membership after the great Wars when returning soldiers fostered a spirit of brotherhood which they could, and would, perpetuate in a Masonic lodge.

The Empty or Vacant Chair ceremony performed at many lodges dates back to 1875, a decade after the close of the American Civil War when it was used in Masonic lodges to pay tribute to those who did not return from the war. Since then it has been used by many lodges on Remembrance Day worldwide including in Canada to pay homage to those brother Masons who fell during WWI, WWII, and other wars. During this ceremony an empty chair is decorated with an officer's collar or an apron placed over the back. It is then placed outside the closed door of the Lodge and a podium and wreath are placed in the South East angle of the lodge where a short ceremony takes place.

As Masons, let us continue to enjoy the rights and freedoms that were preserved for us. Let us continue to support others that wish to join our Fraternity and to try to become better men. Let us continue to support Brotherly Love, Relief and Truth. Let us continue in an effort to make the world a better place in which to live and a better place for the generations to follow.

Think of the part of the General Charge, what is really the core of it that states "...because he did the good act, not for himself but for the cause of good. If you my brethren, meet such a man, you will see the personification of brotherly love, relief and truth; and you will have found the ideal of a Freemason."

All brethren should take a moment for serious thought and reflection each November on this day. Try to give honest, sincere thanks to the Great Architect of the Universe for all of the sacrifices made. Try to think what it must have been like for those in action as well as for those millions of others whose lives were taken or destroyed as part of the brutality of those conflicts. Try to think of your current freedoms and privileges and just try to imagine what your life would have been like without them.

Remember the fallen in your thoughts and prayers and wear the poppy proudly because it represents pride, glory and sacrifice....a sacrifice that was made by our national heroes, our friends, our family... our brothers.