

## **MASONIC ETIQUETTE AND PROTOCOL**

1. One of the peculiarities of the Masonic Fraternity is that a man attends a Lodge meeting or a Masonic gathering not as a private individual, but as a Mason. He is therefore to be addressed by his surname, i.e., "Brother Smith" rather than "Brother Bill."
2. A Mason's profane status or title should be of no concern in a Masonic Lodge. His Masonic status or titles are the governing criteria for his recognition in the Lodge.
3. Masonic protocol requires that all inter-Jurisdictional correspondence must take place between the respective offices of the Grand Secretaries unless written permission has been received in advance for direct correspondence to occur. This applies to correspondence to/from Officers of Lodges and/or Grand Lodges. The pervasive and easy use of e-mail does not eliminate the need to follow Masonic protocol. When in doubt, contact the Grand Secretary's Office for guidance.
4. The responsibility of every Mason is to maintain a respectful attitude toward the Grand Master, not necessarily for the sake of the man in the high office, but for the maintenance of the supreme importance of the office, The Grand Master is therefore never to be addressed at any Masonic gathering by his first name, no matter how close an individual may feel toward him. His proper address is "Most Worshipful" and when being formally received in a Lodge, he is accorded his full title, "Most Worshipful (*full name*), Grand Master of Masons in Texas"

5. The Worshipful Master must be shown the same respect and courtesy we show the Grand Master. He should be addressed at all times as "Worshipful".

6. Prayers at Lodge functions should be in keeping with Masonic teachings. They should never be an expression of particular sectarian views or dogmatic creeds. It is a matter of courtesy and respect that all prayers, speeches and discussions at Masonic affairs avoid sectarian, controversial or political tones.

7. When the Grand Master visits a Lodge, nothing is supposed to follow his remarks except the closing. However, the Grand Master may, when the occasion is appropriate, waive the otherwise mandatory requirements.

8. When wishing to speak in Lodge, a Brother should rise and wait to be recognized by the Master. Then, address the lodge in the following manner: Worshipful Master Wardens and Brethren, then begin to speak. All remarks should be directed to the East. If a Brother wishes to speak to another Brother directly, ask permission from the East first. Rising to speak should also be practiced when making or seconding motions.

9. The Ballot is secret, sacred, and inviolate. When a Ballot is taken the act is momentous for the Candidate and significant for the Lodge. It is an official act by each member in turn and by the Lodge as a legal body. The Ballot has legal sanction and must be conducted according to solemn rules. It is etiquette for the Lodge Room to be in complete silence, without whispering, or discussion of the Candidate while waiting to cast your Ballot or any information about how a member has voted. The officers should remain at their stations and places in silence and dignity. Such of them as participate in spreading, inspecting, and declaring it,

should act in strict decorum. The period of etiquette and decorum doesn't end when you've cast your vote. It includes the declaration of the results by the Master, the restoration of the Ballot Box, and the return of the participating officers to their places.

10. A District Deputy Grand Master on an official visit is received with an etiquette which reflects the fact that he is the personal representative of the Grand Master. When he is present in the Lodge room it is as if the Grand Master was there in person. Proper deference to the DDGM includes allowing him the protocol of "final comment". No one should rise to speak on any issue after the DDGM has completed his prepared remarks. Worshipful Masters are reminded to encourage their members to make announcements from the sidelines before the DDGM speaks.

11. An office has a station or place of its own in the Lodge, with duties, responsibilities, and dignities inherent in it. The etiquette and protocol accorded to an officer represent the properties of the office, and is not directed to the officer personally.

12. A sloppy manner of addressing the Lodge and a failure to give proper respect to the officers reflects a lack of understanding of Masonic protocol. If a Master expects of every member, and of every other officer, a faithful rendering of the form of etiquette that is to be accorded to his office, it will create a more faithful observance of the form at every other station or place.

13. The manner in which an examination is to be conducted is the focus of etiquette and protocol. The Examining Committee is appointed by the Worshipful Master and usually the Senior Deacon is the Chairman along with two other well qualified

Brethren. They must keep in mind that their only purpose is to satisfy themselves that the visitor is, or is not, a Master Mason in good standing from a Regular Lodge recognized by The Grand Lodge of Texas. The Tiler's Oath should be used as part of the examination. If the Examining Committee has the duty to satisfy itself that a visitor is a Master Mason in good standing in a Regular Lodge, the visitor also has a right to make sure that the Lodge he comes to visit is itself a Regular Lodge. He may, therefore, ask to see its Charter. Texas Masons, at the discretion of the Worshipful Master, may be admitted without examination if they produce a current dues card and photo identification as per Article 380.

14. In many societies an office holder reverts to the same status at the end of his term which he had before. The rule in Masonry is different. A Lodge member who has held the highest office in the Lodge carries the title of "Past Master." Past Masters have a standing in Masonic Law; certain duties are theirs for life. They are members of the Grand lodge and have a vote in its processes. They are entitled to a deference which belongs to their position; in protocol they are entitled to a specific order of lineal precedence. On their own part, Past Masters are bound to the same rules of etiquette and respect that is observed toward the Worshipful Master by all other members of the Lodge.

15. The preparation room is a sanctuary for the Candidate and the officers preparing him. It is necessary that it be closed-in and that its privacy is strictly preserved. It is a breach of good manners for the candidate to be under view or made the subject of unkind remarks. The officers preparing him are to act with dignity and are not to discuss with him anything in the Degree he

is being prepared for other than to remind him that the Degree is serious and no frivolity will take place.

16. The etiquette governing the conferral of Degrees is strict. There shall be no talking, whispering, or laughing, or any disturbances during the Degree work. It is not an occasion for mirth. There should be no needless moving about. The officers participating shall never step out of their roles, to hold conversations, to make private remarks, to indulge in pantomime, or to make comments about the candidate. Nothing outside the Work in our Ritual shall be substituted for or added to any portion of it. Detailed arrangements are always completed before the Degrees begin and not improvised while the Degree is in progress. Only a prompter designated by the Worshipful Master should act in such a capacity. Brothers on the sidelines should remain quiet and not offer any prompting or assistance to the degree team.

17. The Worshipful Master is the officer whose first duty it is to see that nothing is ever allowed to harm the Lodge which is entrusted to his care. For that reason he cannot tolerate a careless practice of etiquette. If, upon coming to the East, a Master finds that indifference to, or a casual practice of etiquette has crept into the Lodge he should find an early opportunity to address the subject with his officers and members. The District Deputy Grand Master may consult and advise concerning a Lodge's practice of etiquette, but they cannot interfere. The Worshipful Master has full responsibility for Lodge etiquette, as he has total charge of all things in the Lodge.

18. Although as Masons we believe that it is the internal and not the external that makes a man a Mason, there remains the issue

of attire that is fitting of the occasion, based upon tradition and the use of appropriate clothing as a way of showing respect, not only respect to the officers, but to the Craft, and to the profane that observe us as we gather as Masons. In Texas, unlike other Grand Jurisdictions, we seldom wear formal attire to Lodge meetings, but shorts, flip flops, and bib overalls are a far cry from the level of respect that is due our fraternity, especially if we expect others to respect and admire us.