

WHAT CAN I TELL MY NON-MASONIC FRIENDS

Masons, as a rule, are very circumspect when it comes to discussions with non-Masons. Some members are so careful that they are afraid to even mention the things that everyone knows about the organization. This is, no doubt, because they believe Freemasonry is a secret society and that the members are forbidden to talk about the association with non-members. This is a mistaken idea and there are many things that a Mason can tell non-Masonic friends.

Lets consider a few of those things: The first question that is usually asked is: "What is Freemasonry?" There are many definitions of the word but none is complete because the organization embraces a wide scope of activity. But a short definition is: Freemasonry is a fraternal organization, a religious brotherhood of men, which does charitable work in the community and among its members, and, through its teachings and ceremonials, seeks to make good men better and, thereby, make the world a better place in which to live.

Freemasonry is a voluntary association in that no one is invited to become a member. You can tell your non-Masonic friends that, unlike college fraternities and other organizations, Masonry never has a membership drive and never solicits anyone to become a member. As a matter of fact, you should make it clear that it is a violation of Masonic Law for any member to invite anyone to join the craft. You should emphasize that the prospective member must truly come of his own free will and accord and that he usually seeks membership because of the high opinion he has of the craft as a result of the upright conduct of Masons.

You can make it clear that Freemasonry is not a religion. Sometimes outsiders claim that the craft is a religion. You can explain to your non-Masonic friends that Masons do not look upon their organization as a religion, or as a church, and that most Masons belong to a church of their choice. Masons do not go to Lodge to worship God; they do this on Sunday, or any other day they choose, when they go to their own church or place of worship. It is religious in that one cannot become a member unless he believes in God, but there are no religious tests applied to the prospective member; nor is he required or asked to subscribe to any religious tenant or dogma. You can explain that it is forbidden to discuss politics or religion in the Lodge.

You can explain that Freemasonry is not a "secret society." A secret society is one that keeps its existence a secret and whose members do not make known their affiliation with the group. Freemasonry is not a secret society because it does not hide its existence, members do not hide their membership but, on the contrary, the organization meets in buildings located on public streets, announces its meetings in newspapers and magazines, engraves the words "Masonic Temple, or "Masonic Lodge" on many of its buildings, publishes periodicals and has homes for orphans and the aged. Like most organizations, it has some "Secrets" but is not a secret society.

You cannot, of course, discuss the ritual, the password and matters of a confidential nature; but you can tell them the things printed in booklets for non-Masons authorized by a Grand Lodge. You can go so far as to tell them three degrees of Masonry consist of ceremonies of a strictly serious nature, without horseplay, which teach basic moral truth in an impressive and solemn manner. You can tell them that the rituals

contain a philosophy of life which provides the new member with something on which to build a hope that is eternal.

Sometimes a non-Mason wants to know about the ceremony of initiation. You can tell him, in general terms, that each candidate takes part in a ceremony of initiation, is then advanced to the second degree and later promoted to the third. You can tell him that promotion depends on his proficiency in learning certain things relating to Freemasonry, its ethics and its philosophy. Certainly you can tell him that no man ever took the degrees without becoming a better man. They are lessons based on the Golden Rule: tolerance towards all men, respect for one's family, charity towards all and being true to God for his manifold blessings.

We should be proud to proclaim to the world that we are a serious organization of mature men – an organization that instills the love of God, teaches charity in the broadest sense and shows each member how to live a better life.

Non-Masons sometimes wonder at the close bond that exists between Masons. There is a simple explanation: Masons are bound together by the deep and abiding knowledge that each of them, during the ceremonies of the degrees, has accepted certain high ethical standards of conduct. These standards insure a bond of faith and confidence between Masons.

You need not be afraid to discuss Freemasonry with the non-Mason; thousands of books have been published on the subject. The matters discussed in this paper are just a few of the things you can tell your non-Masonic friends but they are enough to show him that Freemasonry is one of the great organizations of the world and a standing influence in a faltering world.

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