



“The Holy Saints John”

Lodge Presentation:

The following short article is written with the intention to be read within an open Lodge, or in fellowship, to all the members in attendance. This article is appropriate to be presented to all Masons. Entered Apprentice and Fellowcraft Masons should be invited to attend the meeting where this is presented. Following this article is a list of discussion questions which should be presented immediately following the presentation of the article.

The Holy Saints John

Lodges were anciently dedicated to King Solomon, who was said to have been our first Most Excellent Grand Master. But Masons in modern times dedicate theirs to St. John the Baptist and St. John the Evangelist, who were said to be two eminent Christian patrons of Masonry; and since their time, there is, or ought to be, represented in every regular and well-governed lodge a certain Point within a Circle. The Point representing an individual brother, the Circle the boundary line of his duty, beyond which he is never to suffer his passions or prejudices to betray him. This Circle is embordered by two perpendicular parallel lines, representing St. John the Baptist and St. John the Evangelist; upon the top rest the Holy Scriptures. In passing around this circle, we necessarily touch upon both lines, as well as upon the Holy Scriptures, and while a Mason keeps himself thus circumscribed, it is impossible that he should materially err.

The patron saint of operative stone masonry is Reinhold and the patron saint of carpentry and building is Peter.

In ancient times buildings were consecrated to God and dedicated to an idea(s), a virtue(s), or a person(s) who embodied that idea or virtue. If a building had a sacred purpose then it was consecrated to God and dedicated as stated before. If a building were not for sacred use then it was usually just dedicated. Masonic temples are seen as sacred places amongst the craft so are both dedicated and consecrated. A temple is the dwelling place of a deity. A shrine or church is a building or place set aside for the worship of deity. In Greek and Roman culture a temple was where the physical presence of a god could be found and a shrine was set up for those who could not literally pilgrimage to the temple of that deity. While the Jews recognized the universal nature of God, (He is everywhere) the Temple was the dwelling place for the Holy Name of God.

Solomon's Temple was consecrated by God himself when a cloud entered and engulfed the temple in both cloud and lightning. Solomon then dedicated the court yard before the temple



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and the temple itself with prayer, oil, cleansing, horns of brass, and the sacrifice of 22,000 bulls and 120,000 sheep.

Enough background. Why the Holy Sts. John? Why John the Baptist and John the Evangelist?

Simple answer because of the values they upheld and personified. John the Baptist was an extremely moral and righteous man. His zealotry for morality was what made him famous in his own time. The Jewish people and other cultures of the time had ceremonies of ritual washing so his baptizing was not what made him well known. Here was a man who held himself to the highest standards, standards he was unwilling to compromise. John the Baptist spoke out in public against any lack of morals in society and even condemned the king publicly for his lack of morals. Later he would condemn both the king and queen to their face for their lack of morality.

For calling out the king and queen John was imprisoned. He was given the chance to recant his accusations, knowing that his death would be certain he refused. John the Baptist preferred death than compromising his morality, his virtues, not unlike a certain widow's son.

John the Evangelist dedicated his life to charity and brotherly love. He spoke and wrote about caring for the widow and orphan, brotherly love, and charity. The traditions surrounding John the Evangelist are all ones of giving to the less fortunate and forgiving and upholding others.

Therefore our lodges are dedicated to virtue and brotherly love/charity. Masonically these men represent two extremes of our nature. John the Baptist our desire for a correct moral and upright walk. (The common gavel, square, and plumb.) John the Evangelist our desire for brotherly love and to be of service to our fellows. (The twenty-four inch gauge and the trowel.) Both men zealots for their passions.

In our lectures we talk about a point, within a circle, bounded by two parallel lines representing these two men. This lecture uses these two men because of their passions. As Masons we should touch upon morality and we should touch upon charity. Both of these it is easy to become overzealous about. The circle represents the due bounds in which we should attempt to live. Warning us to emulate the virtues of both but to guard against the zealous nature of them both. The Holy Writings serving as a guide for employing both in due measure.

Fraternally,

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Grand Lodge Free and Accepted Masons of Wisconsin



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Discussion Questions

The following discussion questions are written to be presented immediately following the presentation of the topic above. There is no right or wrong answers to these questions, they are designed to promote thought and engage all the members that are present in conversation. Take care that the presentation of the topic and the discussion questions does not exceed 30 minutes. The presenter can present any part of the questions below, or any additional questions, he feels is appropriate.

- If Masonry were being founded today who might our “Patron Saints” be?
- Why should we expect a non-Christian man to practice Masonry in a lodge dedicated to Christian saints?
- How would you explain the use of these men to a non-Christian coming into your lodge?
- Our Masonic forefathers used the examples they knew. Which by virtue of their time and location would have come from the Judaic-Christian writings of Western culture. What if instead of John the Evangelist, our Masonic forefathers had used Mahatma Gandhi or the Dalai Lama would we attempt to hide this lesson from our non-Hindu or Buddhist brothers?
- The circle also represents the calendar year and these two men represent summer and winter, June and December. In what other symbols or ideas does Masonry use opposing or opposites to achieve balance within a man?
- If Saint Reinhold is the patron of operative Masonry why not use him? Why do you use the Sts. John instead as speculative Masons?
- In building the temple of your life which men of virtue might you dedicate that temple to? Which virtues do they embody?