

Freemasonry and Patriotism:

Then Excellent Governor Bobbie E. White, now Right Eminently Distinguished Grand Governor of Missouri, asked me to do a Patriotic presentation based on my military background. Unfortunately, it was not patriotism that brought me to our fine institution. However, my first “exposure” to Freemasonry was while I was serving in the Marines, through a respected peer that was a Prince Hall Mason. It was more the core values taught in the Marine Corps that fell in line with what I had learned of the fraternity, that with the sense of belonging to something greater than myself and the camaraderie offered in the freemasonry is what eventually led to my initiation.

Myfreemasonry.com had this to say:

“A common connection with Freemasonry is that it is a patriotic organization. While it suggests certain attributes of patriotism, the multi-national spread of the fraternity would suggest something other than a direct form of nationalistic adherence.

So then, is Freemasonry a patriotic body?

The answer is a challenging one. Simply put, it is and it isn't.

The aims of Freemasonry are not specifically to embolden specific patriotism. It does, however, promote a strong affinity towards, and a passionate adherence to the nation in which the Freemason resides. It encourages more than a passive interest in the development of civil society and our roles as citizens in it.

The patriotism that is displayed is the result of that interest in the well-being of society itself. The fraternity does strongly encourage the adherence to and following of the principles and laws of the country in which the member resides.”

And the charge of the first degree states:

“In the State you are to be a quiet and peaceful citizen, true to your government, and just to your country. You are not to countenance disloyalty or rebellion, but patiently submit to legal authority”.

Other than that, there is nothing really encouraging us to be Patriotic. There are bodies within the fraternity that are patriotic in nature, The National Sojourners and the Masonic Service Association.

The National Sojourners is a Masonic body composed of Active Duty and Veteran military. According to their website their key purpose is the advancement of programs

that promote love of country. Accordingly, their nationwide chapters stand ready to provide a wide range of complementary patriotic programs and services in support of interested organizations including: Churches, Schools, Civic Groups, Veterans Associations, Youth Groups, ROTC/JROTC units, etc. In addition, the National Sojourners is deeply committed to serving Masonic Lodges and Appendant Bodies.

And there is **The Masonic Service Association** - many of you are familiar with the Short Talk Bulletins that the MSA distributes. But, they have another purpose many aren't familiar with. The MSA was formed in 1919, when several Grand Lodges in the US got together to assist veterans returning home after WWI. They have a program, called the Hospital Visitation Program. This program provides visitations to disabled and lonely patients in the nation's VA hospitals, mason and non-masons. Some of these patients have no family or the family they do have, no longer is in contact with them. A warm smile, handshake and conversation means a lot to some of these service members. We have to brethren in the KC area that distribute care packages of socks, puzzle books, chapstick, combs, etc. These veterans' eyes light up when they receive these packages. I personally am a Deputy Representative for MSA and volunteer once a week assisting wheelchair bound patients in and out of their cars and to their first appointment.

The Knights Templar Honor Commandery Award (Missouri) form encourages us to hold or participate in a patriotic event. Such as; "Veterans Day, Memorial Day programs in Conclave; Honor Guard, Colors posting, Flag Presentations for other Masonic groups, presentation of "With Fervency and Zeal" or "The Precious Stone" at a Lodge gathering". The Grand Commandery of Knights Templar of the State of Missouri also allows military veterans to wear a recognition bar (ribbon) on their Class "A" templar uniform and Summer uniform.

The Masonic Home of Missouri's Veteran Recognition Program. Freemasons who have served in the armed forces receive a Grand Lodge flag that was flown over the Grand Lodge and lapel pin in a very meaningful ceremony.

Both the General Grand Council of Cryptic Masons and the General Grand Chapter of Royal Arch Masons offer Veterans Recognition medals that can either be purchased by the individual, or by the local chapter or council, and awarded to veterans.

So, while Freemasonry is not a patriotic organization, per se. There are ways to serve the fraternity and the community, and recognize our members in a patriotic manner.

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