

# The Lodge as "Sanctuary"

by **The Reverend Sir Knight William Peake**

The United States has found itself in the midst of a rancorous debate over health care reform as well as a number of other initiatives that are on the political docket. Both Republicans and Democrats, whom we have elected to speak in our stead as Americans, are becoming victims of such things as faxes portraying nooses, bricks thrown through windows, objectionable and anonymous voice mails threatening death, ill-will, and a variety of less than savory outcomes. One elected official has had their gas line cut, and another has received a mysterious white powder in a mailing to their regional office. The polarization of the nation seems to be growing as civility and respect unwind and disappear. Is this the outcome imagined by those who established this land on democratic principles?

Even lodge rooms are peppered with vaguely cloaked but objectionable remarks that reveal the political, racial, and social unrest in the land. This state of affairs is truly a challenge to the craft as it runs counter to the very foundations of our fraternity. Such political passion is straining the very fabric of our brotherhood. All this, in spite of the teaching and lessons that every Master Mason has received. The particulars of any brother's politics or the doctrines of any brother's faith are to be left at the door through which we pass clad in white aprons. Not every brother is a Christian or Jew, and in the lodge, it does not matter. Not every brother harbors the same political convictions, and in the lodge, it does not matter. In the very first charge we received as Entered Apprentices, we were all challenged:

"In the state, you are to be a quiet and peaceable subject, true to your government and just to your country. You are not to countenance disloyalty or rebellion, but patiently submit to legal authority and conform with cheerfulness to the government of the country in which you live."

How can brotherhood survive, how can our fraternity thrive if Masons allow their political or sectarian differences - which each of us are encouraged to have - thwart and destroy the very foundations which we have obligated ourselves to uphold?

Once again, the Lodge needs to be a haven of diversity, tolerance, and sanctuary in our world torn by divisions and distinctions. In medieval times there was such a place. Churches offered a "right of asylum" where those charged with a crime could flee and to varying degrees be free from legal action. In a world where political disagreements often led to criminal charges, "sanctuary" was a place of "timeout" where the passions of the moment could cool and dissipate. The "right of asylum" was even codified into law by England's King Ethelbert in 600 AD. In modern times, a Sanctuary movement was born again in the 1980s. By 1987, four hundred forty places in the United States were designated as "sanctuary cities" that were open to migrants fleeing the Civil Wars in Central America. Similar places also exist in such diverse places as Germany, France, Belgium, the Netherlands, Norway, Switzerland, Australia, and Canada.

Our world needs places of sanctuary or the "right of asylum." I would suggest that the Masonic Lodge has long been such a place. It is the one place where families divided by politics could go and, at least for the moment between gavels, Tories and Colonists, Unionists (from the North) and Confederates (from the South) could let go of their differences and be good men and true as brothers in spite of all that otherwise divided them. Indeed there are dramatic and moving stories of how our Masonic institution provided a safe haven in troublesome times in every war for soldiers of opposing sides.

In a message to the Supreme Council of the Ancient and Accepted Scottish Rite, Dan Brown who has written so much about Freemasonry commented:

"In a world where men do battle over whose definition of God is most accurate, I cannot adequately express the deep respect and admiration I feel toward an organization in which men of differing faiths are able to 'break bread together' in a bond of brotherhood, friendship, and camaraderie."

The world around us has taken notice that when our diversity would otherwise divide us when our heartfelt convictions put us at odds with one another, Freemasonry not only takes the weapons from our hands, it links brothers to grasp the hand of their enemies and recognize in a grip, a word, and the perfect points of our entrance, a brother whose value far exceeds our differences.

Is your lodge such a place that unites diverse men in something greater than their distinctions? Is your lodge merely another organization in a world of competing organizations? Or is your lodge a sanctuary where each man is encouraged to be all that he can be while remaining your brother? We have much to offer the world of death threats, virulent divisions, and incivility. We offer more than a fraternity; we offer a true brotherhood where what binds us together is greater than what tugs us apart.

The Reverend Sir Knight William Peake is serving as Senior Warden of Esdraelon Commandery No. 52 in Estherville, Iowa. He resides at 402 Second Street S.W., Buffalo Center, IA 50424 and can be contacted at [peakebill@gmail.com](mailto:peakebill@gmail.com).

---

Update: July 11, 2014

## Knight Templar Magazine Index - ARCHIVE of ARTICLES

<a href="#">HOME</a>	<a href="#">2007</a>	<a href="#">2008</a>	<a href="#">2009</a>	<a href="#">2010</a>	<a href="#">2011</a>	<a href="#">2012</a>	<a href="#">2013</a>	<a href="#">2014</a>
----------------------	----------------------	----------------------	----------------------	----------------------	----------------------	----------------------	----------------------	----------------------

[Top](#)