

Address 17 November 2011

This is a special moment for me Brethren, speaking to you as your Deputy Provincial Grand Master for the final time; and I know it is a special afternoon for you, here in splendid numbers to support both this glorious Province and also your colleagues; those who will shortly be appointed or promoted in Provincial Grand Lodge. The feeling for me on this stage is extremely positive but we are all aware that I am addressing you while we share the recent and inexpressible loss of our Provincial Grand Master, RWBro Jack Price. You should know that he continued to work for you and the Province until a few days before his departure to the Grand Lodge above. He dearly wanted a little more time with us, but God had greater plans for him.

The strength and unity with which we supported him to the end and beyond, in some measure demonstrates the depth of love we held for Jack and Dorothy, together with their children, Jonathan and Janet. His second family was always us and, although we have often expressed it, there will always be a tremendous debt of gratitude we owe to Dorothy, who supported Jack and Freemasonry to an exceptional level throughout the years.

At the beginning of this Meeting of PGL I stated that, in every capacity in which he served, Jack Price was a singular and exceptional individual who possessed all that was required of a leader : that he had a very large heart,

which enabled him to touch all those he encountered with warmth and love.

He often asked us to *'love one another'* : in this context he meant the process of nurturing one another for mutual benefit and growth on this earth. Love is a doing process and 'action' is what I intend to talk about this afternoon.

Freemasonry may be defined by some as a secular society : but only in the sense that it is not a substitute for religion. Freemasonry is **'in'** but not **'of'** the world : a world that would seek us to conform to its standards rather than be transformed by our standards. Freemasonry possesses a unique set of fundamental principles grounded in the values of many religions, ancient civilisations and influenced by many philosophies. If those fundamental principles are true, then Freemasonry is of vital importance and if false Freemasonry is of no importance; what Freemasonry cannot be is moderately important.

We live in a world of shifting values, so often characterised by need and greed. We must never compromise our standards and we must constantly strive to live to a high moral code of conduct; underpinned by the fundamental principles of our Order. It is a time for us to step 'forward' and not 'backwards' : to embrace challenges and convert them into opportunities. Let us be proactive so that we make a real difference and are welcomed as an integral part

of our communities. As men of quality and character we are the conscience of society. There is nothing out there to replace us!

Brethren, there is much activity within the Province with which each of us needs to be associated at one or more levels. From today we have a new organisational structure serving our medium to long term future. Our former seven Areas have reduced to six forming a strengthened base: with the Craft Areas now being co-terminous with those of the Royal Arch and with a consolidated leadership focussed on our future success.

At this point, I wish to formally place on record my appreciation for the vital work undertaken by our District Chairmen: those who are retiring, continuing in Office or are newly appointed. Each of them has undertaken / will undertake a key role in ensuring a smooth transition to the new structure.

I call upon each of you to give them your full support in the discharge of their important duties.

I now ask those District Chairmen, whom I shall now introduce, to stand.

Please wait until I have introduced all the Brethren before you show them your appreciation.

Retiring:

WBros David Basger, Gerry Young, Roger Flitcroft and John Farrington [who is, of course, to be appointed as our Provincial Grand Secretary later today].

Continuing:

WBro Len Hayes, Rod Ward, Ken Hampson, John Pearson, Peter Hewitt, Peter Faulkner, John Griffin, Paul Aspinall, David Biggs and David Dunn and

A **warm welcome** to WBro Brian Durkin.

Redevelopment of Freemasons' Hall (the headquarters of the Province, the Secretariat and the home to many Craft Lodges, Royal Arch Chapters and other Orders) is to commence in the first half of 2012. The Redevelopment will provide an affordable, impressive and comfortable 'fit for purpose' Masonic home for Freemasonry in the City. Salford Freemasons will be looking after their Manchester colleagues for the period of the work, and for that we are most grateful. I refer you to the Provincial Website for the answers to most frequently asked questions regarding the Redevelopment and the interim arrangements: these questions and answers will be regularly updated.

Any society or organisation can be judged by the way it cares for the least fortunate of its members: and so it is with Freemasonry. We have been in Festival mode to raise funds for the Royal Masonic Benevolent Institution for 2

years and to date just in excess of £750,000 has been donated by individuals, Lodges, Chapters and others. In the present climate, this is very commendable: however only one in six of us has entered into a commitment to make a regular donation / contribution. There are of course other Brethren who have chosen to make 'one-off' contributions. To all who have supported the Festival thus far [and in doing so have helped to improve the quality of life of our vulnerable members and / or their dependents] and who will be invited to further support the Festival today, please accept my 'thank you'. In every Festival that I can remember we have called for commitment from the Brethren: that each shall give in accordance with his means and without detriment to himself or family. I ask you to revisit your commitment to support charity: made at the time of your Initiation into Freemasonry.

Let me remind you that the RMBI operates 17 Care Homes with some 1000 residents and that a donation of £5 enables one such resident to be provided with a single meal. I invite each individual, each Lodge and each Chapter to re-examine their priorities in relation to charitable giving whilst the Province is in Festival mode : please remember that it is your Festival and that its success depends on you.

In this Province, the future health and viability of each Lodge will, in very large measure, be determined by the enjoyment and value its members gain from

their regular meetings, rehearsals, committees, social and charity functions.

Enjoyment and value are wholly dependent on the contribution each member makes / is allowed to make to those meetings and the quality of the content that is provided. For most Lodges this means that if you are not focussed on your relationship with each other; if you are not embracing mentoring; if you are not doing something about planning and investing in securing its future; if you are not thinking about recruitment; if you are not thinking about costs and if you are unable to showcase the real essence of the many facets of Freemasonry, to your colleagues and to the outside world; then Freemasonry does not have a future. Don't leave the responsibility for defining and securing the future of your Lodge to somebody else: make sure that you are part of a winning team.

A little thought, time and action to ensure our fellow Brethren are valued, engaged, supported, encouraged and accepted is all that is needed to enhance the quality of the relationship within our fraternity. Brethren don't leave Freemasonry, they leave relationships where they are not valued or cared for: or at worst when relationships no longer exist. Let us become men of value and treat one another with dignity and respect : let us care enough to care.

Windows of opportunity present themselves to us, sometimes only once in a lifetime, and we need to take advantage of them while we can see them.

Some of us are leaders, some have special skills, but all of us have a part to play; everyone has something to give. In the end it comes down to attitude and action. There are no free rides and doing nothing is not an option. Success is about being focussed and using our resources effectively, about doing things the correct way, about building bridges and placing stepping stones (not creating obstacles or stumbling blocks) and offering pastoral care (without preaching).

The leaders of the Province and our various Committees continuously work at providing tools to help you prosper and flourish. For example, we have a Strategic Planning Group which has recently restructured the Provincial organisation and is currently looking at the health of the Craft and the Royal Arch generally; developing recruitment and retention initiatives and examining the role of our Grand Officers (who share a wealth of knowledge and experience). As individuals or as a corporate body the responsibility for defining and securing the future of Freemasonry is yours: there are no 'opt-out' clauses.

Abraham Lincoln said, *'Whatever you are; be a good one'*. Brethren, whoever we are, let us each choose to follow a path of excellence and quality through this life. As we were so often reminded by RWBro Jack Price :

'Look after each other, love one another and God bless you all.'