

2011 / 45.20

Lodge of Sorrow

The Acting WM will open the Lodge in the third degree.

The Lodge will then be called off

A table, covered with a white cloth to be placed in the centre of the room

The three candle pedestals to be placed round the table S. W & N.

The WM will then place the VSL on the table, together with a pair of white gloves and a EA Ap on.

Also the floorcloth to be spread on the floor in front of the table. The list giving the names of all the deceased Brethren of the Lodge to be placed on the table.

One steward to be seated by the table, North side.

WM and Ws take their respective seats.

Ceremony starts

WM Brother SW for what purpose are we assembled?

SW To honour the memory of those brethren whom death has taken away. To contemplate our own approaching dissolution and by the remembrance of immortality, to raise our souls above the consideration of this transitory existence.

WM Bro. JW what sentiments should inspire the souls of Masons on occasions like the present?

JW Calm sorrow for the absence of our brethren who have gone before us, earnest solicitude for our own eternal welfare, and a firm faith and reliance upon the wisdom and goodness of the GAOTU.

WM Brethren, commending these sentiments to your earnest consideration, invoking your assistance in the solemn ceremonies about to take place, I declare this Lodge of Sorrow opened.

Chap. GAOTU, in whose holy sight centuries are but days, to whose omniscience the past and the future are but as one eternal present; look down upon Thy children, who will wander with dread of dissolution and shudder at the mysteries of the future; look down, we beseech Thee from Thy glorious and eternal day, into the dark night of our error and presumption, and suffer a ray of Thy divine light to penetrate into our hearts, that in them may awaken and bloom the uncertainties of life, reliance upon Thy promises and assurance of a place at Thy right hand. So mote it be.

W.M. (pointing at the emblems of mortality)

Brethren in the midst of life we are in death, and the wisest of us cannot know what a day may bring forth. We live but to see those we love passing away into the Silent Land.

Behold the emblems of mortality, once the abode of a spirit like your own; within this hollow cavern once played the ready, swift and tuneful tongue; and now, sightless and mute, it is eloquent only in the solemn lessons it teaches us in all the pride and power of life: bring to your mind the remembrance of their wisdom, their strength and their beauty, and then reflect that to this complexion have they come at last; think of yourselves, thus will you be when the lamp of your brief existence has been burnt out.

Think how soon death, for you, will be a reality. Man's life is like a flower, which blooms today, and tomorrow is faded, cast out and trodden under foot. The most of us, my brethren, are fast approaching, or have already passed the meridian of life, our sun is sinking in the

west, and O how much more swift is the passage of our declining years than when we started upon this journey, and believed – as the young are apt to believe – that the roseate hues of the rising sun of our existence were always to be continued. When we look back upon the happy days of our childhood, when the dawning intellect first began to exercise its powers of thought, it seems as yesterday, and that, by a single effort of the will, we could put aside our manhood, and seek again the loving caresses of a mother, or be happy in the possessing of a bauble; and could we now realise the idea that our last day had come, our whole earthly life would seem but as a space of time from yesterday until today. Centuries upon centuries have rolled away behind us; before us stretches out an eternity of years to come; and upon the narrow boundary between the past and the present flickers a puny taper we term our life. When we came into the world, we knew nought of what had been before us, but as we grew up to manhood, we learnt of the past; we saw the flowers bloom as they have bloomed for centuries, we beheld the orbs of day and night pursuing their endless course among the stars, and as they pursued it from the birth of light, we learnt what man had thought and said and done, from the beginning of the world to our day; but only through the eye of faith can we behold what is to come hereafter, and only through a firm reliance upon the Divine promise can we satisfy the yearnings of an immortal soul.

The cradle speaks to us of remembrances, the coffin of hope, of a blessed trust in a glorious immortality and a never-ending existence beyond the gloomy portals of the tomb.

Let these reflections convince us how vain are all the wranglings and bitterness's, the jealousies and the heartburnings, the small trials and the mean advantages we have gained, but rather the noble thoughts, the words of truth, the works of mercy and the justice that ennoble and lights up the existence of every honest man, however humble, and live for good when this body, like this remnant of humanity, is mouldering in its parent dust.

