

O R A T I O N

given by

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Provincial Prelate

at the

CONSECRATION OF THE RECEPTORY OF

ST. MARY AND ALL SAINTS, No. 367.

10th December, 1960.

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## ORATION.

Given at the Consecration of the Preceptory of S. Mary & All Saints  
at Worcester.                      December 10th, 1960.

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I find myself in a position which is somewhat unusual, in that, as one of the Consecrating Officer's team, I am also one of the Founders. The Oration, which always has a place in a Consecration Ceremony, should, in the nature of things, be addressed primarily to the Founders. This occasion therefore presents to me a practical application of the principle I have endeavoured to maintain through fifty years in the Ministry, that whenever the subject calls for either admonition or criticism, the preacher should see himself standing in the forefront of his target.

Time will not permit any lengthy excursion into the history of our Order. We know that in the year 1050 certain merchants of Amalfi founded a Hospice in Jerusalem. Fifty years later the European occupation of Jerusalem gave a great fillip to this Order of S. John of Jerusalem with the result that it became primarily military in character, and enjoyed many and considerable privileges. It was, at that time, recast into three grades:-

1. Knights, who formed a fighting force for the defence of the Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem against the Saracens.
2. Chaplains who maintained the spiritual traditions of the Order.
3. Servitors who performed the menial work.

In the year 1118 the Order of Templars was founded by nine French Knights who called themselves "Poor Soldiers of the Holy City" and relied for subsistence on the alms of the faithful. Their original vow was, simply, to maintain free passage for pilgrims to the Holy Land. They developed into the most renowned element of the crusading troops. By the year 1300 the Order was 15,000 strong and had already acquired vast wealth.

The close association of the two Orders very probably led to constitutin on similar lines, with the three grades - military, religious and serving.

I have been unable to trace any direct connection between the two Masonic 'United Religious and Military Orders of the Temple and Hospital' with those ancient Orders from which we derive our titles; but there is, without question, a most intimate and real association of ideals and purpose.

Imbued and inspired by love, honour and fear of God, we undertake to receive pilgrims and conduct them on their hazardous journey to the Holy City, ministering to their well-being, striving against the evil which would thwart their pilgrimage - and ours, - incorporating them in our ranks as fellow-crusaders and brothers. In pursuit of this aim we serve the Order in all three grades of Knights, Chaplains and Servitors. May we, for a few minutes, consider this threefold service in some of it's aspects, and take the last first.

Servitors. A first, and very important consideration we should have in mind, is that service to a Preceptory of the Order demands that the members of it have come together with a mind to serve. One of the happy characteristics of Kt. Templary is the deep and sincere regard of the majority of the members for the Order. But we cannot deny that a normal roll-call makes evident the existence of maybe a small, but nevertheless a regrettable number of our brethren who may have forgotten, or perhaps have never fully realised, their obligation to regular service.

We serve by identifying ourselves closely with the work of the Preceptory; by maintaining always a sympathetic rather than a critical attitude, realising that the work done is the work of the whole Preceptory and that the officers on duty are but the mouth-pieces of the whole body of the brethren. A close acquaintance with the Ritual and a punctilious performance of the Ceremonial are also essential factors in loyal and efficient service. In office our motive should be not to enhance personal prestige, but to give of the best in us to the service of the Preceptory and to the honour, dignity and interests of the Order.

Chaplains. This is a religious Order and, when a Preceptory is opened, the significance of this Ceremony of Consecration, in which we are now engaged, becomes immediately apparent. Wherever the Preceptory may be it becomes a Holy Place. When the Eminent Preceptor declares the Preceptory to be open let us consciously notice on the S.....e the M.....c S.....e, a P.....t A.....r, emblem of the Perfect Life sacrificed for mankind on the Cross, which stands in the midst of the Light Crowned T.....e, symbol of the Infinite Love of God, the Eternal Trinity, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Then let us look once more to the A.....r and see with the mind's eye the W..d which it enshrines, telling us that "God is with us". It is in this Presence of our Heavenly Captain that we do our work - His work - and if it is done as at His command, to the best of, and to the full extent of, that which each has to give in loyalty and love to Him, our work becomes thereby a sacrifice - our act of worship.

Knights. In the Installation of a Knight, after the Accolade, and as the final act of Investiture, the new Knight is presented with his sword. "Never draw it without cause nor sheath it without honour". A sword is a weapon of offence - the weapon of a fighting man. Our forbears, if I may so name them, fought against men: the Knights of S. John in defence of Jerusalem against the Saracens: the Templars in defence of pilgrims against those who opposed their journey. Times change, and we today wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of darkness in this world, against spiritual wickedness. The sword we carry is the Sword of the Spirit, and down it's blade the P.....t A.....r is given to each of us.

Masonry does not begin and end in Lodge, Chapter, or Preceptory. In a true Mason it becomes a vital factor in his make-up, colouring his outlook and shaping his conduct. We Knights leave our Preceptories, going our several ways, still armed with the sword and clutching the White S.....e. In a wicked, distraught and sorry world the Knight-Mason is no yes-man, no conformist, but one who, armed with the Shield of Faith and the Breastplate of Righteousness, and wielding the Sword of the Spirit, strives in himself, in his home, his business, his social environment and the world at large, to overcome the enemies of the Holy Name of his Captain and to help in bringing all nearer to the heavenly Jerusalem.

In conclusion, the following words of S. Paul to the Christians of Corinth would be very apt today coming from the mouth of the Consecrating Officer:-

"For we are God's fellow-workers. . . . ye are God's building. According to the grace of God which was given to me, as a wise master-builder I laid a foundation; and another buildeth thereon. But let each man take heed how he buildeth thereon. For other foundation can no man lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. But if any man buildeth on the foundation gold, silver, costly stones, wood, hay, stubble; each man's work shall be made manifest; for the day shall declare it, because it is revealed in fire; and each man's work, of what sort it is, the fire shall prove it. If any man's work shall abide which he built thereon, he shall receive a reward. If any man's work shall be burned he shall suffer loss. . . . Know ye not that ye are a sanctuary of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? If any man destroyeth the sanctuary of God, him shall God destroy; for the sanctuary of God is holy, which sanctuary ye are."