

## NV Grand Lodge Short Lecture Series

### TOLERANCE (The unwritten law)

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We are reminded every day in this world of our lack of tolerance within humanity. We just look at the pictures we see daily from various news sources. Most familiar to us all is the middle east. We see hundreds dying because on intolerance. I have been told my many that tolerance is foundational to growth of humankind. You may know Voltaire as a leading philosopher and writer of the Enlightenment period, but what many may not know is that he was initiated into Freemasonry just a month before his death in 1778. While his time as a Freemason was short, Voltaire's lifelong legacy of rebelling against intolerance and bigotry make him a brother we hold in high esteem. He famously stated: *"I do not like what you say but I will defend to the death your right to say it."* Just before he died, he wrote: *"I die adoring God, loving my friends, not hating my enemies, and detesting superstition."*

One of the fundamentals of Freemasonry is tolerance. We don't speak of it much in lodge, but it is inherent in the very way our lodges operate. We teach prudence, justice and temperance and advocate brotherly love and good neighborliness in Freemasonry. But for one reason or another there is no mention of tolerance as a Masonic virtue or tenet. The closest we come is to teach *"Do unto others as you would have them do unto you"*.

True Brotherly love is when a brother can show tolerance to another human despite the others conflicting opinions and failings, even if this means a case of

applying the old maxim in practice: *Hate the sin but love the sinner*. Tolerance is the unwritten law of Freemasonry. There can be no Brotherly Love without it. Many a Mason will articulate

Masonic tolerance firstly in terms of religious tolerance or political tolerance. That is only part of the pie. As we begin to fully appreciate the customs and traditions of Freemasonry, we realize how much deeper the meaning of tolerance goes.

Tolerance is defined in the dictionary as: being patient and indulgent toward those whose opinions or practices differ from one's own. It also means being free from bigotry, or severity in judging the opinions or conduct of others. Being tolerant also means we show forbearance.

John F Kennedy summed it up as "*Tolerance implies no lack of commitment to one's own beliefs. Rather it condemns oppression or persecution of others.*"

A Mason should be one who tolerates opinions or practices differing from his own. He should also be prepared to defend another's right to have a differing opinion. Tolerance can be said to be a Mason's recognition of the right of private judgment including his own.

We need to be tolerant of others, but we also need to be tolerant of ourselves too. Tolerance is not about surrendering our own beliefs or compromising our own values. It is more about respecting another's right to hold differing views.

In the Thesaurus we find that Tolerance has the following synonyms Broad Mindedness, Open Mindedness, Lenience, Acceptance, Forbearance, Charity, Patience, and Easiness. The opposite of Tolerance is Intolerance, Bigotry, Prejudice, narrow mindedness, Fanaticism, Small mindedness.

## Reference

Herron, C. (2009). A Look as the Importance of Practicing Tolerance in the Lodge.

Retrieved from <http://www.freemasons-freemasonry.com/herron2.html>.