

MASONIC ALLEGIANCE TO OUR FLAG

By Right Worshipful Lonnie L. Godfrey

The very beginnings of American patriotism are intertwined with Freemasonry. The precepts and teachings of Freemasonry contributed to the birth of this great country, and there are many noted Freemasons who played vital roles in shaping America into what it is today.

These men were not only our founding fathers, but were also and continue to be presidents, congressmen, representatives, governors, commissioners, mayors, and council members. They were and are Congressional Medal of Honor holders, Generals, Admirals, unit commanders, line officers, and countless enlisted men. They are religious leaders, civil-rights leaders, astronauts, inventors, industrialists, poets, authors, and entertainers. They have contributed to what we enjoy today as the personal freedom of all American citizens. Their dedication to the principles of freedom and justice has contributed to the blessings and rights we enjoy today as granted by the Great Architect of the Universe.

Yet, in a Masonic Lodge Room filled with symbolism and allegory, what connection can we find between our patriotic

feelings and the Masonic influence of our country's leaders, past and present?

In every just and legally constituted Lodge in the United States stands an American Flag. We pledge allegiance to it and at times sing the National Anthem.

That pledge and anthem came from Freemasons. The inspiration, lyrics, and tunes were all from Freemasons.

If we really listen to the words of the pledge and of our national anthem, we would realize the high price that has been paid over the years to retain our right to say it, and to appreciate our manifold blessings that are symbolized by our flag.

It may be interesting to hear a story about the pledge told by entertainer and Brother Red Skelton. He relates a story in which a school teacher was trying to help students understand the importance and magnitude of the words used in this short pledge. Here is how it was explained.

“I”

Me, an individual, a committee of one.

“Pledge”

Dedicate all my worldly goods to give without self pity.

“Allegiance”

My love and my devotion.

“To the Flag”

Our standard, Old Glory, a symbol of freedom. Wherever she waves, there's respect because your loyalty has given her a dignity that shouts 'freedom is everybody's job' !

“of the United”

That means that we have all come together.

“States”

Individual communities that have united into 50 great states. Fifty individual communities with pride and dignity and purpose; all divided with imaginary boundaries, yet united to a common purpose, and that's love for country.

“Of America, And to the Republic”

A state in which sovereign power is invested in representatives chosen by the people to govern. And government is the people and it's from the people to the leaders, not from the leaders to the people.

“For Which It stands, One Nation”

meaning – so blessed by God.

“Indivisible”

Incapable of being divided.

“With Liberty”

Which is freedom – the right of power to live one’s own life without threats, fear, or some sort of retaliation.

“And Justice”

The principle or quality of dealing fairly with others.

“For All”

Which means, boys and girls, it’s as much your country as it is mine.

Two words were added to the pledge since the time of this lesson, as recalled by Red Skelton. In 1954, the words “under God” were added after the words “one nation.” Of course, Freemasonry, requires a belief in God, and as Freemasons, we acknowledge our trust in the Supreme Architect of the Universe.

So it is interesting to note that the United States Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit upheld, on March 11, 2010, the words "under God" in the Pledge of Allegiance. It ruled that the words were of a "ceremonial and patriotic nature" and did not constitute an establishment of religion.

Of course, what is particularly interesting about Freemasonry is how it handles what at first blush might seem to be contradictory ideas. There is the universality of Freemasonry, which is welcoming to men of every nationality, but we still are loyal citizens of the country in which we live, and both value and promote patriotism. Similarly, while the universality of Freemasonry welcomes and joins together men of different creeds, we are respectful of religion and urge our members to be active and faithful members of their faith. This is why our Fraternity has such an important role to play in a world that is so divided and so filled with hatred and strife. Freemasonry is and always has been a force for good, not only making good men better, but also attempting to make our communities and our world a better place for us all.