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*What is
Freemasonry?*



*a brief explanation of
Irish Freemasonry*

Introduction

Freemasonry is one of the world's oldest secular fraternities with some 35,000 members in Ireland and around 4 million members worldwide. It is a society concerned with moral and spiritual values. Its members are taught these precepts by a series of ancient forms, using the customs and tools of the stonemason as allegorical guides.

The Essential Qualification for Membership

The essential qualification for admission is belief in a Supreme Being. Membership is open to men of integrity from any race or religion who can fulfil this essential qualification.

Freemasonry and Religion

Freemasonry is not a religion, or a combination of religions, nor is it a substitute for religion. It expects its members to adhere to their own faith, and it does not permit discussion on religious matters at Masonic meetings.

The Three Great Principles

Freemasons are expected to adhere to three principles:

Brotherly Love

Every true Freemason will show tolerance and respect for the opinions of others and behave with kindness and understanding to his fellow creatures.

Relief

Freemasons are taught to practise charity, and to care, not only for their own members, but for the community as a whole, by both charitable giving, and by voluntary effort.

Truth

Freemasonry strives for truth and requires high moral standards of its members.

Charity

Freemasonry has been concerned from its earliest days with the care of orphans, the sick and the aged. This work continues today, and in recent times substantial sums have been donated to both Masonic and non-Masonic charities. This trend is firmly established and will continue.

Freemasonry and Society

Freemasonry demands that its members abide by the laws of the country in which they work and live.

Its principles do not in any way conflict with members' duties as citizens, but should rather encourage and support members in fulfilling their public and private responsibilities.

The use by a Freemason of his membership to promote his business, professional or personal interests is forbidden.

A Mason's duty as a citizen must always prevail over any obligation to other Freemasons, and any attempt to shield a Freemason who has acted dishonourably or unlawfully is strictly forbidden.

Secrecy

The only secrets of Freemasonry are those concerned with its traditional modes of recognition. It is not a Secret Society, as all its members are free to acknowledge their membership, and will do so in response to reasonable inquiries.

There is no secret about any of its aims and principles, and its constitutions and rules are available to the public. Like many other societies, it regards some of its internal affairs as matters private to its members.

Masonic Meeting places and Halls are well-known locally.

Freemasonry and Politics

Freemasonry is non-political, and any discussion of politics at Masonic meetings is forbidden.

Other Masonic Bodies

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Freemasonry is practised under many independent Grand Lodges with standards similar to those required by the Grand Lodge of Ireland.

There are a few Grand Lodges and other self styled Masonic or similar Bodies which do not meet these standards, e.g. which do not require belief in a Supreme Being or which encourage their members to participate in political matters. These Bodies are not recognised by the Grand Lodge of Ireland, and contact with them is forbidden.

Conclusion

A Freemason is encouraged firstly to do his duty to his God through his faith and religious practice, and secondly to his neighbour through charity, tolerance and service.

These ideas are not exclusively Masonic, but are universally acceptable, and Freemasons are expected to follow them.

Further information and leaflets available from:

The Grand Secretary's Office
17 Molesworth Street
Dublin 2

Tel: (01) 676 1337 - Fax: (01) 6625101

eMail glfi@iol.ie

www.irishfreemasons.org/

The Masonic Museum is open to the public.
Enquire from the Curator for opening times.