

Why Become a Mason, stay and advance to the York/Scottish Rite? And maybe become a Shrine Mason (Shiner)

Brother Gerard (Jerry) D. Mascola Jr.
MASTER MASON
ROYAL ARCH
SELECT MASTER
ORDER OF THE TEMPLE

First I would like to give you a definition of Freemasonry and what the Masons think of their Society in the 21st century. From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia

Freemasonry is a fraternal organization whose membership is held together by shared moral and metaphysical (the branch of philosophy concerned with explaining the nature of the world) ideals and—in most of its branches—by a constitutional declaration of belief in a Supreme Being. It is an esoteric (that which is specialized or advanced in nature, available only to a narrow circle of "enlightened", "initiated", or highly educated people.) society only in that certain aspects are private; Freemasons have stated that Freemasonry has, in the 21st century, become less a secret society and more of a "society with secrets."

In my reading, studies and searching the web I have come to the conclusions of the Freemasons.

1. **Freemasonry is a fraternity, not a religion.**
Good old meetings with good old boys (MEN)!!!
2. **Freemasonry is an open, not secretive, society.**
3. *It might have secret signs, handshakes and symbols. What fraternity does not?*
4. **Freemasonry is open to all men of good character who believe in God.**
Nowadays is that a bad thing?
5. **Freemasonry does not require improper oaths.**
Who does it hurt to keep things secret and have a little play on words?
6. **Freemasonry teaches individual improvement through study.**
Is it not good to improve ones self?
7. **Freemasonry teaches in steps.**
Is it not good to learn in steps? You cannot start High School can you?

In this paper I will focus on these statements

First why become a Master Mason?

There are as many reasons for becoming a mason, as there are men who have become masons. I joined at 45(that's right 45) because I wanted to see for myself what the mystery and hype was all about. I have seen the Shriner in parades through out my life. I have even seen some of my father's friends with funny hats and costumes. How hard

could it be to drive around in a little funny car or march in a parade for a good and just reward? Years ago I was told that if I wanted to be a member of the Ancient Arabic Order of the Nobles of the Mystic Shrine of North America (A.A.O.N.M.S), "Become a Shiner", and help out with all they do, you had to become a Master Mason and pick a path, York or Scottish rite. (That has changed as of July 3rd 2000 and I feel it is a BIG MISTAKE, as I will explain) The problem was as a Catholic I was forbidden¹ and I believe I still am forbidden by the Church to become a Mason.² (I also learned just recently that my father was a Mason. I am told by him that it was the thing to do in the 1960's). I questioned this and was told that all Masons did not believe in Jesus Christ and question him and his reason for being. I questioned this and was told that the Quaesitum est³ was the main reason for not becoming a Mason. Now I am an educated man and still had more questions than answers. If you are not a member and read all the reports from prior members then to become a Mason is not a good thing to do. **Secretive Society, Improper oaths, people who don't believe or mock JESUS CHRIST.** You are required by the Masons to declare a belief in a monotheistic God, or a belief in a Supreme Being; a generic description allowing the candidate to adhere to whichever deity or concept he holds to be appropriate (**No atheist can become a Mason**) where Judaism, Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism and Gentile (non-Jew) may together worship around its altars. Maybe that is why some people who don't believe in Supreme Being are upset. Also take note the discussion of politics and religion are forbidden in a Masonic Lodge so the candidate should not be placed in the situation of having to justify the interpretation. With this new information I asked myself, how the Masons and Shrinner can be a good society/person. What is even more puzzling is the standing Mason thing is to

2 BE 1 ASK 1

I am told as our Grand Lodge says, "Among millions of Masons, not one was lawfully invited to apply for membership."

Well if we hear and read only negative stories about the Masons, then why do we want to ask them about being one? A better question might be: why become a Mason so I may become a Shriner?

The first thing I had to do was to find out where the Masons had their Lodges and start the process. At the time there were so many other things going on in my life. The days went into months and the months went into years. Your writer finds himself at a loss for words here as well. I could not find one to ask. Not that I was not trying it just was not possible. (Amazingly, now that I am a Mason I meet them in all walks of life). I finally looked it up on the Internet and was directed to the State Lodge in Berlin. The State Lodge picked Brookfield as the Lodge for me to petition to because it was close to my place of residence and told them to contact me. The Brookfield lodge took awhile to get back to me and assign me a Mason petitioner. He asked me questions on why I wanted to become a Mason, whether I believe in GOD or not, how long I lived at the address, who my friends were and where I work. Then I signed the petition and gave it back to him so he could submit it to his lodge. A committee of three asked me the same questions. Then, I had to be recommended by the committee on their impression of me by "the interview".

