

It is my solemn obligation to first, give honor to the Most High God, the Great “I AM”, the Great Grand Master of the Universe, who is the divine leader of our lives. To our Past National Grand Masters whose giant foot steps I humbly walk in, to my National Cabinet, to all Grand Masters, to our National Department Heads, to all of my Sisters who are “fairest among thousands, all together lovely”, to all of my Brothers and to all of my Comrades, good morning! Brothers and Sisters, if I said it a thousand times, it would never be enough to say how grateful I am that you to put aside your personal business and pleasures, to be here with me. Your support of our National Grand Lodge will never be forgotten. To that end, on behalf of my National Cabinet and myself, welcome to the great state of Georgia! Grand Master Kenneth Campfield and his

various committees, have been hard at work to insure that our week here will be a memorable one. In October 2006, I met with Grand Master Campfield and his state coordinators, Brother Clarence Hayes and Sister Fran Pierce. They assured me that our traditions would be honored and we would be pleasantly surprised as they re-introduced the National Compact to the unsurpassed hospitality that the “Peach State” is known for across this great country! I take this time to thank the delegation from Georgia for their preparations and I am looking forward to an outstanding National Session.

Well Sisters and Brothers, “As the Sun Sets in the West to close the Day”, I too, begin my decent as your National Grand Master. However, I pledge to you, that I will not be a proverbial “lame duck” and I will

continue to work as your Servant with the same passion and excitement that I have displayed over the last five years. It is my duty to insure that my successor finds our sacred society, healthy and with the ability to continue moving constantly forward, no matter the obstacles, be they real or perceived.

Brothers and Sisters I am glad to report that we can add another growth state to our National Jurisdiction. The state of Texas is building rapidly. Under the direction of our National Grand Worthy Matron, Sister Mattie Baker with the able assistance of Sister Vester Cain, our chapters are growing and moving steadily in the direction of erecting a Grand Chapter. On the male side, while progress has not been as dramatic, we now have three lodges! Grand Masters Cedric Lewis,

Jerome Rapley and Christopher Graham have worked closely with our Brothers in Texas and in the near future, I expect that we will be erecting a Grand Lodge! Will the Brothers and Sisters that I just mentioned along with the delegation from Texas please stand. Will you please give them a round of applause! Thank you!

Brothers and Sisters, I have always believed that the official opening of our National Session should always accentuate the positive aspects of our Masonic Body.

After all, we didn't travel from virtually all sections of this country to have a "pity party" and listen to the Nay Sayers, who lead the "whoa is me crowd". So, Brothers and Sisters, we will not go down that path this morning either! However, please indulge me for just a few

minutes, because this morning, I have a couple of topics that I must share with you.

More times than not, the enemies of our sacred society have come from among us. Yes, they pledge their unwavering support, but at the end of the day, they conceal themselves in the shadows so that their true motives remain hidden from us. Ultimately, their mission is very simple; “If you don’t do things my way, or if I don’t like your method of leadership, I will destroy your program at all costs”. Brothers and Sisters, it is of the utmost importance that we protect our organization, its name, documents and materials from renegade members and ex-members. In one of our jurisdictions, we have been in a costly legal battle for the better part of two years. Without going into

specifics, two things would have prevented this horrible tragedy; 1) Accurate and precise minutes of our proceedings and 2) the protection of this organization's name: Free and Accepted Ancient York Masons. To that end, your National Grand Lodge has taken the necessary steps required to trademark its name and I strongly suggest, that each National Department working under the jurisdiction of the Most Worshipful National Grand Lodge do the same. If you need assistance, or have questions, please ask my National Legal Advisor, Brother Anthony Williams. We cannot afford any longer to allow men and women to leave our sacred society with our name and belongings.

Now, Brothers and Sister; to the subject of minutes: Grand Masters and National Department Heads were

directed by me to provide the National Grand Lodge with a copy of their annual minutes. To those who have complied, I say thank you! To those who have not complied, I consider it an act of insubordination. My directive was given because we must start anew to preserve the history and name of our organization. I will say again, we have an obligation to leave those who follow us, an accurate depiction of who we were and what we accomplished. Brothers and Sisters, I can assure you if we don't tell our story, others will, and if we are concerned about what is written, can we blame anyone but ourselves?

