

Our Lodge, Our Sacred Space
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Presented to Nathan Hale Council #78, AMD
and Connecticut College, SRICF
28 September 2013

Why do we have an opening ritual, is just to tie us together as brothers? Is just for the sake of the Universality of Masonry, for throughout the world every Lodge has an opening ritual. Or, is there another reason?

How many of you belong to the Lions, Rotary or some other civic organization? Do those bodies have rituals? What do we have that other civic minded organizations don't have that we need an opening ritual? Is it just to keep out cowans and eavesdroppers? I have yet to find a cowan or an eavesdropper that cares to listen to the Lodge secretary read the minutes. Maybe, they are after the secret pancake recipe.

To this day I still remember the first question asked of me before entering the Lodge for the first time: "My friend, do you seriously declare, upon your honor, before these gentlemen, that, unbiased by friends, and uninfluenced by mercenary motives, you freely and voluntarily offer yourself a candidate for the mysteries of Masonry?"

It is the opening ritual of a Lodge that helps protect those mysteries from cowans and eavesdroppers. Yet the opening of a Lodge serves another and more important purpose. It mentally prepares the members for the work of the Lodge and it helps them to clear their mind and shutout the profane world beyond. It is meant to help set ourselves apart from the rest of the world. It is during this time that the hearts of our brothers are also opened to the Supreme Architect and that the lessons taught can be more readily imparted. It is within these walls that we find a sacred space dedicated for our use to serve the Supreme Architect.

What is a sacred space? Sacred means revered due to association with holiness. Holiness, or sanctity, is in general the state of being holy, perceived by religious individuals as associated with the divine. In other contexts, "objects are often considered 'holy' or 'sacred' if used for spiritual purposes", such as the

worship or service of G*d. Sacred spaces can include places in nature, places built by man, or they can even include art. For the Lakota Sioux it is the Black Hills, for ancient druids it was Stonehenge, for Muslim it is Mecca, for Jews it was the holy of holies, the sanctum sanctorum, and several religions teach that where two or more gather in the name of G*d that is a sacred space. For us as masons this is our sacred space, look about this room for its entire purpose is to serve G*d. It is for that purpose that we open and close with prayer, it is why we have an altar upon which sits the Great Light of Masonry and as it always requires more than two to meet, the presence of G-d is here. It is also for this reason that we as Masons always say that our first duty is to G*d. This is our sacred space.

As this is our sacred space we need to treat it as such. It is after the opening ritual including prayer and the opening of the Great Light that we have prepared our Lodge for the work at hand but have we prepared ourselves? Have we turned off and pocketed our cell phones, have we ended personal conversations with the brothers sitting next to us. Or are we still talking and surfing the internet and sending text messages? A sacred space requires respect of not only the place but also those in it.

The purposes of our ceremonies are to make our votaries wiser and happier. The opening ritual is the gateway to the mysteries of Masonry within this sacred space. We need to treat it as such and allow all of our brothers the opportunity to discover those mysteries and apply them to their lives.