

*Address*

*of*

THE MOST WORSHIPFUL  
EDWARD G. GILBERT

GRAND MASTER

*of*

MASONS

*in the*

STATE OF NEW YORK

Saint John's Day

Daniel D. Tompkins Memorial Chapel

Masonic Home

Saturday, June 21, 2008

Utica, N.Y.

ADDRESS OF THE MOST WORSHIPFUL EDWARD G. GILBERT, *Grand Master of Masons in the State of New York, to the District Deputy Grand Masters, Grand Lodge Staff Officers, and Assistant Grand Lecturers for the years 2008-2010 in the Daniel D. Tompkins Memorial Chapel, Masonic Care Community at Utica, on Saturday afternoon, June 21, 2008.*

Right Worshipful Deputy Grand Master, Vincent Libone; Right Worshipful Elected Officers of the Grand Lodge; Most Worshipful Past Grand Masters; the Appointed Grand Line and Officers of Grand Lodge; my Brothers all and especially our Ladies and guests:

Good afternoon my Brothers! This is indeed a fine and glorious day, and I thank the Great Architect for having blessed us with this opportunity to dwell together in Brotherhood. Today marks the summer solstice, the first day of a new season and the beginning of a new era of Masonry in the Empire State. It also marks the longest day of the year and I assure you that my address shall not live up to that definition.

My dear Brothers, ladies and friends, let me take you on a personal journey. A gentle walk back in time, a walk along memory lane. A time when entering the Lodge Room with my Brother, I saw a multitude of Brethren sitting on the sidelines, two and three rows deep. A time when all the Brethren were impeccably attired to the nines in dark suits and ties; where all the officers wore black tie and white gloves; and the Worshipful Master stood tall with his silk top hat and tails.

Let me take you along memory lane: where Masonic Schools of Instruction were eagerly attended by every Lodge in the District or Region with Brothers, both novice and senior, yearning to learn, participate and witness Masonic Ritual at its best.

Yes, let me take you along memory lane: where the Masonic Hall was known as the center of town, not because it was located on Main Street in the heart of the downtown business district. Although that was for the most part true, but rather it was the center of town because the Masonic Lodge was the hub and center of most social activities in the community. A place where the women and men of the Lodge lovingly toiled in the kitchen and hosted the monthly Friday night fishfries and chicken and biscuit dinners; raising much needed funds for various goodwill and charitable endeavors.

Let us remember that time and place where our fellow Brethren banded together as a significant group, wearing their Masonic Aprons and Jewels, carrying the American Flag and Masonic

Banner to lead and spearhead the local parades across this State on Veterans' Day and Memorial Day.

Let us remember that time and place where our fellow brethren gathered on Saturday afternoons to help spruce up the lawn and grounds encompassing our local Masonic Halls, pitching in to help paint, clean and repair our Masonic buildings. A time when the day came to a close, we bonded together and were satisfied that our work was well done.

How many sitting in this beautiful chapel today have heard it said, "Remember the Good Old Days"? Sometimes this adage is countered by those who remember and lived it, saying, "They weren't always that good." They remember a time before the invention of the self-cleaning oven, the electric light, and the telephone. A time when blocks of ice were needed for the "ice box" and a trip into town took half-a-day riding upon a horse and buggy; a time when there was no penicillin or vaccine for polio. A time when everyone struggled to get through the dust bowl and the Great Depression. A time when most adult males were sent off to far away places fighting the war to end all wars and women worked untold hours in armament factories in support of the cause.

Sometimes we look back and conclude that things weren't always that good. But through these hard and difficult times important lessons and values were experienced and learned about the basic virtues of life, including tolerance, achievement, charity, integrity and fidelity. Do these watchwords sound familiar? Does it sound a bit like Freemasonry?

Now that we have remembered the past, let us return to the present and advance to the future. Our journey together toward a successful future can only be realized, if we, as a fraternity, look back and revisit our past and listen to the wisdom and voices of those who walked before us.

As Masons, we need to continue the vision of our founders and forefathers. I firmly believe that Freemasonry did not become the largest and the oldest fraternal organization in the world based upon mere happenstance. Rather, Freemasonry owes its longevity and its appeal to those very core principles imbedded in the precepts and teachings of the Craft, which have been an indelible and indispensable part of the Fraternity since its earliest beginnings. Specifically, I refer to the basic tenets of Freemasonry: Brotherly Love, Relief and Truth.

This is my theme as your Grand Master. We need to get back to the basics of Freemasonry. We must refocus on the roots and true

meaning of our Masonic Ritual; bringing back the very basic concepts, which are the reality that has made us great by encouraging us to lead with heart.

I would like to take this moment to share with you some words of inspiration delivered by Jim Rogers, the Chairman and CEO of a large American Utility Company, spoken before the graduating class of his Alma Mater. Paraphrasing his text, I share these thoughts with you as they closely embrace my concept and my vision of what our Fraternity should mean to each of us.

... Leaders know that responsible actions lead to long-term progress. Its very much like building a cathedral. Whether you are a leader at a university, in business, in government or within a fraternity, it is critical to engage yourself in cathedral thinking. What do I mean by this viewpoint of *cathedral thinking*? Have you ever seen a cathedral up close? All the great cathedrals throughout Europe stand as great monuments to a higher power, and to mankind's quest for beauty and truth.

