

# St. John's Lodge No. 9, F. & A. M.

## Trestleboard

MARCH 2020

*Jim Russell, editor*



Serving Seattle since 1860

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## FROM THE EAST

[Blair Neumann](#), Master



"Do unto others as you would have others do unto you."

The Golden Rule is everywhere. It dates back millennia, and some variation on its theme of reciprocal conduct is featured in nearly every religion since antiquity, including Christianity, Judaism, and Islam today.

But the Golden Rule is nowhere to be found in Freemasonry. Why is that?

How is it that a principle so pure as to be titled "Golden" by billions, so ancient that it's found from Hammurabi to Confucius, has been overlooked by our own ancient and ethical Craft?

I think a perhaps surprising answer may be that this standard wisdom hasn't been overlooked, but that the Golden Rule, despite its near universal esteem, has no place in Freemasonry because as Masons we hold ourselves to a higher standard still.

Our standard is right conduct regardless of how others treat us, without expectation that we be treated rightly by non-Masons in return. And while we expect our Brothers to treat us on the level, we do not lower ourselves to meet them when they do not, but strive to right them by the plumb, squaring our own actions, to help our Brothers back by the perfect points of our art.

We are admonished to do good unto all. There are no exceptions. Do not do good only unto those who do good unto you, nor do only as good as others have done unto you. Such cynicism would be incompatible with Masonry. Do good unto all means to do so regardless.

Our maxim is simple and powerful: Be your best self, regardless of the relative virtues of others. Be proud of yourself and the work that you do to be all you can be. Rise above petty conflicts to be an example for those around you.

In short, do unto others as you would have them do unto you. But, ratchet up the discourse. Don't let yourself or others down. Be a good man!

Brethren, we are now about to quit this sacred retreat of friendship and virtue, to mingle again with the outer world. Amid its concerns and employments, forget not the duties which you have heard so frequently inculcated, and so forcefully recommended, in this Lodge. Be diligent, prudent, temperate, discreet. Remember that at this altar you have promised to befriend and relieve every Brother who shall need your assistance. You have been enjoined to remind a Brother in the most friendly manner of his fault, to endeavor to aid his reformation, and to defend his character. These generous principles extend further, for every human being has a claim upon your kind offices. Do good unto all. Finally, my Brethren, be ye all of one mind; live in peace; and may the God of Love and Peace delight to dwell with you and

## CALENDAR



- March 9 (7-9pm) Fellowcraft Degree read-through
- March 12 (7pm): Officers Meeting *teleconference*
- ~~March 14 (7pm): Jason Shaw speaker "Theory of Thought"~~
- March 18 (6:15pm) 7:30pm: St. John's 9 (dinner) Stated Visit DDGM5
- March 20 – 22: Lodge Leadership Retreat (Wenatchee)
- April 9 (7pm): Officers meeting
- April 12: *Easter Sunday*
- April 13 (7-9pm): Fellowcraft Degree practice
- April 15 (6:15pm) 7:30pm: St. John's 9 (dinner) Stated
- April 20 (7-9pm): Fellowcraft Degree practice
- April 24 (6-10pm): Fellowcraft Degree *for Louis Turner*
- April 25 (10am): Quarterly meeting Masonic Service Bureau
- April 25 (10am): Past Masters Brunch *Jimmy's on Broadway*
- May 3 (10am): FABulous Family Brunch *Columbia Tower*
- May 10 – Mother's Day
- May 13 (6pm): Board of Trustees
- May 14 (7pm): Officers meeting
- May 20 (6:15pm) 7:30pm: St. John's 9 (dinner) Stated
- May 21 (6:15pm): Robert G. Davis Speaker "The History and Evolution of the American Masonic Ritual"
- June 12 – 13: 163<sup>rd</sup> Annual Communication Grand Lodge (Great Wolf Convention Center)
- June 20 - 21: Fremont Fair *(Masonic information booth)*
- June 17 (6:15pm): St. John's 9 Stated Table Lodge
- June 27 (6pm): family night Everett AquaSox baseball
- July 4: *Independence Day*
- July 9 (7pm): Officers meeting
- July 13 (7pm): Samuel Friedman Speaker "Millennials & Masonry"
- July 15 (6:15pm): St. John's 9 (dinner) Stated – Scholarship Night