Let the proud and vain consider how soon the gaps are filled that are made in society by those who die around them, and how soon time heals the wounds that death inflicts upon the loving heart; and from this let them learn ^{humanity} humanity, and that they are but drops in the great ocean of humanity.

And when God sends His Angel to us with the scroll of death, let us look upon it as an act of mercy, to prevent many sins and many calamities of a longer life, and lay our hearts softly down like one "who wraps the drapery of his couch about him, and lies down to pleasant dreams.

From this at least, man learns by death that his calamities are not immortal. To bear grief honourably and temperately, and to die willingly, are the duties of a good man and a true Mason. Lo, He goeth by me and I see Him not; He passeth on also, but I perceive him not; He taketh away, and who can hinder Him.

Man that is born of a woman is of a few days, and full of trouble. He cometh forth like a flower, and is cut down, he fleeth also as a shadow, and continueth not. Seeing his days are determined, the number of his months are with Thee. Thou hast appointed his bounds that he cannot pass, turn from him that he may rest, till he shall accomplish, as the hireling, his day. For there is no hope of a tree if it is cut down, that it will sprout again, and that the tenderer branches thereof will not cease. Though the root thereof wax old in the earth, and the stock thereof die in the ground, yet through the scent of water it will bud and bring forth boughs like a plant. But man dieth and wasteth away; yea, man giveth up the ghost, and where is he? As the waters fail from the sea, and the flood decayeth and drieth up, so man lieth down and rises not till the heavens be no more and they shall not awake nor be raised out of their sleep.

My days are passed; my purposes are broken off, even the thoughts of my heart. If I wait, the grave is mine house; I have made my bed in the darkness. I have said to corruption – "thou art my father" -. And where is now thy hope? As for my hope, who will see it? They shall go down to the bars of the pit, where our rest together is in the dust.

My bone cleaveth to my skin and my flesh. Oh that my words were now written. Oh that they were printed in a book; that they were graven with an iron pen and laid in the rock forever. For I know that my Redeemer liveth and that He shall stand at the latter day upon the earth and though after my skin, worms will destroy this body, yet in my flesh, shall I see God. Whom I see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold, and not another. For Thou cast me into the deep, in the midst of the seas; and Thy floods compass me about; all Thy billows and Thy waves passed over me. Then I said, I am cast out of Thy sight; yet will I look again to Thy holy Temple. The waters compassed me about, even to the soul, and death closeth me round about, the weeds were wrapped about my head.

I said, in the cutting off of my day, I shall go to the gates of my grave; I am deprived of the residue of my years; I said, I shall not see the Lord, even the Lord in the land of the living; I shall behold man no more within the inhabitants of the world. Behold, for peace I have great bitterness; but Thou hast in love of my soul delivered it from the pit of corruption. For the grave cannot praise Thee, death cannot celebrate Thee; the living he shall praise Thee as I do this day.

Are not my days few? Cease then, and let me alone, that I may comfort a little before I go whence I shall not return, even to the land of darkness and of the shadow of death, without odour; and where light is as darkness.

All lights are now extinguished, except for the three candles – one minute of silence – The Steward then extinguishes two candles (S & W) – another minute's silence –

Twelve is sounded by the organist.

