

# DISCOURSE

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## “Ritual”

My Dear Brothers:

I find this particular discourse fascinating in many ways, first I must give you my disclaimer, I am not a ritualist, never pretended to be and do not believe I could become one. However, what I can do and have done all of my Masonic career is to dedicate myself to learn whatever part I had committed myself to, attended all the practices, sought outside assistance when it was needed, and never embarrassed myself or Lodge by not following up with my promise and commitment with whatever part I undertook.

With the disclaimer out of the way, let us proceed to have an open discussion about the “Ritual” and with that being said, if you look at Albert Mackey he defines Ritual as. “The mode of opening and closing a Lodge, of conferring the Degrees, of Installation, and other duties, constitute a system of ceremonies which are called the **Ritual**. Much of the Ritual is esoteric, and, not being permitted to be committed to writing, is communicated only by oral instruction. In each Masonic Jurisdiction it is required, by the superintending authority, that the Ritual shall be the same, but it more or less differs in the different Rites and Jurisdictions but this does not affect the universality of Freemasonry.”

The Grand Lodge of Florida has addressed the matter of Ritual over the last 180 plus years in many ways, with one of the biggest concerns from early on that the Ritual would be uniform across the state. In the early years the major influence were caused by Brothers inserting influence from Georgia and Alabama Ritual and later on or in our time the influence has been from the Northeast and Midwest depending on what part of Florida you live in.

It also took Florida many years for the Brothers to accept a Ritual Cipher, which has made it easy for Brothers to learn the Ritual, and in the last, few years the Floor Work Book has also been adopted which exemplifies proper procedures of navigating around the Lodge, once again improving or making easier the learning of the Ritual. Further, the Craft approved a set of “Books” for any District that chooses to acquire a set for the convenience of their members, today there are more Sets of Books available in the state than at any time before. We have also gone from a Lecturer for the State to a District Instructor in every District to assist the Brethren at the local level making the ability to learn the Ritual work with more ease and convenience.

Now with a small view of what has transpired over the years to improve the Ritual, I now would like to ask my Brothers why are more Lodges not able to “Open and Close” or “Conferred Degrees” of Freemasonry properly. As I travel, I find the biggest cause of this failure is lack of commitment, dedication, and apathy. Why you may ask? Well let us see if we can answer in a way that everyone can understand, be politically correct, or in other words sugar coat it in order to dilute it so much, so, that no one gets the message, because everyone would be doing everything just right and no one Brother would take you serious which, is what has happened. But no more, NOT with me!

Masons more than any other group that I have been associated with deal in truth, I will even go further and say we deal in absolute truth, and anytime we deviate from that we find ourselves in trouble because only the truth will give us the strength, knowledge and wisdom to deal with any problem we may be confronting. Wait a minute, here is the biggest concept of all “COMMUNICATE THE TRUTH AND NOTHING BUT THE TRUTH TO THE CRAFT.” It is my most sincere belief that the Craft when given the right information, when there is no confusion in the facts, when you have been involved in the communications that YOU will make the right decision time after time, I personally have an abiding faith in the Craft.

That being said now lets converse. Whose fault is it? and Why is this happening? The first one is simple it is EVERYONE’S FAULT, you may ask why, you know the work, you are not an Officer, you have never participated in a Degree, how could you have done anything wrong. Well to me it is simple. The Brothers that have never participated should do so. Get involved learn, do not place all the load on your officers, you do have something at

stake; YOUR LODGE, you should make sure everything is done according to the regulations, you should be part of the team that welcomes the new candidate and there is nothing more impressive than a Degree conducted properly. NO EXCUSES. Further, you have a great part of the burden because you chose the leaders past and present Officers of the Lodge and if they were not or are not performing according to their Obligations you should select others that would take their obligations seriously, even if this means getting yourself involved and taking a leadership roll in YOUR LODGE. Notice it is YOUR LODGE, not mine. YOU and all the members of your Lodge are responsible and duty bound to see that the Lodge does well if not you should consider alternative measures such as, merger, consolidation or surrender your Charter, if Masonry is no longer being conducted in the Lodge. Read your Digest, your Charter so you may have a clear understanding of what is expected of every Lodge by regulations. NO EXCUSES

You know the work, Congratulations on having done well, now it is your duty to impart that knowledge to those less informed, and I know that you can lead the horse to water but you cannot make him drink. That is entirely true, but Masons strive for perfection day after day knowing that it will not be achieved. Teaching the work to Brothers is no different because you need to build an environment where your Brothers feel comfortable and conducive to learning. Praising those that do well in public and advising those that did not do well in private, build a rapport with the Lodge and create an atmosphere where the Brothers of the Lodge expect a good Degree this will create the peer pressure to do well. Also, if you have the rapport with the Craft and Officers are not meeting their responsibilities as Officers, maybe the members of your Lodge will not socially or undeservingly promote a Brother that cannot perform the work. NO EXCUSES.