## ***GUEST SPEAKER CANCELED; DEPUTY VISIT THIS MONTH***

King County Public Health officials are now recommending, but not requiring, the following steps for at least the next three weeks: "People at higher risk of severe illness should stay home and away from large groups of people as much as possible, including public places with lots of people and large gatherings where there will be close contact with others." Officials noted that people at higher risk include: People 60 and older, people with underlying health conditions including heart disease, lung disease, or diabetes, and people who have weakened immune systems. ***As a precaution, John's presentation of Mr. Jason Shaw, author and speaker scheduled for March 14 has been canceled with hopes to re-schedule this fall.***



The following week will be our March 18<sup>th</sup> stated communication. VWBro. Steve Harrell will be making his official visitation and will bring greetings from our Grand Master, MWBro. Charles E. Wood. This visit nears the close of VWBro. Harrell's two-year stint as our Grand Masters' representative in District 5.

Also on the agenda we expect to vote on a few petitions for membership and we will be hearing from our Entered Apprentice Louis Turner as he demonstrates his EA proficiency and also offers a little Masonic education and enlightenment.

Last month the Master "shrank the Lodge" for discussion on "what do we want the Lodge to do this year?" Everyone participated in lively and thoughtful discussion.



WBro. Neumann invites all brothers to our monthly stated communication. ***Please make your dinner reservations with the secretary at 206 623-0261 by Friday, March 13, prior to the meeting.*** If you need a ride, the secretary will be happy to find one for you. Do you know of a brother who has not attended Lodge in a while? Call him and ask if you can pick him up and bring him to Lodge.

## **St. John's Off to the Races Again**

St. John's families will again spend a day at the races in August – Seafair Sunday, August 2. Last year Emerald Downs provided a full day of horse racing, Corgi dog racing and offered a full lunch buffet to 42 members and guests of the Lodge.



For the mere cost of \$10 per person, the Lodge will host each couple (a \$120 value); additional guests will also be \$10 each, the price of general admission! Reservations are a must, and will open later this spring.

## **St. John's sets Labor Certificates at \$30**

Following approval by Most Worshipful Grand Master Charles E. Wood of the recent amendment to our Lodge bylaws, the brethren of St. John's set the value of Certificates of Labor at \$30 for the year 2021. Certificates are distributed (paid) by the Senior Warden following the close of each stated communication. They are redeemable as payment for annual dues. It pays to come to Lodge!



If you know of anyone who is ill, in a nursing home or hospital please contact me as soon as possible so we can send them a card or pay them a visit. I can be reached either by phone at 206 623-0261 or email at: [jimrussell58@frontier.com](mailto:jimrussell58@frontier.com).



## ***FAMILY APPRECIATION BRUNCH RETURNS TO COLUMBIA TOWER MAY 3***

Last year's venue for our FABulous Family Appreciation Brunch was well-received and VWBro. Ashley Brinkley under the direction of our Worshipful Master Blair Neumann has made arrangements for all of us to again enjoy a brunch at the Columbia Tower Club atop the Columbia Tower. Starting time for the brunch will be 10am.



Once again all brothers are invited to host their family members, especially our lovely ladies. Parties over two will be assessed \$10 each payable at the event. (Party of two – no charge; party of four will cost \$20.)

***Seating is limited and reservations are a must!*** Let the Secretary know how many will be in your party.

Please remind your guests that this is ***not a casual-dress affair***. Please dress accordingly!

## **MARCH MEETING HIGHLIGHTS:**

Here's a look at what's happening at our March stated communication:

### **Dinner - guests welcome**

1 Menu: Farmers Pub salad; Irish chicken with Colcannon and mustard gravy; Irish apple cake with custard desert

(allergies, vegetarian, vegan? Let us know a week before.)

### **2. Welcome & Introductions**

### **3. Announcements & Good of the Order**

### **Stated Meeting – tiled**

### **1. Balloting on three petitioners**

### **2. General business – reports and planning**

### **3. Masonic Education – Louis Turner**

### **4. Official visit of Deputy of the Grand Master**

### **Refreshments**

Kick back, visit, and enjoy a beverage and dessert

## Senior Warden Message

VWBro. Ashley Brinkley



**David Campbell**  
1926-2020

I start out my post this month on a sad note that our brother and friend VWBro. David Campbell passed away. He will truly be missed. I felt he was not only a brother but a good friend. I often think of brothers in the Lodge who I would have liked to have had as a father and David was one of those men. My own father never got to see me become a man or know that I became a Mason like him. I went to a brother's funeral service last month and it said in the program that he never got to know his own father and I felt fortunate I had mine for almost 10 years before he was killed in an accident. I did talk to David about a week before he passed away. I knew he wasn't feeling well so I didn't talk very long but he was so glad I had called him. Brothers, please don't miss out on an opportunity to reach out to our brothers. You may never know how much that could mean to our senior or infirmed Masons.

