

the entered apprentice degree

The Entered Apprentice Degree is the first degree conferred in Freemasonry, representing the initiation of a candidate into the fraternity. This degree serves as the foundation for a Masonic journey, introducing new members to the principles, symbols, and teachings that underpin the craft. The Entered Apprentice degree emphasizes moral and ethical values, personal development, and the importance of brotherhood. This article will explore the significance of the Entered Apprentice degree, its rituals, teachings, and its role within Freemasonry.

History of the Entered Apprentice Degree

The Entered Apprentice degree has roots that trace back to the early formation of Freemasonry in the late 16th and early 17th centuries. The rituals and symbols associated with this degree have evolved over time, but their core principles have remained steadfast.

The Origins of Freemasonry

- Freemasonry emerged from the guilds of stonemasons and cathedral builders in medieval Europe.
- The term "Entered Apprentice" originally referred to a young apprentice who was learning the trade.
- As the organization transitioned from a trade guild to a fraternal and philosophical society, the Entered Apprentice degree became a formal initiation rite.

The Evolution of the Degree

- The structure of the Entered Apprentice degree was formalized in the 18th century.
- Different Masonic jurisdictions developed variations of the degree, but the central themes remained consistent.
- The degree became a means to impart moral teachings and ethical guidelines to new members.

The Ritual of the Entered Apprentice Degree

The ritual for the Entered Apprentice degree is a carefully choreographed ceremony that serves multiple purposes: it educates the candidate, imparts

moral lessons, and fosters a sense of belonging among members.

The Ceremony

- The ceremony typically takes place in a Masonic lodge, which is a dedicated space for conducting Masonic activities.
- The candidate is prepared for initiation through a series of steps that symbolize purification and readiness.
- Elements of the ceremony include:
 - Blindfolding: Symbolizes a state of ignorance that the candidate must overcome.
 - The Oath: The candidate takes a solemn vow to uphold the values of Freemasonry and maintain confidentiality about the rituals.
 - The Symbols: Various symbols, such as the square and compasses, are introduced, representing moral and ethical principles.

The Lessons of the Degree

The Entered Apprentice degree teaches several important lessons that are fundamental to Masonic philosophy:

1. Self-Improvement: Members are encouraged to improve themselves morally and spiritually.
2. Brotherhood: The importance of fraternity and support among members is emphasized.
3. Charity: Freemasonry promotes charitable acts and helping those in need.
4. Integrity: Members are taught to live with integrity and honesty in all their dealings.

The Symbolism of the Entered Apprentice Degree

Symbolism plays a crucial role in the Entered Apprentice degree, providing deeper meanings to the rituals and teachings.

Key Symbols and Their Meanings

- The Square: Represents morality and the importance of measuring one's actions.
- The Compasses: Symbolizes self-restraint and the need to keep passions within bounds.
- The Level: Stands for equality among men and the idea that all members are equal in the lodge.
- The Plumb Rule: Represents uprightness and the importance of living a

virtuous life.

The Importance of Symbols in Masonic Education

- Symbols serve as tools for reflection and meditation, allowing members to explore their personal beliefs and values.
- They provide a common language among members, fostering a sense of unity and understanding.
- The use of symbols is a way to convey complex ideas in a manner that transcends language and culture.

The Role of the Entered Apprentice in Masonic Leadership

After receiving the Entered Apprentice degree, members embark on a journey of learning and active participation within the fraternity.

Path to Advancement

- The Entered Apprentice degree is just the beginning; members can progress through additional degrees, including the Fellow Craft and Master Mason degrees.
- Advancement requires active participation in lodge activities, learning the teachings, and demonstrating an understanding of the principles of Freemasonry.

Responsibilities of an Entered Apprentice

As a newly initiated member, the Entered Apprentice has specific responsibilities:

1. Participation: Attend lodge meetings and participate in discussions and activities.
2. Learning: Study the teachings and symbols of Freemasonry to gain a deeper understanding.
3. Support: Offer support to fellow brothers, embodying the values of fraternity and charity.
4. Conduct: Uphold the ethical and moral standards expected of a Freemason in all aspects of life.

The Impact of the Entered Apprentice Degree on Personal Development

The lessons learned during the Entered Apprentice degree have a profound impact on personal growth and development.

Building Character

- The degree emphasizes the importance of integrity and ethical behavior, shaping the character of its members.
- Self-reflection encourages members to assess their actions and make positive changes in their lives.

Strengthening Relationships

- The bonds formed within the lodge promote camaraderie and lasting friendships.
- Members learn the value of teamwork and collaboration, contributing to personal and professional success.

Conclusion

In summary, the Entered Apprentice degree is a pivotal moment in a Freemason's journey, providing a strong foundation in moral values, ethical conduct, and personal growth. Through its rich history, meaningful rituals, and profound teachings, this degree opens the door to a lifelong exploration of self-improvement and brotherhood. By embracing the lessons of the Entered Apprentice degree, members cultivate a deeper understanding of themselves and their responsibilities to others, ensuring that the principles of Freemasonry continue to thrive in the modern world. The journey does not end with the Entered Apprentice degree; it is merely the beginning of a lifelong commitment to learning, growth, and community.

Frequently Asked Questions

What is the Entered Apprentice degree in Freemasonry?

The Entered Apprentice degree is the first degree in Freemasonry, marking the initiation of a new member into the fraternity. It introduces the candidate to the basic tenets and symbols of Freemasonry.

What are the key teachings of the Entered Apprentice degree?

The key teachings include the importance of moral integrity, the value of brotherhood, and the pursuit of knowledge. It emphasizes the foundational principles of Freemasonry, including charity and community service.

How is the Entered Apprentice degree conferred?

The Entered Apprentice degree is conferred through a ceremonial ritual performed by members of the lodge. This includes symbolic gestures, verbal teachings, and the use of Masonic symbols to impart lessons.

What are the prerequisites for becoming an Entered Apprentice?

To become an Entered Apprentice, a candidate typically must be a man of good character, at least 18 years old, and have a belief in a Supreme Being. Recommendations from current members may also be required.

What symbols are associated with the Entered Apprentice degree?

Symbols associated with the Entered Apprentice degree include the square and compasses, the letter 'G' (representing God and geometry), and various tools like the plumb, level, and trowel, which illustrate moral lessons.

What is the significance of the number three in the Entered Apprentice degree?

The number three holds significant meaning in Freemasonry, symbolizing the three degrees of Masonry: Entered Apprentice, Fellow Craft, and Master Mason. It also represents the three principal tenets of Freemasonry: Brotherly Love, Relief, and Truth.

What role does the Entered Apprentice play within a Masonic lodge?

As an Entered Apprentice, a new member is expected to learn and grow within the lodge, participate in meetings, and engage in the activities of the fraternity while preparing for advancement to the Fellow Craft degree.

Can women become Entered Apprentices in Freemasonry?

Traditionally, Freemasonry has been a male-only organization; however, there are co-Masonic and women's Masonic organizations that offer similar degrees to women, including the Entered Apprentice degree.

How can an individual prepare for the Entered Apprentice degree?

An individual can prepare by researching Masonic principles, understanding the significance of the symbols, and reflecting on their personal values and commitment to the fraternity, as well as engaging with a mentor or a current Mason.

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