



Culver City-Foshay # 467 F. & A. M.

# TRESTLEBOARD

NOVEMBER 2010



## FROM THE EAST

November is a month of reflection and a time to be grateful for the many blessings that we have received during the year. Thanksgiving is a National Holiday that we celebrate with this very thought in mind. Being thankful or having deep gratitude in our hearts is a powerful instrument and a strong tool for building well into the future of Masonry and also into the future of our own lives.

Some of us may believe that there is nothing to be thankful for since times are difficult from a suffering economy and unemployment or for many other very valid reasons to feel a lack of thanksgiving or gratitude. However, the mere thought of those things that we could be grateful for or the mental exercise of visualization of that which may or may not have been actualized can bring us closer to our desired goals or even improve our current accomplishments. It is indeed a truth that our focus is the key to the real and tangible manifestation of those things that we desire. So, as we enter this month, let's be grateful for what we have and what we might see ourselves obtaining in our Masonic as well as in our personal lives.

I know that I am grateful for so many things in relationship to the lodge and also in the many ways that being a Mason has influenced me. I would not trade my Masonic experience for anything, as it has been a key factor in my life. I am grateful for the officers of the lodge and all the support that they have offered me as well as to the Grand Lodge for all the tools that they have placed at the disposal of the local lodges in an effort to help strengthen the ability of lodges to do the work of creating new Masons and also in the effort to strengthen the effectiveness of lodges to create educational programs for potential candidates and for those who have already been Raised to the Sublime Degree of Master Mason.

The year is quickly coming to an end and a new year is soon approaching! Let us be thankful and let us be grateful for what we do have and if we do not have what we truly desire, let us gather together and as a family of friends and brothers, let us build even the greatest of dreams and celebrate together the true spirit of Freemasonry is my November wish to each and every brother of our Lodge.

God bless us all and thank you!

Fraternally,

Jonathan P. Dilley, WM



## FROM THE WEST

### Masonry and the Mystery Schools

Imagine yourself in this situation: You have been accepted for initiation into a secretive society and told to be at an isolated mountain location at a certain time. You go to the appointed place and, at first, no one is there. Finally, a hooded figure emerges from a hidden cleft in the rock face and gestures for you to follow. You are led into a cave and shown a pool of water. Your guide instructs you to dive into the pool, find an underwater tunnel, and swim through it until you emerge in another chamber of the cave. Uncertainly, you lower yourself into the cold, black pool, take a breath, locate and enter the lightless tunnel deep below the surface as you wonder if you must swim a few feet or a hundred. You even wonder if you have already failed some mysterious test and have been sent into a dead end where you will drown.

In the ancient times of Greece, Egypt, Rome, and Persia, this scenario and ones similar to it were played out again and again when orders known generally as the Mystery School religions initiated their subjects into their mysterious teachings. Although Masonic initiations require no physical hardships or place the candidate in actual danger, our system and philosophy are built upon the Mystery School tradition; therefore, understanding them and surveying some of their similarities to our own tradition can shed some light on why we use the tool of initiation to “make” Masons.

Mystery Schools are founded on the basic belief that two types of knowledge exist: exoteric and esoteric. These words are based on Greek roots that more or less mean, respectively, “outside” and “inner.” Aristotle seems to be the first writer to use them to describe types of knowledge when he described his books as exoteric, defining the word as meaning “common.” He left esoteric undefined, but later philosophers began to use it to describe secret teachings within a religion or system of knowledge which were transmitted only to an inner circle of prepared candidates. As used today, the word “esoteric” refers to either secret knowledge reserved for a special inner circle (initiates) or to knowledge that can be understood only by those who have been specially prepared or trained to receive it.

The term “esoteric teachings” was first applied to the secret mathematic and geometric knowledge of the followers of Pythagoras, later to a number of Mystery Schools, such as the followers of Mithra, Isis, Orpheus, Eleusis in Europe and the Near East, and to a number of similar schools in Asia. In the Greek and Roman worlds, the Mystery Schools wielded powerful cultural and political influence and conferred great respect and admiration on their members. As an example, Cicero, who had been initiated into the Eleusinian Rites, said that the Mystery Schools allowed one “to live happily and die with a fairer hope.”

Today, the Mystery Schools have all but died out in the Western world, existing mostly in sporadic and isolated revivals. However, their influence continues to be felt—the Christian Gospels and teachings, for instance, retain some of the wording and concepts of the Mysteries. Nevertheless, for modern times, in Freemasonry is contained their most vital legacy.