I hope a lot of you got to see the television miniseries on George Washington recently like I did. It made me reflect on our Lodge's past trip to Washington, DC and our visit to George Washington's Mt. Vernon home. I was in awe that we got to go into the house that our brother lived in. We saw the same view of the Potomac River he did and sit on the same front porch he did. I have also had the opportunity to go to Valley Forge and see where Washington crossed the Delaware on that Christmas night so long ago. I wonder if Washington would have done all those things without being a Mason. Were his Masonic principles a driving force? Are our Masonic principles a driving force in our own lives and does our non-Masonic world see us as better men and citizens? I hope so. I only know I am striving to be a better man because of Masonry, but I am not done yet, I am still a work in progress. How about you?



**WBro. Serco Tokatlian, Master of Elliot Bay Lodge No. 257 in 1982, receives his 40-year pin from St. John's Master WBro. Blair Neumann**

## Junior Warden Message

WBro. John Murray Louderback



What does it mean to be on a team? A team is comprised of individuals that form a dedicated group that is striving to accomplish a goal. Every organization or team is only as good as the individuals that comprise the team and how effectively they work together. No team is made up of just one individual. Everyone on the team must do his part to the best of his ability. The quarterback of a football team is the offensive leader of the team. However great the quarterback, if he does not have an offensive line blocking, he and the team will have little chance of success.

Brothers, consider St. John's Lodge as your team. You, as a member of St. John's, what is your position on the team? What are your responsibilities? Be a part of "Team St. John's"!

The Worshipful Master, Secretary, or Officers cannot, or be expected, to do everything for you and the Lodge. Be a self-starter. Be self-motivated to do something for the Lodge without being asked. Make yourself available.

If you believe the Lodge needs more educational programs, do not expect someone else to do the educational program. Do it yourself. Put your ideas together. Bring your ideas to the Education Committee and the Master. Help promote Freemasonry and St. John's.

Your leadership through labor is what is needed. Imagine the possibilities if everyone does his part!

Freemasonry and St. John's will only be as successful as we make it. Contribute your best efforts for "Team St. John's". You are known - and will be remembered for all eternity - by what you do.

What will be your legacy?

## MASTER MASONS RAISED IN MARCH

### *Date Raised:*

3/28/1953	Howard C. Harris, Sr.
3/31/1956	Gus N. Cooper
3/28/1958	Gilbert N. Hain
3/26/1966	David G. Coghill
3/26/1969	Gerald S. Ostroff
3/31/1977	Michael J. Davis
3/9/1979	Tom H. Sawyer
3/27/1981	David L. Bolson
3/8/1984	Kenneth W. Macarthur
3/8/1995	Boe E. Lindgren
3/5/1998	Robert F. Sluder
3/28/1998	D. Joseph Lund
3/27/1999	Mark A. Gfeller
3/22/2003	Morgan Owain Morgan-Jones
3/22/2003	Vaibhav Vijay (Vince) Kodikal
3/23/2006	Brian J. Downie
3/1/2013	Seann P. Maria





## Northwest Junior Pipe Band Concert



# A CELTIC CELEBRATION!

25TH ANNIVERSARY

## NORTHWEST JUNIOR PIPE BAND



IN CONCERT 7PM  
MAY 2, 2020 \$25

### Bagpipes & Drums

Highland Dancers

Scottish Fiddlers

Special Guests & More!

### VIP Reception 5:30 pm

Upgrade your ticket for a special pre-concert gathering including wine, appetizers and Celtic music

### EDMONDS CENTER FOR THE ARTS

410 4th Ave N, Edmonds, WA

Tickets: [ec4arts.org](http://ec4arts.org)

Info: [nwjpb.org](http://nwjpb.org) (206) 508-1261 [info@nwjpb.org](mailto:info@nwjpb.org)

On Saturday May 2<sup>nd</sup> at the Edmonds Center for the Arts, Northwest Junior Pipe Band and friends proudly present their spring concert - A Celtic Celebration!

