

Ashlar Lodge No. 98 Free and Accepted Masons

St. Augustine, FL

Chartered January 18, A.D. 1888, A.L. 5888

904-826-4086



November, 2022



STATED COMMUNICATIONS

Masonic Temple
4 Martin Luther King Blvd.
St. Augustine, FL
1ST & 3RD Thursdays
Meal – 6:30 p.m.
Stated Communication — 7:30 p.m.

DEGREE WORK AND PRACTICE

2nd & 4th Thursdays

CHARITY OF THE MONTH

St. Augustine Music Festival

From the East

**REMEMBER YOU'RE A
MASON**

When the pressures of
recession

Make us concentrate on
greed,

Take heed, a worthy Mason
Cares about another's
needs;

Don't let pressures of the
moment

Make your obligation sway,
Stop and help a fallen broth-

er

Or another by the way;

What you give is like a
bubble

Whenever you assist,
What it costs in time and
trouble

Is, soon after, never missed;

Brother, bear that obligation
You accepted on your knee,
It's in direct relation
To your own security;

Never hesitate, my brother
Square your actions now and
say,

"I'll remember I'm a Mason,
"And behave like that **today.**"

November 2022

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
		1	2 RAIN- BOW 7:00 PM	3 STAT- ED COMM 6:30 PM	4	5
6	7 OES	8 Shrine Club 7:00 pm	9 District Instruction Middleburg No. 107 6:30 pm	10 Lodge Instruc- tion TBD	11	12
13	14	15 York Rite Chap- ter/Council 6:30 pm	16 RAIN- BOW 7:00 PM	17 STAT- ED COMM 6:30 PM	18 GM Offi- cial Visit — Putnam Coun- ty Shrine Club 5:30 pm	19 Open Books Pine- land No. 86 9 am—noon
20	21 OES	22 York Rite Command- ery 6:30 pm	23 Dist. Assn. Hastings No. 183 6:30 pm	24 THANKS GIVING	25	26
27	28	29	30			

FROM THE WEST

Hello my Brothers,

I want to take this time to wish everyone a Happy Thanksgiving! As I reflect on what I am grateful for, I am grateful to live in a country where we are truly free! Free to express our opinions without worrying about the government killing or jailing us. Free to do our best and get ahead. Free to give back and help others. Free to be the best person we can be. Free to assemble as Masons and make a difference in the lives of our brothers, their families and our community.

In November, we also celebrate Veteran's Day. The freedoms we get to enjoy are largely due to the sacrifices made willingly by veterans. The expression "All gave some, some gave all" has always had an effect on me. To think about all the men and women who chose to go into harm's way to help us live the lives we live is amazing. You are all amazing and selfless in my opinion.

Thank you to all who served and those who currently serve our country and make it possible for us to be free and enjoy a beautiful life!

Fraternally,

Brother Tom Torretta
Senior Warden

December 2022

Sun Mon Tue Wed Thu Fri Sat

				1 STATED COMM 6:30 PM	2	3
4	5 OES	6	7 RAIN- BOW 7 pm	8 MM DEGREE 6:00 PM	9	10
11	12	13 SHRINE CLUB 7:00 pm	14 District Instruction Cabul No. 116 6:30 pm	15 STAT- ED COMM 6:30 PM	16	17
18	19 OES	20 YORK RITE CHAP- TER/ COUNCIL 6:30 PM	21 RAIN- BOW 7 pm Dist. Assn. Lake No. 72 6:30 pm	22 Lodge Instruc- tion TBA	23	24 Christ- mas Eve
25 Christ- mas Day	26	27 CLOSED INSTALLA- TION 6:00 PM	28	29	30	31 New Years Eve

FROM THE SOUTH

THIS IS WHAT WE DO

Freemasonry is about the journey of a man to become his true and best self. If a man uses the tools of Freemasonry, he will be dramatically changed and for the better. We are a band of brothers and also solitary practitioners of an ancient art. If used properly, it can greatly develop a man's confidence, his self-control, his kindness, his wisdom, his knowledge, the powers of his mind and other abilities. For himself and for the rest of humanity, Freemasonry can be the most important thing a man will ever do with his life.