(Note its main purpose as told by many authors on the subject is to assert that you are a man of good character and that you believe in God. Atheism and Freemasonry are not compatible). I was then put on a ballot to be unanimously voted in. The lodge secretary contacted me for dates when both the lodge and I could do the degree work.

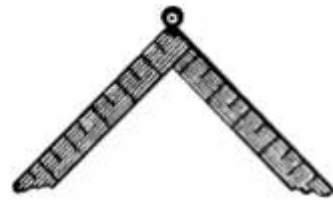
I started Graded School, which took from October 2003 (The Interview) to October 2004 (Raised as a Master Mason)



Entered Apprentice



Fellowcraft



Master Mason

- THE ENTERED APPRENTICE. This went through OK. I tried to remember all things but could just remember the key parts.
- THE FELLOW CRAFT. This also went well. This took about a month for I was busy with the National Guard. I was starting to see the Masons as a historical place. Telling about the craft and how a man should act and be.
- The MASTER MASON. This was long but went well. The first part was in darkness. I will try and remember this so when I take part in it, I will know what the candidate is thinking. Again telling about the craft and how a Mason Act and Be.

As I was initiated, passed and raised into the first three degrees of Freemasonry, I received the foundation stones of Masonry. This is the basis on which I may build on my Masonic education. This can be likened to the basic education received in grade school.

Therefore, the following sums this up.

In the Blue Lodge - the Master Mason has received the great lessons or "**4 cardinal virtues**", of Temperance, Fortitude, Prudence, and Justice. We are startled by the assertion of our Grand Master Solomon, King of Israel, "I fear the Master's Word is forever lost." To complete the symbolism of Freemasonry, the word must be recovered. Therefore, there is a case for the additional degrees.

Second why Stay?

I know that I have only been a Mason for a little over two years and that I have been thinking about it for over twenty, but I couldn't ever conceive of abandoning my membership in Freemasonry. Let me say this: In the first two years of being a member, as I work my way through the degrees, I have received the highest honor that could ever be bestowed upon a man, one more honorable than any other order that could be conferred - by king, prince, president, or anyone else. It was a moving experience, to be led around

the floor and instructed in the history of the Hebrew people and the oral history of freemasonry. Therefore, if I am going to stay I might as well complete my training.

Third why become a York Rite Mason?

It took a while for me to remember my training as a Master Mason. Look for more training and find the lost word. As I passed the State Lodge in Berlin (this is on my way home from work), I started to look for the lost word. I stopped in and started to ask about the path I should take. The answer was simple. As I am a Christian I should start the York Rite. Now again I am going against the Church. I truly believe that we should start being tolerant about other religions, people and States/Countries as well as the Masons. So far I have not been instructed to step, spit or do any sacrilege to the crucifix (cross), God or the American Flag. I have not been told or suggested to worship or pledge myself/wife or first born to Satan. --NO BIZZARE BLOOD RITUAL-- I have not been instructed in the art of terrorism or other dastardly deeds. All I have seen and gone through was good story telling of the Jewish/ Hebrew sufferings passed down and written by the early Masons.

As Dr. Norman Vincent Peale, (May 31, 1898 – December 24, 1993) was a Christian preacher and author (most notably of *The Power of Positive Thinking*) and a progenitor of the theory of "positive thinking". Peale was also confessed to be a Freemason (33°) once remarked: "Masonry encourages men to be good and that can never conflict with Christianity".

