

Ritual Presentation to Strive for

By Alan B. Power

What is so great about Masonic Ritual?

Ritual is great, if it can be done well, with feeling, and without interruption – it has flow. Ritual exists in both the opening and closing of the Lodge and in Degree work. Superior Ritual exists when someone knows the work and can not only do the work but do it with feeling and get the message across to his audience.

There is a difference between good and bad ritual, and you know the difference between good and bad work. In good work, the floor movements are crisp, sharp, and well executed. You can see the pride that the Lodge officers put into it. In poor floor work, it is slow, imprecise and sometimes slovenly. There is nothing so discouraging as visiting a Lodge and seeing apathy apparent in their poorly performed ritual. It is OK to make mistakes, it is not OK to continue to make them or not care that you are making them.

In saying the words, bad work is imprecise, sometimes halting and sometimes needs prompting. Or some may resort to reading or regurgitating words in a paced monotone. Good work is precise and delivered with sufficient volume, clear enunciation, good timing, and feeling (as if you mean what you say). It is not hurried; it is delivered with good pace to allow the words to “sink in” vice tumbling by. Never rush your words. If need be, insert strategic pauses to emphasize your delivery. (JFK used this technique to great effect.) Deliver your words precisely and deliberately so the audience can appreciate and understand them. That, after all, is what it is all about. You want the receiver of the message to get the message and understand it.

To a great extent, if you do ritual work well, it is as if you were an actor performing it on a stage. Well, news to you, that is exactly what you are supposed to be doing. Every time you perform a ritual - you are an actor in a play. The play is what ritual is all about. The better you do it, the more meaningful it is to those observing you. After all, you are performing the ritual to benefit others. Otherwise, you might as well do it in a closet or not at all. Certainly, sloven ritual benefits no one and is an embarrassment to you and your Lodge.

Think about it for a moment, would you go to a play and spend good money to see actors on stage that did not know their lines and did not emote the feelings inherent in their part? The answer is certainly a resounding no. You go to a play to see well-rehearsed actors and actresses that are emoting the feelings that are the part. Many actors spend hours studying the part and the emotions required to get the part right and make it more meaningful for the audience. They practice their parts by speaking the lines aloud and by “being” the person in the role.

Do you not owe that same dedication to your ritual in Masonry? Do you not owe that to your brothers? Do you not owe it to that new candidate going through the degrees? To benefit him and make his experience as good as it possibly can be?

Ritual only improves if you make it improve through diligence and work. Be the one to emulate and you will soon find there are others that will want to do the same thing. Let it be infectious. There is nothing like pride in your work (ritual) to improve the overall performance of your “play”. (Pride is OK

as long as it does not morph into arrogance.) You owe it to your audience to deliver your ritual professionally and when you do it well, both you and your Lodge will be experiencing the pride of a job well done. Help your Lodge be the leader and flagship of your district, the flagship of your State. Isn't that what Carson 1's Vision Statement is:

To be the most prestigious Lodge in the State of Nevada by advancing the tenants of our craft where all good men are Master Masons.

Lastly, and this applies to all that you do - if you are going to do a job, do it well or don't bother to do it at all.