Another topic that is dear to my heart takes me to 1st Corinthians, 13th Chapter, where the following is written: "Though I speak with the tongues of men and

of Angels and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal. And though I have the gift of prophesy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge, and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and I have not charity, I am nothing". Sisters and Brothers, I make reference to this biblical declaration as a personal plea to all of us to continue our support of the Jefferson D. Tufts, Sr. Scholarship Fund. I trust that we all know that 1st Corinthians are scriptures about love. However, I will submit that Love and Charity are synonymous and a loving spirit will allow us to be charitable givers! There are deserving young men and women who need our financial support. If you have not made a contribution, please accept this as a personal invitation to continue our efforts to honor a true giant of York Masonry.

Another topic that I have pondered since we last convened, is the familiar phrase that I have heard for twenty-seven years: “I love this organization”! My challenge to every Sister and Brother is simple and straightforward; Let us make certain that our actions equal our words. If we love this organization, let us focus more of our time on nurturing our memberships, versus fines. If we love this organization, let us focus our efforts on growing our memberships, versus suspensions, expulsions and other Masonic punishments unless they are absolutely warranted. If we love this organization, do not accept an office that you are not capable of performing. If you love this organization, and you desire to lead us, make absolutely certain that you have been a great follower. Brothers and Sisters,

when a leader exercises authority, he or she must do it with wisdom and more importantly with caution. If you love this organization, be prepared to serve us with unconditional passion.

Before closing, allow me again to salute my National Cabinet and our National Department Heads. These wonderful Brothers and Sisters have demonstrated to me, that they understand, if meaningful goals of substance are to be accomplished, it takes a team! In the book of Numbers it is written; “I am not able to bear all of these people alone, because the burden is too heavy for me”. Pastor John C. Maxwell writes that God’s answer to Moses’ cry for help, was for Moses to share the responsibilities of leadership with a select group.

There isn’t much written about the seventy elders that

Moses called to aid him. In fact, they are only mentioned twice in the Old Testament: in Numbers and in Exodus. When the elders were called the second time, God expanded their role. This time, they were called to participate – thus revealing something remarkable about how God works with leaders. God places Moses' spirit upon the elders, which enabled them to assist Moses in bearing the burdens of the people. Brothers and Sisters, I shared with you in California in 2003, that being National Grand Master is a daunting task. My National Cabinet and our National Department Heads have served as my symbolic elders and collectively they have made being National Grand Master one of the greatest experiences of my life! Please give them a round of applause!

Thus brothers and Sisters, I will end as I began; “As the Sun sets in the West to close the day”, I too begin my decent, as your National Grand Master. I will again leave us with some Masonic Food for thought:

something that equalizes all of God’s children in the posture we should take when offering up our daily devotions. Brothers and Sisters, it is by this action, along with praise to Almighty God and the way we treat one another that will determine our admission into the Promised Land. Brothers, as an Entered Apprentice, we took an oath on our left knee which was symbolic of the weak position we were in as novices to this Sacred Society; As Fellow Crafts we took our oaths on our right knee which was symbolic of our strength in Manhood; but it was not until we were raised from a dead level to an upright perpendicular on the square to

the sublime degree of a Master Mason, that we learned to subdue ourselves on both knees. Brothers, it is in this posture that the Most High God receives the prayers of His people; this posture is one of reverence and exaltation to the Great Grand Master of the Universe; this posture displays three squares before the Most High God, which can also be tied to the Triple Tau.

National High Priest, I believe some of us know what I am talking about!!! It is in this posture that we are taught to remember one another during our daily devotions to God, and finally, in this posture that we create a foundation strong enough to truly help one another.

Brothers and Sisters, let us be reminded to continue humbling ourselves before the Creator and just as importantly, praying for each other to assist in furthering our Noble and Glorious Work!!!

**As always, Execution, Not Excuses. Peace be with you,
and thank God for allowing us to assemble again!**

**Brothers, Sisters and Comrades, I Felton N. Ferguson,
Most Worshipful National Grand Master of the Most
Worshipful National Grand Lodge of Free and
Accepted Ancient York Masons, Prince Hall Origin –
National Compact, in and for these United States, on
the continent of North America, declare this 149th
Grand Masters Council and National Department
Heads Workshop open for the dispatch of business.
Take timely notice and govern yourselves accordingly!
This I declare once, this I declare twice and this I
declare a third and final time.**