As Western Washington's only youth pipe band, join the Northwest Junior Pipe Band as they celebrate their 25-year anniversary with a concert featuring: pipes and drums, highland dancers, Scottish fiddlers, special guests and more! All proceeds support the NWJPB including their return to Glasgow Scotland to compete in the World Pipe Band Championships in August 2020.

Make it a VIP experience and upgrade your ticket for a wine reception before the show. Enjoy wine, appetizers, music and a bonnie good time. (VIP pre-event begins at 5:30pm)

Concert only 7-9pm: \$25. Including pre-event wine reception 5:30-7pm: \$65. Seating is reserved so act fast.

For information and tickets, call (206) 508-1261  
See you at the show! \*\*\*

\*\*\* St. John's Lodge tries to financially assist young people throughout the region. Included among the many we help are the Northwest Junior Pipe Band, student scholarships, four DeMolay Chapters, five Rainbow Assemblies, four Job's Daughters Bethels, two Little League teams, two elementary school reading programs, and the Seattle Youth Symphony.

## Student Scholarship Announcement 2020

In accordance with Masonic values, St. John's Lodge again strives to support hard working individuals of good character and high moral standards who are involved in their community. Furthermore, we encourage students with clearly defined career paths.

To apply for a scholarship, email the following to St. John's Lodge Scholarship Committee at [sjl9scholarship@gmail.com](mailto:sjl9scholarship@gmail.com) **no later than April 30:**



1. Letter of interest, including your contact information (name, address, telephone number, etc.)
2. A copy of the official transcript of your last semester's grades.
3. Answers to these questions:

**1. How did this year of study affect your preconceived career projection? i.e., did it strengthen your resolve to persist in the direction you originally thought you would take? Or have you decided to change course? Why?**

**2. Describe your biggest challenge this past year at school, how it affected your ability to succeed, and what steps you took to overcome it.**

**3. Which groups/clubs/societies did you become a member of this year? To what extent did you actively participate? What did you learn by your association? If you did not join a club, why not?**

**4. Specifically, how would the St. John's award make a difference this next year at school? What will the money go towards?**

The Grand Lodge of Washington also announces the availability of Scholarships through [Washington Masonic Charities](http://WashingtonMasonicCharities.org).

## Help Spread the Word – “Be a Freemason”

**“Blood is thicker than water. But nothing's thicker than brotherhood.”**

Every year in virtually every city and town across America, thousands of men join the ranks of Freemasonry. Men of honor and integrity. Of charity and obligation. Each with a vow to be the best they can be. To be more than just a man. To be a Mason.

Help spread the word about [BeAFreemason.org](http://BeAFreemason.org) by sharing it on all your social media pages and mentioning the site to your friends and acquaintances who may be interested in becoming Masons.

The new website, created by a joint venture with Scottish Rite NMJ and Shriners International, will serve as a guide for men who are interested in becoming Masons and act as a referral service matching interested men with the Grand Lodge in their area.



# LET'S LOOK AT THAT A LITTLE CLOSER



*Freemasonry is steeped in long tradition. In times past, the trade secrets of building and stone masonry were a man's livelihood. In other times, a man's life could be at risk. You didn't want to be discovered as a Freemason under the Nazis, in post-revolution Iran or in many of today's oppressive governments. But our desire for secrecy has long gone misunderstood and misinterpreted. As Masons, we don't reply to the criticisms from the public, and in hearing no reply, our silence is often misinterpreted as confirmation of their suspicions.*

## Masonic Secrets

RW Patrick D. Cholka

Like many of you, I follow a number of Masonic websites, blogs, podcasts, Facebook pages and other sources that help me to think about the various aspects of Freemasonry. My list of bookmarked sources is quite extensive. On one of these sources, there are a number of Brethren that are quite concerned about sharing Masonic "secrets".

Recently, a relatively new Brother simply asked what the duties of a Junior Steward are. A simple question and I suspect the Brother that asked the question was recently appointed to the position. A few other Brothers were quick to "whisper good council" in this Brother's ear and advised him that to answer his question would be to reveal some of the secrets of Masonry that he promised to conceal and never reveal.

The original question was soon after removed. This confused me. In the booklets associated with the Wisconsin Program, where the Grand Lodge of Wisconsin's candidate education and examination information is communicated, we are clearly told that of the information contained in those booklets, the only information we are required to keep secret are the modes of recognition; the duties of the Lodge officers are covered to some extent in those booklets. In addition, in our ceremonies for the installation of officers the duties of all the officers are carefully explained.