Our fraternity is historic and has made a huge mark on history throughout the centuries. Our stated mission is to make good men better. Good men are something the human race will always need. As usual, they are in short supply. By focusing on the improvement of the most dangerous member of the human race, man, we make the world a better place for all. We unite men of all religions, political opinions and races as one brotherhood. That is a noble endeavor if there ever was one. Freemasonry is needed now more than ever. By preserving and transmitting our ancient and noble tradition, a Mason is doing his part to promote, build and maintain democracy, freedom, equality, human rights and civilization. The work is never done. This is what we do.

Borrowed.

Esotericism in Ritual

Part I

*When we consider a book, we mustn't ask ourselves what it says
but what it means,
a precept that the commentators on the holy books
very clearly had in mind.*

Umberto Eco in *The Name of the Rose*

Masonic ritual is strongly based in the Western philosophical esoteric tradition and the societies which utilized it which permeated Europe beginning in the sixteenth century and found their expression in the United States beginning in the eighteenth century. The symbols of the square, compasses, plumb, level, star, columns, and rose, coupled in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries with a renewed interest in astrology, enabled special forms of thought to be transmitted throughout a community. Symbols and reality were placed into a concordism which displayed Nature's harmony and aided in the acquisition of knowledge about each. The cosmos was perceived as a complex and multilayered structure in which "light" or some type of "hidden" knowledge, often described as fire, was obtainable through contemplation. To know the world and man's place in it—a sense of *gnosis*—led to a meditative world filled with symbolic representations of the triad of God, Humanity, and Nature.

Esotericism provides for the development and expansion of serendipitous thinking which enables the individual to imagine and meditate. The imagination facilitates the development of symbols and images into a fuller understanding of spiritual mysteries. It is a tool for knowledge of the world, the self, and the myth or legend. It reveals significations and serves to enlarge our world view. Visionary imagination as a philosophy took full form at the beginning of the seventeenth century concurrent with the rise of Freemasonry in Europe and was influenced directly by both Jewish and Christian esoteric traditions.

Esoteric tradition has traditionally embraced the concept of transmutation as an essential component. This aspect of the tradition is often misinterpreted to mean the physical change of a base element into a precious one. The true importance of esotericism as well as of initiation rituals, however, is representative of a transformation or passage from one place to another or one status to another, and not of one substance to another. A metamorphosis takes place through esoteric ritual which represents a renewal, a second chance, another opportunity, or a reaffirmation. It may also be viewed as an attempt to recover something that has been lost. A new path is taken and an old one is discarded. This mystical tradition includes purgation (divestment), illumination, and unification. This archetypical approach to tradition is most marked in "modern" times beginning in the late fifteenth century with the Renaissance and extended into the Enlightenment as well as into the modern world. It led to new academic explorations and influenced the study of comparative religion. It is soundly based in the concept that there is an overarching truth found in all religious and esoteric traditions. And this truth may be taught or transmitted because the knowledge is valid and the initiation is a master to disciple process. A person cannot initiate himself, the mysteries are passed, not created piecemeal.

The esoteric tradition of transmutation is often paralleled with that of the medieval alchemist in that something of a lesser value is to be transformed into something of a higher value. Jungian psychology would view this as the movement from the state of being will-less to that of being self-actualized. Maslow may have interpreted it as the movement through his hierarchy. Philosophically, this process is related directly to man becoming more in tune with his God through correct moral action and a sound system of moral instruction. The forms of symbolism used in this tradition are well known; it is the esoteric interoperation that proves difficult to understand.