- W.M. Brother SW, in this hour of gloom and darkness, when death stares us in the face, when the skin slips from the fingers and the flesh cleaves from the bones, what shall we do?
- S.W. WM, the light of nature and of reason fails us here. Their feeble rays penetrate not the darkness of the tomb; let us look above, to Him whose omniscience ruleth both death and the grave.
- W.M. Brother Chaplain, lead us in addressing our earnest petitions to that Almighty Father, who ever lends an ear to His suffering children.
- NB. All lights are now put on.
- Chap. Our Father who art in heaven, it has pleased Thee to take from among us those who were our brethren. Let time, as it heals the wounds thus inflicted upon our hearts and upon those who were near and dear to them not erase the salutary lessons engraved there; but let those lessons, always continuing distinct and legible, make us and them wiser and better; and whenever distress and trouble may hereafter come upon us, may we ever be consoled by the recollection that Thy wisdom and Thy love are equally infinite, and that our sorrows are not the visitations of Thy wrath, but the result of the great harmony by which everything is being conducted to a good and perfect issue in the fullness of Thy time. Let the loss of our brethren increase our affection for those who are yet spared to us, and make us more punctual in the performance of the duties that friendship, love and honour demand. When it comes to us also to die, may a firm and abiding trust in Thee dispel the gloom and dread of dissolution. Be with us now, that we may serve Thee in spirit and understanding. And to Thy name shall be ascribed the praise for ever. SMIB.

W.M. Brother Senior Warden, your advice was timely and well. Masons shall always remember that when human strength fails, they have the inexhaustible fountain of both open to them from above, through the medium of prayer.

Brothers Senior and Junior Wardens, join me round these solemn emblems of mortality, and assist me in paying the last Masonic honours to our departed brethren.

NB. (Procession round the Lodge. First the two wardens with their columns. The SW. two white flowers and the small card as a guide to words during the procession. The JW. carries one white flower and his card. Then follow the two Deacons with their wands.

Finally the W.M. Who carries a sprig of evergreen.

During the procession, the Organist will play the hymn "Abide with me" and the Brethren will join in the song if they can.

They process once around the Lodge, singing stops when JW arrives at the front of the table. He then recites as follows-

J.W. In memory of our departed Brethren I deposit this white flower, emblematical of the pure life to which they have been called and reminding us that as these children of an hour will droop and fade away, we shall soon follow those who have gone before us and inviting us all to fill the brief span of our existence that we may leave our survivors a sweet savour of remembrance.

NB. (A short silence while the procession is formed) The Organist will renew the playing of solemn music. The procession will pass twice around the lodge.

S.W. The S.W. on arriving at the front, will proceed to the front of the table and place two white flowers on the table and say-

"As the sun sets in the West to close the day and herald the approach of night, so, one by one, we lay us down in the darkness of the tomb, to wait in its calm repose for the time when the heaven shall pass away as a scroll, and man standing in the presence of the infinite, shall realise the true end of his pilgrimage here below.

Let these flowers be to us a symbol of remembrance of all the virtues of our brethren who have preceded us to the silent land, the token of that fraternal alliance which binds us while on earth, and which we hope will finally unite us in heaven."

NB. The S.W. takes his place in the procession, which then proceeds round the Lodge as before. Three times round to the usual solemn music.

At the end of the third round, the W.M. will place on the table a spray of evergreens and say-

W.M. "It is appointed unto men once to die, after death cometh the resurrection. The dust shall return to the earth and the spirit unto God who gave it. In the grave all men are equal; the good deeds, the lofty thoughts, the heroic sacrifices alone survive and bear fruit in the lives of those who strove to emulate them.

While, therefore, nature will have its way, and our tears will fall upon the graves of our brethren, let us be reminded by the evergreen symbol, of our faith in immortal life that the dead are sleeping, and be comforted by the reflection that the memories will not be forgotten; that they will be loved by those who are soon to follow them; that in our archives, their names be written, and that in our hearts there is still a place for them. And so, trusting in the intimate love and tender mercy of Him without whose knowledge not even a sparrow falls, let us prepare to meet them, where there is no parting, and where with them we shall enjoy eternal rest.

W.M. Brethren, resume your seats.

W.Bro.Chaplain, read to us from the Holy writ, that Great Light in Masonry, words of comfort and hope, to cheer us in our darkness and despondency.

Chap. But some men will say, how are the dead raised? And with what body do they come? Thou fool, that which thou sowest is not quickened except to die; and that which thou sowest, thou sowest not the body that shall be, but bare grain; it may chance be of wheat or some other grain; but God giveth it a body as it has pleased Him, and every seed, his own body.