Seeing that the installation of officers is one of a very few of our ceremonies that can be performed in the presence of Masons and non-Masons alike it doesn't seem like something we are trying to keep secret. Now, while I understand that there is some variation in this regard between Grand Jurisdictions I have to believe the viewpoints are relatively similar.

Before I continue, let me back up fifteen years as of this April. My interest in developing my understanding of Freemasonry goes back to just a few weeks after I was raised. I had not met the first men who eventually became my first mentors in Freemasonry until the day of my Master's board. The fact that they knew parts of my family for decades before I met them helped to hasten the development of the connection we had.

Anyway, just a few weeks after I was raised one of them saw me rifling through the library at the Lodge and

asked if he could help me find what I was looking for. When I explained that I didn't know what I was looking for he asked if he could make a suggestion and a few weeks later he brought in a book titled "Old Tiler's Talks" by Carl Claudy.

Anyway, on the discussion about secrets I was immediately reminded of one of the Old Tiler's Talks that addressed that very topic. In this particular edition, a younger Mason is concerned that one of his Brothers is violating his obligations by taking the slides from the picture lecture home where his children can see them and suggested that someone speak to this Brother about it. The "old tiler" explained to the newer Mason that the secrets of Freemasonry cannot be found on the slides associated with our lectures for if they were, the person that created them, or commissioned them to be created, would be in violation of his obligation.

This got me to thinking: what are the secrets of Freemasonry that we are always so quick to defend?

Freemasonry's long-standing commitment to secrecy has caused more controversy, both within and without the fraternity, than any other Masonic topic. It is the source of many rumors, suspicions and mistrust. Our commitment to secrecy has both helped and hurt the organization greatly.

In many ways, we are proud of the aura of secrecy that surrounds the fraternity and what we do, and, in some ways, we encourage it. Some of us like being called a "secret society" or even a "society with secrets" as it promotes the idea that we know something the rest of the world does not.

When we examine this, we begin to understand the nature of Masonic secrecy; how the craft perceives its relationship to the general public. Even the emblems we use in our rituals and the symbols we wear on our clothes and paste to our cars helps to cement this relationship. We want the general public to see these emblems and ask questions about them only to receive a vague explanation in return. Yet, we encourage them to continue to ask questions.

Our desire for secrecy has long gone misunderstood and misinterpreted. As Masons, we don't reply to the criticisms from the public, and in hearing no reply, our silence is often misinterpreted as confirmation of their suspicions.

Freemasonry generally doesn't concern itself with its nay-sayers and critics, and I will not suggest we begin





facing our detractors head-on. However, the public's suspicion of Freemasonry is probably due more to our lack of seeking recognition for the good we accomplish than to the thought that we are purposely conspiring. People tend to distrust what they don't understand.

When any group is not public with their efforts, the opportunities to understand what they do are greatly reduced. There are countless reports of the good things that Freemasons and Freemasonry has accomplished by well-respected Masons and non-Masons alike. But it is the negative, real or perceived, that draws the public's eye and keeps their attention.

There are a number of sources we can point the skeptic to that would clear up a lot of misunderstandings, but as these sources require a general understanding of Freemasonry to interpret, they just tend to strengthen the mistrust. One must have an understanding of Freemasonry in order to understand the context and must understand the context to be able to understand something written about it. You can read a book on nuclear fusion but you have to have an understanding of the topic before you can understand the book.

This is the very essence of an allegory: an allegory does not provide answers. The allegory of our ritual communicates our symbols and points us in the right direction. The understanding of them is left to the individual Mason, to his interpretation. When a non-Mason tries to understand the allegory of our ritual without the context he can do no more than read the words on the page and interpret what he is reading. Once the Mason begins to interpret the allegories of Freemasonry, he may conclude that the lessons his attention is drawn to is intended to either divide or to unite. That Freemasonry's secret passwords and signs are intended to exclude those that have NOT chosen to understand its beauties or to welcome those that have.

He may believe he's committed to keep secrets that he may not understand, and lose sight of the lessons of our allegories. Or he may understand that the secret modes of recognition and the allegories of our ritual are symbols that illustrate the moral lessons of the fraternity. It may help him to understand that, though parts of the ritual are considered secret, the lessons that lie at the root of them should be revealed, rather than concealed.

