

**Grand Lodge  
Free & Accepted Masons  
Of California  
Grand Oration 1990**

**Grand Orator  
Gordon "Jim" Vaughan  
"Commitment To The Future"**

Most Worshipful Grand Master, Distinguished Visitors, Members of this Grand Lodge and my Brethren all

I would like to express my deepest and heartfelt appreciation to Most Worshipful Sam M. Pavlovich for affording me the opportunity to serve as Grand Orator of the Grand Lodge of California for this past year. It has indeed been an honor and a privilege, an experience that I shall forever cherish, but more importantly - and I am confident that I can speak on behalf of all the Grand Lodge Officers who have served this past year - Sam, may we convey our gratitude and admiration for the truly inspirational leadership you have given us. You have led us with dignity and integrity. Your sincerity and warmth of Brotherly love and your joyful self-giving dedication to purpose combine to set you apart; you truly reflect the living embodiment of the highest ideals of our Beloved Masonic Fraternity.

I do not mean to be disrespectful of our Grand Master, but a little over a year ago, I had reason to be just a bit suspect of him. On that occasion he called me aside and asked if I would serve the Grand Lodge as its Orator. After these next few moments you may be just a bit suspect of him, too. For you see., by profession, I am a farmer, and while I do not apologize for that, since I believe I am a good farmer, my hope is that you will not judge either the Grand Master or me too harshly.

This moment awakens feeling beyond my words, and I well understand what Lord Tennyson must have felt when looking out upon the sea and listening to its voices, he cried, "I would that some tongue could utter the thoughts that arise in me."

As we enter the last decade of the 20th century and face the drawing of a new century at seemingly Mach I speed, Freemasonry is confronted with the challenges of an ever changing society. What is Freemasonry's mission in today's world? As Masons, what are our goals? What is our vision for the future? Are we to be content in merely keeping abreast, or should our posture more properly be one of leadership? Leadership which makes us ever mindful of the need for new visions and new goals - goals and visions which will result in a higher Masonic profile in the community and the world surrounding us. Freemasonry has much to offer society, and the outside world needs to be aware of, and understand, who we are, what we do, why we do it and how mankind will benefit from our efforts. As people of faith, we are not held captive to our past or our future. This is the Period in our history which will set the stage for the 21st century. What will be the center of our focus in the years to come? In what direction will our Fraternity move? Freemasonry has for centuries undergone periods of change and adjustments and must continue to do so, if it is to remain a viable force in today's society. However, it is my belief that as Masons we must be ever vigilant to see that we do not compromise the very cornerstone or foundation of our Fraternity, ever bearing in mind those precepts and principles which set us apart and make Freemasonry special. Yes, we must adapt, we must be open to change, but most of all, we must be accountable.

We read in the Holy Writings which rests on our Altar, "Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven.". Light is first and foremost something which is meant to be seen, something to brighten the way.

The houses of Palestine were very dark with only one little circular window, perhaps no more than eighteen inches across. The only other light was a lamp in a sauce-boat filled with oil, with a wick floating in it. Naturally, the lamp was placed on the lamp stand, which was probably no more than a roughly shaped branch of wood. It was not so easy to rekindle a lamp in the days before matches existed, so when people went out, they took the lamp from the stand, for safety's

sake, and put it under an earthen bushel, so that it would burn without risk. Now I ask you, is Freemasonry hiding its light under a bushel for safety's sake?

The primary purpose of a lamp is to be seen. So also those basic tenets of Freemasonry, Brotherly love, relief and truth, those cardinal virtues temperance, fortitude, prudence and justice - of which we so proudly speak, are not something to be kept under a bushel basket, something to be kept secret. They are meant to be visible.

Light is a guide. Just as lights mark the channel for ships, lights in the city mark the way for people, so we too as Masons can be lights by example. Our Masonry needs to be visible in our ordinary activities. We need to be known as Masons, at work, at play, and in our every day lives.

It is imperative, therefore, that each of us impart a clear understanding and meaning of our teachings and philosophy. How we are regarded by the man on the street, as individuals and as a group, will depend on our role as ambassadors of goodwill.

Early in his tenure of office, President Reagan made an interesting and profound observation as he perceived the family unit. He said, "The family has always been the cornerstone of American society. Our families nurture, preserve and pass on to each succeeding generation the values we share and cherish, values that are the foundation for our freedoms. In the family we learn our first lessons of God and man, love and discipline, rights and responsibilities, human dignity and human frailty.

Our families give us daily examples of these lessons being put into practice. In raising and instructing our children, in providing personal and compassionate care for our elderly, in maintaining the spiritual strength of commitment among our people, in these and other ways, America's families make immeasurable contributions to America's well-being.

Today, more than ever, it is essential that these contributions not be taken for granted and that each of us remember that the strength of our families is vital to the strength of our Nation."

We should be ever-mindful, that, like our families of birth, our Masonic Family plays an important role in our daily lives and in our fraternal well-being. Especially in these days of general unrest in our Fraternity, feelings of tenderness and consideration are so apt to fade within the hearts of men. For some really trivial and unworthy reason Brothers become inveterate enemies; there is disorder and disillusionment for what was once intended to be the source and crown of perfect joy. More than ever in these disturbing times, there is need for the introduction of forces in the lives of Brothers dissolving fear, re-establishing simple faith and relations with each other. The strength and well-being of the entire Masonic Family is vital to the strength and well-being of our Masonic Fraternity. Together and united we provide a vibrant force in our society. Think of all the good we can do for our fellow beings.

I am convinced that Past Grand Master, Most Worshipful Chester R. MacPhee, has provided us with the key, and I quote, "Brotherly love has been the lesson of every major religion since recorded time. It is the easiest, and yet the most difficult of all God's assignments to man. Easy if we would do it, and yet, most difficult because we are self-centered people forever concerned with what we want. By doing what we want without regard to others, we close the door to kindly consideration for others, which is the first step of Brotherly love. The individual who would truly exemplify Brotherly love comes closest to heaven on earth. He has no passion of greed, intolerance or hate. He suffers not from unhappiness, because he has no time for it. He is forever interested in doing something for someone else. It is his mission in life. He has no time to belittle others, because he fully understands that all are his brothers. He cannot hate for long, for he knows that he alone must carry the heavy weight of hate. He does not walk alone, because God forever walks with him. Yes, Brotherly love is the easiest thing in the world to do, because it helps the giver more than the receiver. Brotherly love is easy because it is enjoyable. It is easy to do because it frees us from tension. It is easy to do because It IS the right thing to do."

Our future lies within the heart of each of us, you and me. If our hearts should guide us to continue our work in the vineyard for the principles of Freemasonry, then surely our future is one of success. Success or failure is measured in two words, minimum and maximum. If we do just what we have to do and nothing more, then we have followed not our hearts but the minimum necessary to get by, and the future of our Fraternity will probably be one of struggle and failure. It is my belief that each one of us will give a maximum effort and success will prevail.

Freemasonry is the greatest fraternal organization on the face of the Earth and it is our responsibility to see that its luster be not dimmed by any act of ours. When we knelt at the Altar and took our obligations, we made a commitment to this Fraternity and its future, a commitment to its well-being. Let us set aside our trivial differences and renew that commitment so that generations to come may enjoy Freemasonry in all its glory. This is our challenge; yes, let this be our COMMITMENT TO THE FUTURE.

Thank you for your kind attention and may God bless each of you, my Brethren.