I have done some of my homework on what to expect as I advance. I have made it through the **ORDER OF THE TEMPLE** Degree. Some say that we should go through the degrees as an all day class. That is fine for one day seminars teaching you a refresher course in how to do something, but to do this on more than two degrees is not teaching and learning but getting people into the fraternity. Here they are looking for just numbers and not members? Also some of the degrees are a lot of work for sets, cast and crew. Therefore, I feel and believe that you should go through them in a timely fashion. How long is too long? Long enough to keep people interested, but not too long to have people fall asleep. Now a days if it takes two seconds its too long and they look elsewhere. I feel that one degree or possibly two degrees a day every month would be fine for the higher degrees. Considering the Blue Lodge Degrees, they should be one degree a day every month. Someone should be working with the candidate on his future within the lodge (Chairs, Committees, and other working bodies) and his further education within Masonry. I believe in mentoring. Today in a world where we do not have much time for these things, I believe that this would help Masonry membership grow. We show the candidate that there is more to masonry than a number. It is a face and a family. A place to go where lodge business is conducted; see your brothers in a gathering after the lodge meeting. It is a place to stimulate and learn the real meanings of Masonry, to stimulate interests that are necessary to achieve proficiency in Masonry. I believe that it is the responsibility of the Lodge, under the leadership of its Master, to help the newly made Brother when he needs it most. By doing this we teach improvement through study

In doing the degrees over months, we teach Freemasonry in steps.

A proposed timetable

January/February: Go over Candidates Blue Lodge petitions (this is with the understanding that they were given to the members during December Tree sales and other Holiday Money Making Drives) and interview/setup Blue Lodge Degree work. Also finish up York or Scottish Rites degrees. (Remember I believe that the York or Scottish Rites should be taken one or two degrees a month. This would work out to The York Rite (9/10) degrees taking from five to ten months and the Scottish Rite (29 degrees) from fifteen to twenty-nine months)

March/April: Election of Members for Chairs. Also Blue Lodge Degree works with Outgoing Chairs assisting incoming Chairs.

May/June: Finishing up Blue Lodge Degree Work. Preparing Master Masons for advancement to York or Scottish Rite.

July/August: Lodge is Dark.

September/October: Start with York or Scottish Rite Degrees

November/December: Finish up? The York or Scottish Degree works. Start the recruiting and Money Making again.

The York Rite of Freemasonry



The Capitular Degrees



The Cryptic Degrees



The Chivalric Orders

Next we get into the following degrees and this understanding is taking from the following text:

KNOW YOUR YORK RITE OF FREEMASONRY

"Experience Spiritual Growth"

by

Noel M. Smith, P.G., O.P.C.

Reese L. Harrison, Jr., K.G.C.Y., K.C.P.C.

High School (Junior High School)



Capitular Masonry - 4 Degrees

MARK MASTER:

Based on the parable in Matthew 20:1-19. Teaches how to receive wages as a Fellowcraft Mason, the importance of the mark we make in life, the nobility of labor, and that no one is superior because of time in service.

PAST MASTER:

Lessons taught in Psalm 25. Teaches that he who would rule others must first learn to rule himself, and how to govern and rule with moderation and decorum.

MOST EXCELLENT MASTER:

Lessons taught in 2 Chronicles 6 and 7, and 1 Kings 7 and 8. Recites the events surrounding the completion and dedication of King Solomon's Temple, and emphasizes the opportunity and obligation to disseminate light and knowledge to less informed brethren.

ROYAL ARCH:

Lessons taught in 2 Chronicles 36. It brings to light that for which the Mason has searched, for here we find that which was lost – the word, which you were given a substitute in the Master Mason's degree, is imparted to you. Its lessons are the essence of Masonic truth. The ceremonies, for the most part, are founded upon the return of the Israelites from captivity to rebuild a destroyed temple and you learn how many of the sacred objects of the Jewish people were discovered and restored. Presiding Officer of a constituent Royal Arch Chapter is the Most Excellent High Priest. Governing body is the Grand Royal Arch Chapter of Texas. Decoration is the Golden Keystone. The meeting room is referred to as a Tabernacle, and meetings are referred to as Convocations.

High School



Councils of Royal and Select Masters

Cryptic Masonry - 3 Degrees

ROYAL MASTER:

Lessons taught in 1 Kings 5, 6 and 7. Symbolically teaches that to all who diligently labor in the erection of a Spiritual Temple in this life, a reward is promised and they may at its completion, appear before the Supreme Master, and if found worthy, receive a knowledge of divine truth.

