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Service to Others

A CENTENNIAL LODGE OF PERFECTION ORATION

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My Brothers in the East, the West, the South, and the North, thank you so much for the opportunity to present this oration. It is an honor and my pleasure. I am here this evening to speak about charity. Last year, Brother Thomas Repp gave his oration on the subject of financial charity. My oration considers emotional and physical charity to others.

In general, this concept is reasonably common throughout society. One, the underlying premise of the Golden Rule, is found in the Old Testament of the bible: Leviticus, Chapter 19, Verse 18: God spoke to Moses saying, "Love thy neighbor as thyself." In the Bible's New Testament, we find in Luke, Chapter 12, Verse 48, the statement of Jesus: "For of those to whom much is given, much is required." Jesus tells us in John, Chapter 15, Verse 13: "Greater love has no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends." The motto of Rotary International - "Service Above Self," as well as the concept of community service utilized by other service

organizations grew out of the “Golden Rule” and, in the more modern world, out of Freemasonry.

We hear a lot today about “the forgotten man or the forgotten woman.” Actually, those who are often forgotten are the emotionally and/or physically neglected, and they are some of the most vulnerable in our society: wounded veterans, abused children, battered women, the homeless, and the elderly to name but a few. When looking for opportunities to make emotional and physical charitable gifts of oneself, helping vulnerable members of our society is a good place to start. One’s kindness needs not be measured by how many hours in a week one volunteers. It can be as simple as assisting someone crossing the street or volunteering at a special event once or twice a year. It is **NOT** the **frequency** with which one extends one’s charitable effort, but the **quality** or **sincerity** which counts.

Depth of character can be seen by what one gives of oneself and not by what is taken. Furthermore, it is the personal investment of one’s own time and labor—I use the phrase euphemistically—helping others, which engenders a feeling of self-worth and satisfaction. Few things are more rewarding than when a person answers one of life’s most persistent and urgent questions: ***what are you doing for others?*** What differentiates Freemasonry from service organizations such as Rotary, Lions Club, etc., is the teaching and instillation of the underlying charitable principle of the giving of oneself to each other as a brotherhood.

Masonry teaches us to give back not only to our Brothers, but to our communities as well. We are provided leadership opportunities and taught to work together to solve problems. And, along the way, we meet fellow Masons who are like-minded in giving to their Brothers as well as to their communities and country. We are encouraged to look for opportunities to serve, locally, nationally, and internationally. In today’s world the need for emotional and physical charity is ever so great. **Finally, think of this:** The giving of oneself is the ultimate exercise in democracy. Sure, a person can vote in

elections every year or two, but when he gives of himself, a vote is cast about the kind of world in which he wants to live.

In Blue Lodge degree work, we are taught to come to the aid of worthy distressed Brother Masons, their widows, and orphans. So many values are presented in Blue Lodge that it is easy not to truly focus on any one of them, but the general sense is hopefully instilled in each Blue Lodge Mason. It is when we proceed beyond that Third Degree “graduation” and attend the University of Freemasonry—the Scottish Rite—and become 32nd degree Scottish Rite Freemasons that we are exposed in great depth to these values through the 29 additional degrees. While emotional and physical charity appear throughout those degrees, it is in the 18th degree where the significant emphasis is placed on charity. As a member of the choir, I will never forget the song Charity and the words: “Charity never faileth. And now abideth, faith, hope, and charity. But the greatest of these is charity.” It is when a Brother dedicates himself within the Fraternity by participating in degree work and regular attendance at Reunions that he does his post-graduate work at this University.

So, gentlemen, by now you get my gist. A Mason's brotherly love is the very essence of Freemasonry and is demonstrated by the manner in which we treat, communicate with, and act towards one another. Regardless of a Brother's perceived station in life—financial, hierarchical, or titular—as Brother Masons we meet upon the “level” where each of us is accorded equal respect and regard. There is no other way. We proudly act by the “plumb” and part up-on the “square.” It is where we come to aid, and perhaps even rescue, each worthy distressed Brother.

My wife, Anne, and I have always been deeply moved by the acts of kindness we have been privileged to witness among our friend and in our community. Gestures such as fostering a teenage boy whose family imploded and who was at risk of falling through the cracks if he did not find a sanctuary. Or the aggrieved woman who had just run over a puppy and spent the rest of her afternoon searching for the owners so

she could return the beloved pet and offer her profuse apologies. Or, neighbors who rally together for a couple hours to purchase and deliver truck-loads of food for hungry fire fighters battling a fire that just doesn't want to quit. Here at the Scottish Rite in Denver, we recently witnessed a prime example of such charity to-wards our Brothers through the calling of our members to see to their possible needs during the Wuhan coronavirus pandemic.

Let me conclude. While, as a fifty-four-year Master Mason, I intellectually understood charity, I did not TRULY feel it until roughly three and a half years ago when I was diagnosed with a fatal lung disease. It is called Idiopathic Pulmonary Fibrosis, or IPF. As you can imagine, I was devastated ... totally numb. When I finally emerged from the gloom, I realized I still had some years left before this vile disease rendered me disabled. It is because of the very les-sons and values taught to me by the University of Freemasonry that I have chosen to make my remaining years special.

When I look around our Cathedral room and see all your faces—some of you whom I know quite well and others less so, all I see is my Brothers, nearly all of whom have approached me in one way or another, all offering me the most sincere and heart-felt support a suffering man could imagine. I so cherish your kindnesses. This emotional and physical charity, which one normally sees only coming from family and very close friends, has so touched me. **TRULY, CHARITY IS PERVASIVE IN THIS BROTHERHOOD.** But for all of you, as well as my wonderful and giving wife, I might have become a bitter and withdrawn man. Your emotional and physical charity, your Brotherhood, has prevented that. And that, in turn, has brought many a tear to my eyes.

So, in conclusion, the best way a man is to find himself is to place himself in the service of others. Albert Einstein stated: "**Only a life lived for others is worth living.**" Winston Church-ill, a Freemason, once said: "**We make a living by what we get, but we make a LIFE by what we give.**"

Thank you my Brothers, THANK YOU!