Each of us are charged to guard the secrets of Freemasonry but we must consider what can be, or is hoped to be, shared. Guarding those things that are not secrets as though they are promotes intolerance and exclusiveness and contradicts the benevolent spirit of Freemasonry that takes root as the fraternity's foundation. Some Masons are satisfied with what they see on the surface and do not seek to understand the meanings behind it and the beautiful system of Freemasonry which was carefully constructed to bring people together often keeps them apart.

Consider this: if Freemasonry provides a Mason with the tools to make himself better, and if one of the requirements to become a Mason is to be a good man prior

to petitioning a Lodge, where did that foundation of being a good man come from if not from Freemasonry?

It stands to reason that before petitioning a Lodge we were able to tell the difference between right and wrong and had been familiar with many of the principles Freemasonry holds dear: perhaps the principle of equality or even the cardinal virtues of temperance, fortitude, prudence and justice. The principles, tenets and maxims the fraternity holds dear are not exclusive or unique to Freemasonry and we must have possessed them in our hearts long before petitioning a Lodge. What is unique to Freemasonry is how we reinforce them.

The secrets of Freemasonry then, cannot be the duties of the Junior Steward. Neither can the secrets be that we hold ourselves to a higher moral standard; that we practice the tenets of Brotherly love, relief and truth nor the meanings we have assigned to the ordinary working tools of the ancient operative mason.

As Freemasonry expects each of us to continually apply the lessons reinforced in it to our lives, then if we are successful the rest of the world would know as much about the nature of the Fraternity as anyone by our own actions. You can generally tell a Mason by his character.

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RWB. Patrick D. Cholka was Raised April 3, 2004 in Henry L. Palmer #301, where he is a Past Master, under the Grand Lodge of Wisconsin. He also served as the Worshipful Master of Wauwatosa #267. He has also served as a District Deputy Grand Master, Grand Lodge of Wisconsin. Past Grand Orator and Past Chairman of the Masonic Committee on Education, and is a 32nd Degree, AASR Valley of Milwaukee and Past Thrice Potent Master. For Comments or Questions please email: wanderson25@cogeco.ca Our mailing address is: Sunday Masonic Paper 828 Milford Drive Kingston, On K7P 1A8 Canada

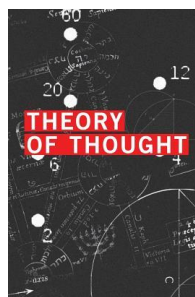
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St. John's Lodge No. 9 invites you to the first of its 2020 visiting guest speaker series with an interactive presentation and discussion about the recent and impact of symbols with no... Jason Shaw. As Masons... on symbols, but what... and how do they work... symbols reflect reality, or could... control reality? How do symbols interact with our brains, our minds and the universe?

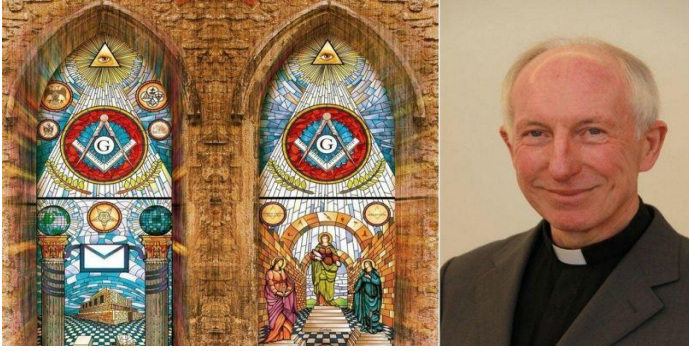
Come and enjoy a thought-provoking evening as author Jason Shaw combines Einstein's theory of relativity, string theory and philosophy to pose a potential solution to the theory of everything.

This event is free and open to all including non-masons. Make your **reservation by March 7** with WBro. Russ Johnson at [rajco20@me.com](mailto:rajco20@me.com).

Theory of Thought presents a new way of understanding the mind, symbolism, attraction, and physics. It reveals an architecture for the interaction of thought in a hyperdimensional space, called mindspace. It is a theory of everything that describes the principles of philosophy, religion, and science as reflections from the properties of hidden models. Discover a unique theory derived by the most important symbols in the Universe.