In esotericism, *mythos* and *logos* meet. The myth or legend is to be contemplated and explored for its meaning with the natural relationship between God, man, and the universe being explained. The narrative, rich with symbols but not to be accepted as literal fact, expresses the splendor of the work and human life therein finds its meaning. English Freemasonry and its derivative as practiced in the United States is less esoteric than other mystery traditions yet both maintain a strong sense of symbolism and esoteric communication. The higher degrees in Freemasonry, especially those found in the Scottish Rite (or in the United Kingdom, the Rose Croix) which are not of English origin, are the most esoteric. The thirty-three degrees of the Scottish Rite build on the moral and philosophical teachings of Symbolic Lodge Freemasonry. They appear to have originated at some point prior to 1733 and there is a specific reference in the Copiale cipher of the mid-1730s to "the rank of a Scottish master" as being an "entirely new invention." The other large appendant Masonic body is the York Rite which includes Royal Arch Masons, Council of Royal and Select Masters or Cryptic Masons, and the Commandery of the Knights Templar. This separate body operates with some autonomy and is based on the Legend of York. Three of the degrees in this body are based on what was perceived as the Templar Code and is open only to Christian Masons. Within

Symbolic Lodge Freemasonry, there appears to have been a movement referred to by some as Strict Observance based on the Templar Code, but, by the beginning of the nineteenth century, many Symbolic Lodge Freemasons had abandoned the flirtation with the Templars and moved toward the more universal acceptance Fraternity common in the modern world.

As the world moved into the eighteenth century and Western Christian philosophy dominated critical thinking, Masonic ceremonies and rituals emphasized even more the acquisition of knowledge (light) and a legitimate transformation within the individual. Serious reflection was undertaken on the great monotheisms of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, and links between the three were explored and elaborated upon. The theological and philosophical as well as dramatic writings of Gotthold Ephraim Lessing serve to illuminate this movement. And while the landscape became filled with allusions and direct references to the occult, and both publishing and, in the twentieth century, electronic media, were filled with supposed metaphysical, religious, and fraternal mysteries more commonly and sensationally called “secrets,” the sound esoteric tradition of past generations prevailed among the more enlightened and dedicated members of the Craft.

The twentieth century Western esoteric tradition grew further by embracing scholarly historians of the phenomenon. Historians, both specialists and generalists, began to research, write, and publish their findings and conclusions. They sought to give status to their discipline and gain a more public understanding of their much-maligned field. Freemasons were often confronted with the historical charge that their “speculative” nature as expressed in constitutions published after 1717 tended to separate them from the traditional initiatory and symbolic esoteric world with its firm foundation in a belief in Deity. This is, in fact, untrue and, as demonstrated in the first constitutions and all that followed, there is in the Fraternity an inseparable relationship between God and man. The Deity provides the light, not man. And though several Christian churches, notably Catholicism, some Pentecostal groups, and, even, some more main-line denominations, have expressed the belief that esoteric Freemasonry is not compatible with Christian faith, this represents a gross misunderstanding of the Fraternity’s principles and is possibly based on some Christian theologians objecting to the link between faith and knowledge thus expressing the unjustified concern that the Masonic quest for “light” in some way interferes with a pure expression of faith. Knowledge seeks to question, explain, and grasp reality fully—internal and external. Knowledge is what Einstein would call the soup, not the flavor. It is that which enables us to rediscover the relationship between man and his Creator.

The author of “The Revelation of Peter” found in *The Nag Hammadi Scriptures* writes: “Some who do not understand the mysteries and speak of what they do not understand will boast that the mystery of truth is theirs alone.” The same can be said of modern attempts to interpret esoteric writings or to write esoterically. Much of early Christian esoteric writing may be found in the various Gnostic gospels and through the writings of those who refuted Gnosticism such as Irenaeus. The basic concept of this form of teaching is that its proponents possessed some special knowledge and that full understanding of the mystery—light or *gnosis*--led to full self-knowledge and thus salvation. Gnosticism was not without, it was within. It was, as is found in the canonical “Gospel of John”, *the word*. It was this knowledge which would free mankind from earthly bondage and it is directly related to spiritual rather than material things. This special knowledge is accessible but often misperceived. It requires dedication, striving, clear-thinking, and initiation into the mystery to understand. Knowledge available in the “real” world is but a dim reflection or, even, imitation, *gnosis*. Therefore, this special knowledge, open to only a few dedicated, initiated, highly motivated individuals is transmitted esoterically so as not to confuse or lead astray the masses. It is knowledge for leaders, not followers. It is the key, not the lock or even the door.