SELECT MASTER:

Lessons taught in Deuteronomy 31:24-26. The summit and perfection of Ancient Masonry, without it the history of the Royal Arch Degree can hardly be said to be complete. It rationally accounts for the concealment and preservation of those essentials of the craft which were brought to light at the erection of the second Temple and which laid concealed from the Masonic eye for 470 years. The degree teaches the virtues of silence and secrecy, which constitute the very essence of all Masonic character.

SUPER EXCELLENT MASTER:

Teaches fidelity to vows, the wisdom of worshipping God and the punishment for perjury. Here you are welded into a circle of friendship, and an unending chain of fraternal union, as symbolized in the Symbolic Blue Lodge by the point within the circle, which is displayed on our altars. Presiding Officer of a constituent Cryptic Council is the Thrice Illustrious Master. Governing body is the Grand Council of Royal and Select Masters of Texas. Decoration is the Royal Purple Service Award. The meeting room is referred to as a Secret Vault, and meetings are referred to as Assemblies.

College



ILLUSTRIOUS ORDER OF THE RED CROSS:

Lessons taught in Ezra 3, 4 and 6. Continues the story of the Royal Arch and deals with a period in Jewish history of the time of the return of the Jews from captivity and efforts to rebuild the temple of their God in Jerusalem and teaches the almighty force and importance of truth. As Judaism was a preparation for Christianity so this Order is a preparation for the Christian Order of the Temple.

MEDITERRANEAN PASS AND ORDER OF MALTA:

Shifting to the time of the crusades, admission to the introductory degree of Mediterranean Pass is sought so that a safe pilgrimage to the Holy Sepulcher might be undertaken, culminating in the enrollment of the suppliant in the Order of Malta, which teaches a soldier of the cross to keep his sword untarnished, and to wield it with virtue.

THE ORDER OF THE TEMPLE:

Binds the Christian virtues with their promise of immortality with the Word becoming flesh, which walked among us. A Knight Templar is a defender of the faith, enlisted under the banner of our Blessed Savior, the Prince of Peace. Presiding Officer of a constituent Commandery is the Eminent Commander. Governing bodies are the Grand Commandery, Knights Templar of Texas, and Grand Encampment of the USA. Decorations are Knight Grand Cross of the Temple (KGC) and Knight Commander of the Temple (KCT). Highest award is Knight Templar Cross of Honor (KTCH). The meeting room is referred to as an Asylum, and meetings are referred to as Conclaves.

With the Blue Lodge Degree, my equivalent to grade school, you had to study to advance to the next degree. With the next set of degrees you had to show up and learn.

I finally petitioned to advance to the next levels of Masonry. Which is Junior High School **Chapters of Royal Arch Masons** *Capitular Masonry - 4 Degrees* **April 2006 (petition) to October 2006** (conferred Royal Arch)



Mark Master Past Master (Virtual) Most Excellent Master The Royal Arch

MARK MASTER: Here, we are taught what workman's wages are and how to receive them. This degree is historically the second half of the Fellowcraft degree.

PAST MASTER (VIRTUAL): Here, we learn how to govern and rule a lodge with moderation and decorum

MOST EXCELLENT MASTER: Here, we learn of sacrifice, and why King Solomon, instead of David, his father, was chosen to build the temple. Here, temple, light and knowledge are passed to less informed brethren. In the second section of this degree, the completion and dedication of the temple is most beautifully portrayed

ROYAL ARCH: Here, receiving that for which we have so long wrought, the lost Master's Word rewards us. Without the Royal Arch, the Master Mason degree is like a promise unfulfilled.

As I have gone through these degrees there were **No Improper oaths, or any other improper conduct. Just some good clean story telling and knowledge passed along.**

After my equivalent to Junior High School I proceeded to High School Councils of **Royal and Select Masters** *Cryptic Masonry - 3 Degrees* November 21 2006 (Conferred) Only first two. (*Must wait for next Degree (this degree is an honorary one) Extra Credit)



Royal Master



Select Master

Super Excellent Master (Honorary)

ROYAL MASTER: Here, we learn that whatever may be the uncertainties of life; the reward is sure to the faithful Craftsman

SELECT MASTER: Here, we learn that the Word is to be preserved in the Secret Vault of the Soul. While in the Super Excellent Master degree, we find that catastrophe overtakes the unfaithful, whether he be prince or pauper, and that without fidelity, success is impossible