## Vatican Cleric Claims Catholics Can Be Freemasons

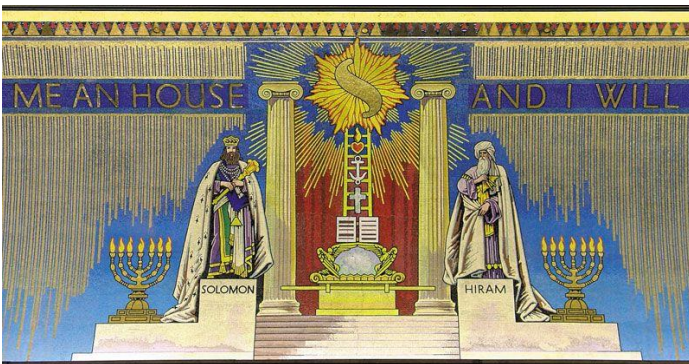


VIENNA - Eight popes over 200 years in a barrage of 20 legal interdicts have condemned Freemasonry, pronouncing automatic excommunication against any Catholic who becomes a member of a Masonic Lodge.

Now, a new book by an official of the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue is claiming that a practicing Catholic can simultaneously be a Freemason and that the penalty of excommunication may “certainly not” be applied to “Catholic Freemasons.”

Father Michael Heinrich Weninger launched his 500-page study *Loge und Altar: Über die Aussöhnung von Katholischer Kirche und regulärer Freimaurerei* (Lodge and Altar: On the Reconciliation of the Catholic Church and Regular Freemasonry) last Wednesday in Vienna, accompanied by Austrian Lodge Grand Master Georg Semler on the dais.

Semler identifies as a “committed Catholic,” while Weninger, ordained by Cdl. Christoph Schönborn in 2011, was outed as a Freemason when celebrating Mass at the consecration of the new Lodge of Mark Master Masons No. 1954 in 2014.



A Masonic temple painting simulating Solomon's temple

A Masonic [communiqué](#) informed its members that “Bro. Rev. Michael was installed and invested as Chaplain in each of the three Lodges,” adding that Weninger was “well qualified since he lives in the Vatican as a member of the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue but works in Rome.”

Weninger says he has presented copies of his book to Pope Francis, to Schönborn and to high-ranking officials in the Roman Curia. Schönborn responded with “Nothing but goodwill,” he bragged.

However, at a presser in 2013, Pope Francis lashed out at “[a lobby of masons](#)” while on a 2015 visit to Turin, the pontiff spoke of “worst conditions” for young people at the end of the 19th century when “Freemasonry was in full swing ... there were priest haters, there were also Satanists.” In 2017, the pontiff [compelled](#) Cdl. Burke to purge Freemasons from the Knights of Malta.

At the book launch, Weninger narrated his experience of being repeatedly approached by Catholic Freemasons during his trips around the world: “They described to me their troubles of conscience and mental problems, whether they were actually excommunicated because of their membership [in the Lodge].”

“And I told them with a clear conscience that they weren’t,” he stressed, claiming that around two million Catholics are Freemasons.

There is canonical argumentation for considering the Masonic oath to constitute a graver offense than an explicit act of heresy.

The former diplomat, now heading the Vatican’s dialogue with Islam, argues that previous popes’ condemnations of Freemasonry must be understood as “ultimately more politically than theologically motivated.”

“One has to differentiate between different types of Freemasons,” Weninger contends. He exonerates Lodges under the umbrella of the Grand Lodge of England as “regular Freemasons” who he says are neither political nor anti-Catholic.

Weninger admits that Italian and French Freemasons were often politically or even militarily combative against the Church but dismisses them as “pseudo-Freemasons.” This does not apply at all to English-oriented Freemasonry, which is the template for most Lodges in the world, he explains, noting that “regular Freemasonry” is “politically reserved” and “keeps tolerance high and also encourages its members to a certain spirituality that is absolutely compatible with Christianity.”

“For too long,” Weninger argues, “the Church did not differentiate between these ‘regular’ Freemasons and others, with sometimes sectarian or anti-Church tendencies.”

Weninger also claims the confusion over whether Catholic Freemasons are excommunicated stems from a contradiction between the 1983 Code of Canon Law — which, he contends, removed the condemnation of Freemasonry contained in the 1917 code — and a damning 1983 [declaration](#) from the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith (CDF).



Fr. Weninger (far right) with Semler (far left) at the book launch



Though the CDF declaration is not binding under Canon Law, it does have a certain theological weight, Weninger admits.