The principle issue with such *gnosis* was the tendency of those who presumed themselves to be in possession of it to abandon the real world and devalue the body. To some degree the monastic tradition, of which the Knights Templar were a part, became part of this quest for light. In the greater scheme of things, however, such special knowledge, such understanding of the mysteries of life are most useful not in an isolated mountain-top retreat secluded from all humanity, but within the world in which we all live. The key, then, is to be able to interpret the esoteric teachings and bring them into a real-world application.

Esotericism is a form of indirect communication which utilizes symbols and is neither unorthodox nor relegated to any period, century, civilization, or organization. “The world,” says Sherlock Holmes in *The Hound of the Baskervilles*, “is full of obvious things which nobody by any chance ever observes.” Ancient philosophers tended to embrace double doctrines: external or exoteric and internal or esoteric; one profane, the other mysterious. Esoteric knowledge was considered appropriate only for thoughtful seekers of knowledge and truth. Esoteric writing preserved this special brand of knowledge for a hand-picked audience which had “wits of such sharpness as can pierce the veil.” It was an internal restraint expressed externally created to avoid political and religious persecution for, as Thomas Aquinas noted in 1258, “certain things can be explained in private which we should keep silent about in public.” Maimonides echoes Aquinas a century later writing that “these matters [theology] are only for a few solitary individuals of a very special sort.” In the tenth-century Abu Nasor al-Farabi wrote of Plato that “he followed the practice of using symbols, riddles, obscurity, and difficulty, so that science would not fall into the hands of

one who does not know its worth or who use it improperly.” Even John Adams, when serving as vice president of the United States, utilized a form of esoteric communication when writing to his two sons about his estranged friend, Thomas Jefferson in his references to Egeria and Numa of Roman antiquity.

Modern Freemasonry is an intensely complex and contradictory phenomenon which has meant different things at different times in different places and been thus practiced. Its members have included numerous serious thinkers, scientists, politicians, academics, and public leaders who used the Fraternity’s principles and teachings to advance progressive ideas and to counterpoise civil, religious, and academic institutions. Masonic Lodges served the spread of enlightened thinking in a much more theologically conservative age and facilitated the development of social order out of the chaos that plagued Europe from the sixteenth through the late eighteenth centuries. And when it came to the New World, especially that portion which would become the United States, a number of that nation’s founders joined the Fraternity and, according to Reinhart Koselleck, there were two social structures which left a “decisive imprint” on the Age of Enlightenment, “the Republic of Letters and the Masonic Lodge.” Esoteric writing and the practice of transmitting knowledge through esoteric means was formalized in these Lodges and resulted in an expansion of the Enlightenment through the vast literature associated with the organization which made common use of pseudonyms and anonymity to explain, illustrate, and shed light upon the character of this “new” philosophy while protecting the authors from public and political retribution. The very creation of modern open society required those changes both in Europe and North America, and their success depended upon esoteric secrecy.

LODGE OFFICERS 2022

Worshipful Master	James Carrick	904-501-4348
Senior Warden	Thomas Torretta	602-881-3206
Junior Warden	Terrell Jones	904-669-5249
Secretary	Troy Usina	904-451-5283
Treasurer	Oscar Patterson III	904-955-9175
Senior Deacon	George Maulsby	703-956-0228
Junior Deacon	Mark Williams	904-669-9694
Chaplain	Robert Harry, Jr.	904-806-1255

FRATERNAL NOTICES AND DATES

O.E.S. Chapter #12.....1st & 3rd
Mondays
Rainbow Assembly #42.....1st & 3rd
Wednesdays
York Rite Bodies.....3rd & 4th
Tuesdays

**OTHER 11th MASONIC
DISTRICT LODGES**

Palatka No. 34
Palatka—2nd & 4th Mondays

Lake No. 72
Crescent City—1st & 3rd Mondays

Pineland No. 86
Peniel—1st & 3rd Thursdays

Melrose No 89
Keystone Heights—2nd & 4th Tuesdays

Middleburg No. 107
Middleburg—1st & 3rd Tuesdays

Cabul No. 116
Green Cove Springs—2nd & 4th Thursdays

Hastings No. 183
Hastings—2nd & 4th Tuesdays

Bunnell No. 200
Bunnell—1st and 3rd Tuesdays