SUPER EXCELLENT MASTER: Because of scheduling conflicts I missed this step but here we find that catastrophe overtakes the unfaithful, whether he be prince or pauper that without fidelity, success is impossible. (I have read that this is a ceremony rather than a degree. In small States like Vermont it is offered as extra credit. This degree takes place once every so many years. Most recent was November 2006).⁴

Again as I have gone through these degrees there were **No Improper oaths, or any other improper conduct. Just some good clean story telling and knowledge passed along.**

As I stated before, I do not believe in receiving the degrees all in one day. There is too much to be taught and too much to learn. At times it is necessary to confer all of the degrees in one day. This is due to the following:

- Higher Degrees (Super Excellent Master) being offered only once every few years. Therefore you have to get into the cycle. (This is why a candidate should be scheduled in training)
- Degree being short (Time and Knowledge) example Past Master (Virtual) and Royal Master
- Degree Teams training and needing candidates. Why not go through/watch for relearning degree (one day seminars teaching you a refresher course in how to do something)
- Some degrees needing more than one candidate to perform (Royal Arch)
- Candidate not being around for a while, being deployed (Military Services) or working out of State and wants to be raised/conferred in certain Lodge by Dad/Grandfather or someone special to that person.

Now we come to the degrees, which are Christian in nature. The three Commandery Orders - known as Chivalric Masonry

After my equivalent to High School I proceeded to College **Commanderies of Knights Templar** Chivalric Masonry - 3 Orders Conferred December 2006 (Over two days that was two weeks apart)



**Illustrious Order of
The Red Cross**



Order of Malta



Order of the Temple

As I have gone through these degrees there were **No Improper oaths, or any other improper conduct. Just some good clean story telling and knowledge passed along.**

Regardless of religious beliefs, any Mason may apply for and receive the above 10 degrees (The ENTERED APPRENTICE through SUPER EXCELLENT MASTER). The next three Commandery Orders - known as Chivalric Masonry are Christian in nature and two of the three degrees teach about the New Testament. It is recommended that you are apart of the Christian faith, because of the affiliation with the Christian belief. Now I am not saying that a Non Christian Master Mason should not apply for these degrees, I am just going by what was stated along in the past. (Also, if you do not believe in the New Testament, why force something you don't believe in on yourself). What I believe is that all Mason Brothers should study both paths (York and Scottish Rite.) then select the one that is most rewarding to him. Most of the Master Masons I have had the pleasure of meeting and talking with have taken both Rites. Now a days you might find yourself lacking dues owed and time owed to the Mason.

ILLUSTRIOUS ORDER OF THE RED CROSS: Here, we learn the almighty force and importance of Truth

As stated in the above paragraph an important note must be brought out: Thus far, all Masonic degrees and orders, from the Entered Apprentice through the Red Cross, have been from the Old Testament of the Holy Bible. The next two - the Order of Malta, and the culminating Order of the Temple - being Christian, bring us to the New Testament.

The teaching of Christian applications of Masonic precepts begins with this Order.

MEDITERRANEAN PASS AND ORDER OF MALTA: Here, we represent a soldier of the Cross-, on our way to the holy land, who is taught to keep his sword untarnished and to wield it with virtue.

THE ORDER OF THE TEMPLE: Here we are admonished to live in accordance with the sublime precepts taught by our Lord, and as presented for our guidance in the four Gospels. The main focal point for all those Masons who desire to demonstrate their sincerity, devotion, and love for all mankind by their deeds as well as by their words.

No Christian Master Mason should be satisfied until he has discovered the true light so his own light may shine before both Masons and all of mankind. By his loyalty and devotion he dedicated himself to the service of this great Christian order, The York Rite of Freemasonry that has the respect and admiration of the public at large and of Masons everywhere.

In closing, the York rite does not mean you are elevated to a “higher rank”. It is an educational tool to help you realize the Fatherhood of God and Brotherhood of Man in your own life.