In the 1983 [Declaration on Masonic Association](#), personally authorized by Pope John Paul II, then-Cdl. Ratzinger unambiguously declared:

The Church's negative judgment in regard to Masonic association remains unchanged since their principles have always been considered irreconcilable with the doctrine of the Church and therefore membership in them remains forbidden. The faithful who enroll in Masonic associations are in a state of grave sin and may not receive Holy Communion.

Against Weninger's attempt to distinguish between "regular" and "irregular" Freemasons, the declaration also made explicit that "it is not within the competence of local ecclesiastical authorities to give a judgment on the nature of Masonic associations which would imply a derogation from what has been decided above."

Weninger also insists that the CDF condemnation of Freemasonry does not undo the dialogue begun in the late 1960s by the then archbishop of Vienna and president of the Secretariat for Non-Believers, Cdl. Franz König, who held talks with Austrian, German and Swiss Freemasons in the wake of the Second Vatican Council (1962–1965).

That dialogue culminated in the Lichtenau Declaration (1970), explains Weninger, which affirmed that Masonry was not a threat to the Church and recommended that all Church sanctions against Masons be lifted.

Even the basic initiation rituals of Masonry involve an at least tacit renunciation of the efficacy of one's baptism.

However, canonist Edward F. Condon in his 2015 doctoral dissertation from the School of Canon Law of the Catholic University of America, observes that "the perceived benignity of the Lodge is immaterial since it is ... the underlying philosophy of Masonry which renders membership toxic to the Faith."

Condon expresses shock at "the presumption of the authors" of the Lichtenau Declaration, which, he points out "did not address the central objection of the Church, through the centuries, to Masonry — that its very nature promoted religious indifferentism and a relativistic and secondary understanding of membership in the Church."

At the book launch, Austrian Grand Master Semler reiterated the Lichtenau Declaration point that Freemasonry is not a religion and has love of neighbor in common with the Church.

But according to Condon, "even the basic initiation rituals of Blue Lodge Masonry, common to every rite and country, involve an at least tacit renunciation of the efficacy of one's baptism through the assertion that one has been 'long walking in darkness' and now 'seeks the light only Masonry can bring.'"

The higher degrees of the Scottish Rite prevalent in American and Britain, "areas of supposedly benign Masonry, involve explicit denunciations of the pope and the Catholic Church," Condon reveals, elaborating:

Should the [Mason] Apprentice continue, as is expected, to the rank of Master Mason, he will still further learn, and himself affirm, that the Catholic Church is an agent of spiritual and temporal tyranny which he should fight against and consider himself to be acting as God's agent in opposing. He will undergo another blindfolded and half-naked ritual in which he will simulate his own death and resurrection, and he will be taught that it is Masonry which will teach him to interpret Sacred Scripture instead of the Church.

"There is solid canonical argumentation for considering the Masonic oath to constitute a graver offense than an explicit act of heresy," states Condon in *Heresy by Association: The Canonical Prohibition of Freemasonry in History and in the Current Law*.

Semler is nonetheless hoping for an official gesture of reconciliation towards the Freemasons on the part of the Vatican, which could include a meeting between Grand Masters and Pope Francis, or even between Grand Masters and the CDF prefect.

Weninger's book is based on his doctoral dissertation [Über die Aussöhnung von Katholischer Kirche und regulärer Freimaurerei](#) ("On the Reconciliation of the Catholic Church and Regular Freemasonry") completed at the Jesuit-run Pontifical Gregorian University in 2019.

## Lodge Affirms Altar Book Policy

At St. John's February stated communication, Worshipful Master Blair Neumann directed everyone's attention to the three Great Books upon the altar: The Torah, The Holy Bible, and The Quran. Jews, Christians, and Muslims all believe in the One True God. They just have different interpretations. These Books represent one



third of the three great Lights of Masonry, the HBS&Cs. The Master of the Lodge receives his inspiration from the Book of his faith, and a candidate will be sworn on the Book of *his* faith. The Book of the faith of the Master will be open at each stated communication during his term in the East.

### Visit Our District Brethren

District 5 Lodges	Next Meeting	Time
St. John's 9	Wednesday, March 18, 2020	7:30pm
Eureka 20	Monday, April 6, 2020	7:30pm
University 141	Monday, April 6, 2020	7:30pm
Daylight 232	Saturday, March 21, 2020	10am
Lafayette 241	Thursday, May 7, 2020	7pm
Queen Anne 242	Thursday, March 12, 2020	7:30pm
Esoterika 316	Tuesday, April 28, 2020	7:30pm