Here is how the process worked in the ancient world: Members of a Mystery school might communicate the purpose and some of the basic tenants of their belief to the public, either through words or deeds. They might even have classes that taught an outer, an exoteric, version of the religion to those interested. When the inner members deemed a particular person ready and able to learn more and pursue a deeper path into their doctrine, he or she would be invited to undergo initiation. To understand the importance of the event of initiation, consider the deeper meaning of this word: Its root is *initi*, which gives rise to words meaning “first” or “to begin.” We make a first move by “seizing the initiative.” The first finger on our hands is the “index” finger. Hence, when one is initiated, despite having lived for a number of years, having experienced many life-changing events, perhaps even having studied the Mystery’s outer teachings, one’s initiation is the first truly important event of one’s life. Or, from another perspective, initiation is the first step in an entirely new life.

To aide in our own understanding of Masonic initiation, I will describe a few main features of the traditional Mystery Schools. Although I will mostly avoid directly describing aspects of our own rituals, you may contemplate in your own minds the links between the Mysteries and Masonry.

First, potential initiates might be taken into a dark chamber, perhaps underground, perhaps blindfolded, after which they are caused to travel to a new place and brought into the light. Here we can see an allegory of death and birth; the initiates have died metaphorically in their old lives and have been born into new ones. It is significant that the light which they encounter is a new light, as though they are given new eyes which see the world from a higher state of knowledge, spiritual awareness, and consciousness. This is best illustrated in the phrase “to see the light by which Masons work;” The initiated work in a new kind of light, in a new kind of world.

Circumambulation is another important feature of the Mysteries. By walking in a circle, initiates imitate the path

of the sun around the world, making them aware of a connection between themselves and the universe—remember the great teaching of Hermes Trismegistus: “as above, so below.” Initiates become one with the universe and it molds into them its order, regularity, purity, and grandeur.

Finally, initiates are instructed with the doctrine’s esoteric knowledge, which is often communicated symbolically by giving esoteric meanings to words, objects, or symbols already known to initiates. One may see examples of such objects in the Culver City-Foshay library and lodge room, where various tools of building are displayed. We freely connect such tools with some of their exoteric meanings, such as prudence, fortitude and justice, and our Blue Book describes the meanings of each tool in non-ciphered text, which means they may be communicated freely to non-Masons. However, in the degrees, initiates see other uses and meanings for the tools that are esoteric—embedded in the ritual for the initiates only. Later, the initiates may learn there are even deeper layers of esoteric meaning for each object. Individual words may have esoteric meanings as well. To draw an example from the ancient world, readers of the Bible know that the initials (that word again!) placed above Jesus’ head on the cross, I.N.R.I., stand for *Iesus Nazaremus Rex Iudeorum* (Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews). But in one of the Mystery Schools, the letters also mean *Ignis Natura Renovatur Integra* (nature is renovated by fire), and further, that these letters are also the initials that represent the four classical elements—water, fire, air, and earth. These esoteric meanings can then become a rubric for further teachings.

In summary, the value of the initiatory system of teaching is that it presents knowledge to a student in a dramatic, allegorical way that can have a much more profound and lasting impact than, say, presenting the same knowledge in a literal lecture. Also, the emphasis on inner and hidden meanings reinforces in the initiates’ minds that the greater truth is not that which is given to them, but that which is realized internally by each initiate—the ritual provides the path, we alone must follow it to its conclusion to find the treasure that is waiting only for us.

Fraternally,  
Curtis Shumaker  
Senior Warden



The School Of Athens, Raphael (1483-1520) depicting Plato and Aristotle (Leonardo & Michelangelo)



## FROM THE SOUTH

Dear Brethren, I am pleased to send you these words for reflection:

### The Holy Ashlar

Early in the lessons of our craft we were taught the meaning of the Ashlar, a stone as taken from the quarry in its rude and natural state and handed over to the artisans whose tools made it fit for placement in the temple. The transformation from its rough to perfected state is adequate to represent the transformation we are seeking in our lives while attaining a higher state of consciousness and rising to a more stately existence. As the working tools of the old craftsmen were indispensable to their success, so we have retained what they used as necessary to our spiritual edification.

In particular, the gavel, used by our ancestors to break off the rough and superfluous parts of stones is enjoined upon us as appropriate to “fitting our minds as living stones for that Spiritual Building, that House not made with Hands, eternal in the Heavens.”

The concept of a stone as possessing life force is an interesting testimony in Freemasonry. Traditionally the expression “living stones” has had strong Christian references, contradistinguishing them from the inanimate parts that compose the material temple, and comparing them with the “living men” built upon Christ as a foundation. Furthermore, in the Gospel of Luke, the narrator informs us that had the disciples failed to do so, the very stones would have cried out rejoicing for the “King that commeth in the Name of the Lord” [see: Luke 19:37-40]. Islamic script also, perhaps with less emphasis, characterizes a living quality of stones, for it is written: “Indeed, there are stones from which rivers burst forth, and there are some of them that split open and water cometh out, and there are some of them that fall down for fear of Allah” [see: the Qur’an; Surah 2:74]. Even among the oracular Jews, a mystical reservoir from which stones transmitted spiritual energy to the High Priests occurred in the Urim and Thummim akin to his breastplate and ephod.