Now getting back to the Shriner and dropping the requirement of taking a path (York or Scottish Rite). I believe that removing the path requirement does the Masons, the other orders and the Shrinner no long-term justice. In today’s society it seems that in order to survive, you have to make changes. Sometimes these changes are good for all. Other times these changes are good for one order, chapter or club, but in the long run it tends to hurt the other order, chapter or club especially if was/is a feeder into the order, chapter or club. I believe that it is hurting the York/Scottish Rites and in the long-term will hurt the Masons. As the people in the Mason and the degrees are getting older, we must replace them with younger people. I know I outlined a plan of one to one and a half years from The Enter Apprentice to The Order of The Temple and almost three years to The Consistory (19°–32°) Northern Masonic Jurisdiction (NMJ) ⁵ or The Consistory (31°–32°) Southern Jurisdiction (SJ). ⁶ In addition of achieving 32° Scottish Rite Mason, there is more waiting to be honored with the “33rd Degree”. In the Northern Jurisdiction, there is only the 46-month requirement, and while there is a Masonic Service Award, it is not a required intermediate step towards the 33°. In the Southern Jurisdiction, a member who has been a 32° Scottish Rite Mason for 46 months or more is eligible to be elected to receive the "rank and decoration" of Knight Commander of the Court of Honour (K.C.C.H.) in recognition of outstanding service. After 46 months as a K.C.C.H. he is then eligible to be elected to the 33rd Degree. ⁷ Now back to the time line for a worse case Shrinner in three and a half years? Years ago I believe that people had the time for that. They looked forward to going to the meeting/degrees. They looked forward to the face-to-face socializing, serving the order and being rewarded for their service. Now a days with the less than two second societies it is hurting the Mason and the Orders. I believe if we start and attract the twenty-something year old and make it worthwhile for him to join; we will not have the problem of having the people who do the degree work

aging out. As I stated with the Super Excellent Master, years ago there were Masons who were able to do this degree on a regular bases. How that happens might be the bases for another paper?

**Ancient Arabic Order of the Nobles of the Mystic Shrine of North America
(A.A.O.N.M.S)⁸
Shrine Masons or Shiners**



Shrinedom has one objective and this is to support our Children's Hospitals, which provide quality medical treatment at NO CHARGE for any child to age 18

**This paper is respectfully submitted to The Vermont Lodge of Research, F. & A.M.
On
December 16, 2006**

**By
Brother Gerard (Jerry) D. Mascola Jr.**



Please note: Most of the material was from on line research and if I used a quote I hope that it was in the right reference. I do not want to plagiarize anyone's word or work. This is not the intent of this paper. The intent of this paper is to convey my thoughts (as I read and understood the subject material) on the subject matter and to educate the reader with confusing the poor candidate/Brother. I have also followed up with end notes where needed.

END NOTES:

1. Canon Law Regarding Freemasonry (1917-1983)

Code of Canon Law, Can 2335, forbids Catholics, under the penalty of excommunication, to enroll in Masonic or other similar associations.

2. Canon Law Regarding Freemasonry (1983-Now)

Code of Canon Law, Can. 1374 A person who joins an association which plots against the Church is to be punished with a just penalty; one who promotes or takes office in such an association is to be punished with an interdict. The faithful who enroll in Masonic associations are in a state of grave sin and may not receive Holy Communion.

3. In Can 2335 Masonry is mentioned but in Can 1374 is not. Since the new canon law did not specifically mention Masonry any issues or questions about Roman Catholics with Masonic associations was clarified by the document *Quaesitum est* (issued in 1983, Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger (who became Pope Benedict XVI in 2005) as the Prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, issued *Quaesitum est* (Declaration on Masonic Associations) which can be summarized by the statement that "*...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. (It is notable and that the Quaesitum est concentrated on the "naturalistic" beliefs of Freemasons rather than their anti-clerical activities)

4. As stated this degree is an honorary one and a member of the Council does not need it in order to hold office or to advance to the next degree ILLUSTRIOUS ORDER OF THE RED CROSS

A little history of different levels of degrees within the Scottish Rite. There are two Jurisdictions within the Scottish Rite.

5. Northern Masonic Jurisdiction (NMJ) formed in 1813 and oversees fifteen states, (which Vermont is one of them)

6. Southern Jurisdiction (SJ) founded in 1801 and oversees thirty-five states, districts and territories in the United States.

7. This data is from wikipedia, free encyclopedia definition of Scottish Rite.

8. The Order is not an appendant body of Masonry.