So you are an Officer of the Lodge, you are expected to do your very best, to apply yourself, to know your capabilities, to know your weaknesses and your strength, to be a leader, to know your duties and responsibilities, you are in charge and I ask you. What has happened to your Lodge? Why do you not know how to open and close the Lodge? Why do you not know your part in the Degrees? Why are you allowing a Degree to go on when the parties are not ready to confer the Degree? and the list goes on and on. NO EXCUSES.

Officers, on you I place the biggest culpability, because you accepted the positions and responsibilities yet you have not fulfilled them. If you are allowing this type of Ritual work to be conducted while any of you are in the line it is truly shameful. Pride my Brothers, pride that you will do your best and not settle for less. Pride that you will deliver the Degree with the same measure that you sold Masonry to the candidate if not better. Pride that you may not embarrass yourself or your Lodge, when visitors and members see something not even closely remote to the Ritual, as practiced in Florida. NO EXCUSES.

Be the leader your Lodge needs, inspired your members to higher goals lead them by examples; do not settle for the same failures that have gotten you to where you are today. Aspire to do better and you will start your Lodge on the road to recovery. The greatest legacy a leader can leave his followers is that he will not be missed because of the failures in his absence, but because he would have made leaders capable of taking the reigns of leadership and continue to progress without hesitation. NO EXCUSES. If you are doing whatever it takes to turn your Lodge around count on me, to do whatever I can to help you in this worthwhile endeavor.

Every Lodge in the State of Florida and for that matter the world is expected to perform the Opening and Closing Ceremonies properly, to confer the Three Degrees and any other ceremonies that add to the protocol and decorum of this Ancient and Noble Fraternity; to accept anything less is reprehensible. Your Charter by whose authority you are allowed to meet as a Lodge, requires among many other duties that your Lodge Officers know the Opening and Closing Ceremonies, confer the Three Degrees of Masonry, and your Dispensation required that you have someone to deliver the Lectures. If your Lodge cannot perform these duties and are not trying to overcome the situation, than you should not continue to have the authority to meet as a Lodge. What you need now is to merge, consolidate or surrender your Charter, whether knowingly or unknowingly you have failed to live up to the contract between your Lodge and Grand Lodge. You may want to look into a Square and Compass Club.

Would you want to be remembered as the Master and Officers that were in charge when your Lodge was designated more of a Square and Compass Club than a Lodge? Would you want to be remembered as the Lodge Officers that failed to turn the Lodge around? Would you want to be the Lodge Officers that were responsible when the Lodge doors were closed never to be open again? I know I would not want to be in your shoes during any of these scenarios. However, you can still count on me to see that this transaction is done according to the Regulations.

The following is some of the text contained in the U.D. Certificate and the Lodge Charter:

The U.D. Certificate says and I quote. “that **the Brethren therein nominated for Master and Wardens are qualified and capable to confer the three Degrees of Ancient Craft Masonry**, according to the established work of this Grand Jurisdiction and to give the lectures appertaining to those Degrees;”

The Charter says and I quote “hereby v and committing to them and their successors full power and authority to open and hold a Regular Lodge Free and Accepted Masons, and by virtue of these presents **to confer the degrees of Entered Apprentice, Fellow Craft and Master Mason, according to the known and established customs and practices of Freemasonry, and not otherwise;**”

The reason we offer these quotes is to demonstrate the importance of the Ritual so much so that it was described in detail in the U.D. Certificate and the Charter of each Lodge that has been constituted in the State of Florida. Ritual work is part of the requirements for a Lodge to maintain their Charter current among many others.

My Brothers this is another reason why Masonic Education and Masonic Leadership Training are so important, these are the things you would learn, as your duties and responsibilities to your Lodge. Let us work together to improve ourselves in Masonry and in the spirit of Brotherhood work together to improve in all of our duties and responsibilities, your Grand Lodge and Grand Lodge Officers are ready, willing and able to assist you with any of the circumstances you may be in, with an honest assessments without prejudice.

Wishing everyone the measure of success, they so deserve, God speed and if we can be of any assistance please contact me.

Fraternally, I remain your most humble servant.

Jorge L. Aladro  
Senior Grand Warden.

*If you would like to receive, these newsletters make request at email below if you would like to forward to your list of friends you have my permission and thank you in advance.*

*“My Brothers, the newsletters are intended to be thought provoking, to get you to think creatively, to get you thinking what if?, to dare you to improve yourself and your Lodge.”*

*Note: If you would, like to have any of these presentations made at your Lodge or District Associations feel free to call.*

***“Masons always rise to the occasion”***