Now, whether in rejoicing or in fear or in prophecy, these living stones are symbolical and outward expressions of what lies hidden beneath the coarse barrier shielding the human interior realm. Stones, generally regarded as rigid, cold and inanimate are actually sacred and Masonic portals to the deepest realms of the human psyche and, even so, the deeps of a soul. Therein may be discovered one’s profounder knowledge and greater powers! Whatever within him that is holy and divine cannot be adequately expressed in outward terms. Only what are pure and holy intents are capable of inward expression and are unhindered by what otherwise would be impalpable surfaces. Hence, “Know Thyself!” is the ancient charge and launching point of the mystery school from which freemasonry has certainly descended.

The stone of the Apprentice is unprepared and bewildering. He may appreciate its superficial potential but lacks the skill to realize it; and he cannot anticipate value beneath its surface. Were he to place it upon the foundation, no matter how solid, the superstructure would fall in time due to unfit measurement. He, in truth, has not learned the lessons of conformity and social edification and, thus, his stone is the Rough Ashlar, according to our tradition.

The Fellowcraft works on the surface of the stone that it may properly fit among other stones upon the solid foundation. This of course, represents his progressive education as a social being, in which the Liberal Arts and Sciences have been enjoined. His stone will help keep the superstructure in good stead. He is adequately endowed with virtues necessary to work effectively with his fellow creatures and his work will henceforth be congruent and aligned. His stone, therefore, has been called in our profession the Perfect Ashlar.

The Master must treat of what is not necessarily visible to the perceiving eye. He must incite the polished stones to come together; and to that end he must provide for a solid foundation and a crowning keystone. To him, the beauty of the stone is in the whole of it. Every particle which composes it, from its surface throughout its interior, must harmonize with the laws of the universe which he employs through mathematics, the science of the heavens and the spheres. His stone is verily the whole of the temple itself and the spirit that dwells within it.

As Freemasons speculative, we endeavour to erect our spiritual temples, measure by measure and brick by brick, according to our education and in communication through prayer with our maker. We must be of mind to penetrate

our course barriers and purge what is found below to be unholy, even as the inferior workmen had ridded from the surface of rough stones the superfluities of unfitness. The one who preservers must surely be strong, for what he may discover within may replace his complacency with fear and trepidation and may well adumbrate difficult tasks. Yet the chief task is clear: He must prepare a receptacle fit for the spirit divine. The stone of torment may be placed before him, within his oratory and during his hours of contemplation. The stone before which he prays is that which sweats blood and water; and it may yet speak to him, even as the subtle stones of ancient days past spake unto the priests who consulted the oracles. If he succeeds his probation, its surface may unfold, and that which is inward will become outward, and the spirit will manifest, making indeed a joyful noise unto the Lord!

Fraternally,  
Merrick Rees Hamer, P.M.,  
Junior Warden



## CHAPLAIN'S PARAYER

Eternal God and Ruler;  
With Thanksgiving and the holidays upon us we give thanks.  
Remembering the early pilgrims of our land who gave thanks  
for thy protection during their first days alone in a strange land.  
We give thanks for their courage, their safety under thy care.  
Give us that faith as we look into another year, which will soon be here.  
Thy blessings we ask in all we do.  
Amen.

Ed Calzaretto  
Chaplain



NOVEMBER 2010						
Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b> Dinner 6:00pm Stated Meeting 7:30pm	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b> Candidates School of Instruction 7:30pm
<b>7</b> Meet the Masters 10am-12pm	<b>8</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>10</b> 2 <sup>nd</sup> ° Farid Yazami, Joseph Shirazi* Todd Jeffrey* 7:30pm *(may occur 11-13)	<b>11</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>13</b> Degree/Practice 7:30pm
<b>14</b> Meet the Masters 10am-12pm	<b>15</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>17</b> 3 <sup>rd</sup> ° Ricky Wayne Sullivan Jr. 7:30pm	<b>18</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>20</b> Degree/Practice 7:30pm
<b>21</b> Meet the Masters 10am-12pm	<b>22</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>24</b> 1 <sup>st</sup> ° John Micheal Turner III, Luis Aurelio Martinez Christopher R. Coppola 7:30pm	<b>25</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>27</b> Degree/Practice 7:30pm
<b>28</b> Meet the Masters 10am-12pm	<b>29</b>	<b>30</b>				



**Chef's MENU:**

••• Stated Meeting Dinner •••

*Chicken Florintine*  
*Baked Tilapia*  
*Potatoes Au Gratin*  
*Steamed Vegetables*  
*Green Salad*  
*Dessert*

George Wollin  
 Chef