

**Sunday Masonic Paper No 766**  
**We Must Be Charitable**  
**by RWBro Wayne D. Anderson**

Have you ever found yourself destitute? I have. I have been both destitute in terms of coin and of spirit. It was an invaluable experience, one which I hope to never find myself in again, but if I do, I fear it not. My only hesitation with being destitute is that it hampers my ability to assist others.

You can never fully comprehend the power of charity, until you are the beneficiary. The feeling of being helpless and dependent upon another feels very vulnerable indeed, like standing in a crowded room without clothes and without the ability to dress. You can feel exposed and weak. It can feel like the whole world is looking on at your dire situation.

There was a time in Masonry in which this lesson was given to me. At the time I understood it only from a financial standpoint. Of course, I would contribute to a brother's relief financially if that's what he needs. We are brothers, after all. A few years passed after my initiation into the Fraternity before this lesson would crack from the seed and implant roots into my soul. I never met a brother in those first few years that needed any charity. I had helped a few guys move and clear trees, but never any real need. How fortunate!

It struck me one day that this charity must extend beyond money. It must extend beyond the help to move from one home to another, providing an ear to listen, furnishing clothing, or granting a place to stay. Our charity must be not only from a place of love, it must be love, manifested. We must practice spiritual charity. We must employ empathy and embrace the pain of others. We must strip ourselves down and stand with those in need upon the darkened square.

One day I came to realize that the practice of charity must apply to everyday situations with everyday people. After this realization, I looked around and saw the suffering of others in a whole new way. I saw people with body issues, people with inferiority complexes, people who were unsure of themselves, and people who withheld the beauty of who they are for fear that they simply were not good enough, as measured against what they perceived as normal. I saw people who were told that they were different and that different was no good. I saw people who didn't feel like they could or should, write, speak up, or tell a joke in a crowd. I saw these people all around me in daily living and I saw it within the fraternity. My heart broke.

Charity is to include everyone, not just our brethren. We must empower everyone to succeed, and we MUST make sure that no one stands alone with their emotions. We as Masons are duty bound to help a brother as well as those who are not initiated. We are to be a light in the community. We cannot be content to rely upon the legacy of trustworthiness and generosity of our grandfathers, which we inherited by the donning the same apron, ring, and appellation of "Freemason." We must act every day, in every way, as if our fellow humans are entitled to the full bounty of spiritual loving-kindness that we all muster for our brothers.

We know that we will do just about anything that a brother asks, but if we are content with waiting until he asks we are missing the point. The charity we need to be practising cannot be measured in simple dollars or organizing festivities for a cause. This charity is measured in feelings of worthiness, validation, comfort, smiles, gratitude and enlightenment. We are in the business of being generous men, not for the sake of strengthening the bonds of brotherhood, but for strengthening the condition of the human spirit at large. The goal should be to share a piece of yourself, of your spirit, and to truly connect with another person on a deeply personal and intimate level. This is charity. This is the warm feeling that washes over you when you first realize that your brethren are here to support you both inside and outside of Lodge. This is the feeling of love. To make another person that has been scattered upon the rocks of life feel like their plight is not a singular struggle; to comfort the ones that are shaky in their resolve, and to bring warmth to those that need it, is Charity.

Charity extends beyond the grave, through the boundless realms of eternity. We must be charitable, brethren, or there is no point in being a Mason at all. If we do nothing in this life to improve the lives of others, then we have done nothing. This is why charity is the first great lesson of Masonry.

BE PROUD OF WHO YOU ARE

BE PROUD OF WHAT YOU DO AND

BE PROUD TO BE A MASON.