**Masonic Universality Presentation 10-15 minutes**

*(Underlined text indicated a new slide at that point)*

Intro-

A newly-made Mason is told about the universality of the Institution.

To the average initiate the idea of Masonic universality is geographic, like the one conveyed by Mackey's poetic prose "Wherever the wandering steps of civilized men have left their footprints, there have our Temples been established."

When he first observes the globes surmounting the pillars in the Fellowcraft Degree, the initiate is told that they "denote the universality of Masonry."

(How the celestial sphere fits into this geographical explanation of Masonic universality has never been clarified. Spacex may find an answer!)

In the ritual of the first degree, the initiate is given a more profound, a more mystical explanation of this term in the description concerning the dimensions of a Lodge. Its proportions, he is told, "signify the universality of Masonry."

From this instruction an alert and philosophical Brother may be inspired to reflect on the deeper meanings of the phrase, as it applies to Masonic customs, tenets, and ideals.

Yet it is this approach to the idea of universality which leads the contemplative to realize that Masonic universality is a moral ideal, the consciously pursued development of a world-wide tolerance based on knowledge, appreciation, and understanding between men, their creeds, and institutions.

Questions-

So how should we define Masonic Universality?

Where do we find universal virtue in Freemasonry?

Why should Masonic Universality be understood in the framework of virtue rather than in geographic terms?

Goals-

My goal in this presentation is to examine Masonic Universality as a moral framework, truths held in every culture and society from time immemorial, because this is what sets us apart as a society of men bonded through a common experience and world view.

What is Universality?

A common definition is geographic, Freemasonry admits men of all faiths and of all color. While this is the general concept of Freemasonry, there are some …Jurisdictional issues

-Masonic Dictionary

This is obviously a weak argument today, so I propose we reframe the question.

What if we look at universality as referring to morality and virtue rather than geography?

Universal Virtues-

Thankfully researchers have looked into the question of universal virtues or morals.

Virtue is a trait or quality that is deemed to be morally good and thus is valued as a foundation of principle and good moral being

The field of Positive Psychology has identified 6 universal virtues, present in all societies and cultures.

Courage

Strength in the face of pain, grief or adversity

Humanity

Benevolence

Justice

Teamwork, fairness, leadership

Wisdom

Perspective, creativity, curiosity

Temperance

Modesty, self-control

Transcendence

Appreciation of beauty, spirituality, gratitude

Where do we find these universal virtues in Freemasonry?

Let us first look at the tenets of Freemasonry as laid out in the EA Degree.

Brotherly Love-

Every true Freemason will show tolerance and respect for the opinions of others and will behave with compassion and understanding to his fellows.

Humanity, Temperance, Wisdom

Judeo-Christian-Good Samaritan

Greek-Philia

Hindu- Who doeth all for Me; who findeth Me In all; adoreth always; loveth all Which I have made, and Me, for Love’s sole end.”

- Bhag-a-vad Gita

Relief-

Freemasons have been taught to help those in distress without detriment to their dependents, and to give their support to outside charities.

Humanity, Justice

Abrahamic Faiths-Rules of hospitality

Buddhist-Compassion

Islam-Alms

Truth-

Freemasons strive for truth both in their view of themselves and in their dealings with others.

Courage, Justice and Transcendence

Aristoteles’s Truthfulness

Buddhist-Right Thought

Judeo-Christian- Thou shalt not bear false witness

EA Tools-

Lets go one step further down the trail, lets apply these universal principles to the EA’s working tools

Square-Square our actions with virtue

Consider you actions before acting out of passion or emotion

Wisdom

Compass-Control of our desires and passions

This is temperance and at the same time transcendence

24-inch Gauge-Balance, 8 hours to vocation, 8 to rest and 8 to service

We must not allow one aspect of our life push out others

Temperance and developing Wisdom

Common Gavel-Focus

We must learn to focus on those things that are good and right

Temperance, Transcendence

Why does this set us apart historically?

Masonry likely arose during the 14th to 16th centuries in Northern Europe

They live in a Pre-Reformation Christian society where Reformation ideas are already floating around, people are questioning strict Christian dogma and teachings

In a world where all things are religion, developing a set of universal virtues is dangerous, but also progressive.

Progressive idea X2 (Joke)

Assuming, based on language and symbolism, that Masonry arose in Northern Europe then these were merchants and traders as well as craftsman.

People traveling to the east and bringing back new ideas, hence the examples provided earlier, all from European trading partners in the 15th to 17th centuries.

They created a system of moral teachings focusing on character and virtue outside the framework of the church.

This is massive innovation, Enlightenment ideas, based on Renaissance Humanism, 100years before the Enlightenment

This also created universality as religion was no longer a barrier

In Pre-Reformation and Reformation Europe this is dangerous thought

The Masons brought together teachings from around the known world, through trade, to create arguable the first universal system by which to teach virtue since the Classical Greeks

Conclusion

So how should we define Masonic Universality?

The argument for Masonic universality based on a universal experience, or universal acceptance is weak, as we have seen the teachings are universal.

However, no matter where you were made a Mason you were taught the same principles, virtues and ideas

Thus we find a stronger framework through which to understand Masonic Universality as found at the end of the EA Picture Lecture

Where do we find universal virtue in Freemasonry?

We find it in the tools, tenets and teachings of our craft as I did by looking at the tenets and tools of the Entered Apprentice.

The same universality is found in the FC and MM, the wording may shift but the base teachings remain, no matter your country or jurisdiction’s pure work.

These teachings may seem simple and therefore lacking deeper meaning, but all great truths of the human condition are ultimately quite simple

It is that simplicity that has drawn the greatest minds of human existence to study them, refine them and seek to make them universal

Why should Masonic Universality be understood in the framework of virtue rather than in geographic terms?

To say you will find acceptance in any lodge is good, but it lacks depth.

If we stick to geographic universality we are basically the same as any other group, acceptance through membership

What sets us apart from other groups is our teachings, as progressive today as they were 500 years ago.

These teachings allow us to participate in social discourse anywhere across the Earth because we have become familiar with these universal virtues

How many other groups can claim to teach universal virtue? Virtues that cross oceans, state boundaries and nations?

Few if any.

Hook/Call to action

This universality through virtue sets us apart, makes us special and encourages all of us to better ourselves through Masonry.

So, go out, study the teachings, take each and try to apply it to your daily life.

They are simple but I think you will find they contain the kind of truths that can change one from a simple human to a man of great character, unlikely to be forgotten after he is gone.