All flesh is not the same flesh; but there is one kind of flesh of men, another flesh of beasts, another of fishes, and another of birds. There are celestial bodies, and bodies' terrestrials; but the glory of the celestial is one, and the glory of the terrestrial is another.

There is one glory of the sun; and another glory of the moon, and another glory for the stars; for one star differeth from another star in glory. So also is the resurrection of the dead.

It is sown in corruption, it is raised in incorruption, it is sown in dishonour, it is raised in glory, it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power; it is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body. There is a natural body and there is a spiritual body. And so it is written, that the first man Adam was made a quickening spirit. Howbeit that was not first which is spiritual but that which is natural; and afterwards that which is spiritual. The first man is of earth, earthly; the second man is of the Lord of Heaven. And as we have borne the image of the earthly, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly.

Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood shall not inherit the Kingdom of God; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption.

Behold, I show you a mystery; we shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in a twinkling of an eye, at the last trump; for the trumpet will sound; and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible ~~must~~ must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality.

So when this corruptible shall put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written. Death is swallowed up in victory; Oh Death, where is Thy sting? Oh Grave, where is Thy Victory.

W.M. (Collects lists of deceased members from centre table and stands in centre of the Lodge)

Brethren, I will now read the names of our deceased brethren, those who have gone away from us. That we may remember them and imitate them. But let their faults and errors be forgotten and forgiven; for to say that they had these is to say that they were but human.

Upstanding brethren with the sign of reverence.

Reads lists from the centre and then returns to Chair in East.

Bro.S.W. our recollections of our departed brothers have been refreshed and we may now ask ourselves were they just and perfect Masons, worthy men, unwearied toilers in the vineyard and possessed of so many virtues as to overcome their faults and shortcomings?

Answer these questions as Masons should answer.

S.W. Worshipful Master, man judges not man. He whose infinite and tender mercy passeth all comprehension, whose goodness endureth forever, has called our brethren hence. Let him judge.

In ancient Egypt, no one could gain admittance to the sacred asylum of the tomb until he had passed under the solemn judgement before a grave tribunal.

Princes and peasants came to be judged, escorted only by their virtues and their vices. A public accuser recounted the history of their lives, and threw the penetrating light of truth on all actions. If it were judged that the dead had led an evil life, his memory was condemned in the presence of the nation, and his body was denied the honours of sepulture.

Masonry has no tribunal to sit in judgement upon her dead; with her, the good which her sons have done lives after them, and the evil is interred with her bones. She does require however, that whatever is said concerning them shall be the truth; and should it ever happen that of a mason who dies, nothing good can be truthfully said, she will mournfully and pityingly bury him out of their sight, in silence.

W.M. Brethren, let us profit by this admonition of this solemn occasion; lay to heart the truth to which we have listened, and resolve so to walk, that when we lay us down to the last sleep, we may be privileged for our brethren to strew white flowers upon our graves, and keep our memories as a pleasant remembrance.

Bro.S.W. announce to the brethren that our labours are now concluded, and it is my pleasure, that this Lodge of Sorrow be closed.

S.W. Bro.J.W. The labours of this Lodge of Sorrow being ended, it is the pleasure of the W.M. that it be closed. Make the due announcement to the brethren and invite them to assist.

J.W. Brethren, please be upstanding. The labours of this Lodge of Sorrow being ended, it is the pleasure of the W.M. that it is now closed.
(All resume their seats.)

NB. The Deacons replace the candles to their proper places
The Chaplain returns the Volume of the Sacred Laws to the East.
The Stewards remove the table and floor cloth.

W.M. Principal Officers upstanding
Bro.J.W. What is the time?

J.W. Past high time W.M.

W.M. Your duty?

J.W. To call the brethren from refreshment to labour.

S.W. I will thank you to declare it.

J.W. Brethren, it is the Worshipful Master's command that you cease refreshment and return to labour, for the further despatch of Masonic business.
(Single knock by J.W., the S.W. then W.M.)

W.M. When calls to close in the third, then in the second. The W.M. then invites the reigning W.M. to resume his rightful place in the Lodge.