To call them mere buildings is like calling a Rembrandt just another painting, or a Stradivarius just another fiddle, or Irving Berlin just another song writer. Unlike the buildings of today, these magnificent structures were not erected in a matter of years, but over many decades and centuries. Due to time constraints, the builders who laid the cornerstone and foundations, were not around to celebrate the completion of the cathedral. The builders who laid the foundation and began to place stone upon stone never saw the beautiful stained glass windows that would inspire personal prayer and religious awakenings. They never saw the spires that would stretch toward the heavens. They never heard the bell in the tower greet the throng of worshipers.

Yet those builders knew what they were about. Their vision and basic instinct was as clear as the future ringing of that bell on a cold crisp winter day. Their vision was something bigger than themselves. They were Masons who shared one vision and one purpose – to build a lasting legacy that would be an inspiration to others, long after they left this Earth.

My challenge to you today is to spend the rest of your life making decisions derived from *cathedral thinking*. If you join me in this endeavor, you will build cathedrals in your lives, in your Lodges, in your communities, and in the world. ...

We should never lose sight of the Masonic inspiration that motivated our leaders of the past to construct the great edifices we enjoy today, namely our three precious jewels: The Masonic

Home, The Masonic Medical Research Laboratory, and The Chancellor Robert R Livingston Masonic Library. These modern-day cathedrals shall remain as a living testament not only for today's generation, but like the cathedrals of old, they shall remain as a bastion of strength for the generations yet to come.

In conclusion, to get back to basics and to lead with heart, I ask the following:

**A.** I ask the Master of each Lodge to schedule one day a month for a member or members of the Lodge to visit those elderly brothers who are either homebound, sick or infirm. Further, I have formed a new Grand Lodge Committee, which I have named the Surviving Spouse and Loved Ones Committee, which is charged with tending to the needs of our Special Ladies of the Fraternity. Let these often-forgotten members of our Masonic Family know that we care about them and that we are interested in their well-being. Determine if they have any special needs that the Lodge, District or Grand Lodge can help resolve or remedy. Do they need transportation to visit their physician, eye doctor or dentist? Do they need help with grocery shopping or laundry service? Do they need help with the upkeep of their home, car and/or property? Do they need a ride to visit the local Masonic Lodge? Make certain that these homebound members of our fraternity know whom to contact for help and what services are available. Least of all, sometimes they just need to see a friendly face and hear a friendly voice to take away that feeling of loneliness and despair.

**B.** I ask that each District Deputy Grand Master and Grand Lodge Staff Officer make a concerted effort to personally call and/or visit every delinquent Brother in his respective District who is in danger of being unaffiliated from Masonry for non-payment of dues. A semi-annual report should be submitted to the Senior and Junior Grand Wardens containing a summary of your findings. Approach these valued Brothers knowing that at one-time they were inspired to knock on the door of Freemasonry in the search of more Light. Determine, if possible, why the Brother has deviated off the pilgrim's path. Perhaps he is in financial and/or medical distress, or moved and lost contact with his Lodge. What has caused him to loose interest in the Lodge? Every effort should be made to redirect this valued Brother back to his Masonic Family.

**C.** I ask that each District Deputy Grand Master and Grand Lodge Staff Officer make an accessment of the Lodges in their respective Districts, in an effort to determine the physical state of

their Masonic Buildings. We are fortunate that the Trustees of the Masonic Hall and Home have pledged a matching fund of up to one million dollars designated for assistance to our Lodges and qualified indigent Brethren for Masonic Benevolent purposes. Our ultimate goal with your kind help and generous support is for these funds to be matched by donations from the Fraternity at large. I am confident that each of you will join me in reaching and surpassing this noble goal.

To quote one of our elder statesmen, who served as our Grand Master in the early 1950's from upstate New York, Most Worshipful Ward B. Arbury, who made the statement "I have in mind the old thought, which has been repeated so often – the duty of our Fraternity generally is to promote better understanding between man and man, between locality and locality, and between Mason and Mason."

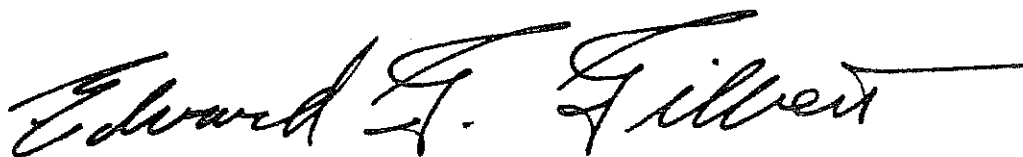
To all my Brethren, I wish to express my humble and sincerest appreciation and gratitude at having been given this opportunity to serve you and this Grand Lodge. I hereby pledge and with the help and guidance of Almighty God, I shall do my very best to make each of you proud of your Grand Lodge and this wonderful Fraternity we respectfully call Freemasonry.

In the immortal words of Very Worshipful Past Grand Chaplain, Reverend Brother E. Lewis, Queensland, Australia, "Finally, let us remember, there is a Lodge greater than any Masonic Lodge, a Lodge in which all Masonic Lodges are but a small part – God hath made mankind one vast Brotherhood, Himself their Master and the world His Lodge."

May God Bless each of you.

May God Bless our children in the Armed Services.

And, May God Bless America.

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Edward G. Gilbert". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above the printed name "GRAND MASTER".

GRAND MASTER