



## UGLE Oration

Enjoy!

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An exhortation to enjoy our Freemasonry.

### **Summary**

Enjoy Freemasonry, have fun, be happy and communicate happiness and you will shed much needed light and luster on a darkened world.

### **Keywords**

Freemasonry, Enjoyment, Fun

## Enjoy!

One of the most senior of the Rulers of the Craft has remarked, on many occasions, that Freemasonry should be fun. You will also, in all probability, have been informed that our Masonic Craft is extremely serious, providing a spiritual pathway, through symbolism, to an understanding of the meaning of life and to self-knowledge. At first view you may feel that having fun and pursuing a spiritual journey towards enlightenment are incompatible, but this is far from being so.

In her book *Dancing in the Streets: A History of Collective Joy*, Barbara Ehrenreich describes the great wave of depression that settled on Europe in the early 17th century. She provides evidence that this depression never really lifted, and many commentators have remarked what a sad and lonely country England is at the present time. The World Health Organization rates depression as the fifth most prevalent cause of disability and death worldwide, exceeding even heart disease.

Robert Burton, in his *The Anatomy of Melancholy* published in 1621, ascribed the prevalence of depression to the decline, in part due to suppression by puritanical forms of religion, of communal festivities. It was, for example, such attitudes that brought the mediaeval mystery plays to an end. Little wonder that the poet R.S. Thomas described puritanism as the '*the adroit castrator of art; the bitter negation of song and dance and the heart's innocent joy*'.

Dismissing the killjoy puritans, Robert Burton urged people to '*... use plays, jests, merry company, a cup of good drink now and then, hear music and have such companions with whom they are especially delighted ... freely feast, sing and dance, have their puppet-plays, hobby-horses, tabers, crowds, bagpipes ... play at ball, and barley-breaks, and what sports and recreations they like best*'. He added that '*... none shall be over-tired, but have their set times of recreations and holiday, to indulge their humour, feasts and merry meetings*'.

It was not profound reasoning that drove the philosopher Nietzsche to atheism but rather the joylessness of so many of the so-called religious people that he encountered. He thus affirmed that what for him was so decisive in his loss of faith was not reason, but taste. Nietzsche was a depressed and self-tormented man with a dread of '*the horror of individual existence*' and, though sadly denying them to himself, he realised the importance of communal rituals through which, in his words '*each individual becomes not only reconciled to his fellow but actually at one with him*'. As time passes, and you participate in our ceremonies, you will sense this one-ness with your brethren in the harmonious progression of the ritual and you will see how this harmony and one-ness are carried over into your whole Masonic life and, hopefully, beyond.

In the Address to the Brethren on installation night, we are urged to unite in the grand design of being happy and communicating happiness. But is not striving to seek happiness in a world so filled with pain and hatred mere self-indulgence? Quite the contrary! The key phrase is '*communicating happiness*', for in so doing we will be strengthened in our determination to relieve sorrow, suffering, pain, loneliness and depression wherever and whenever it is encountered.

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We should enjoy each other's company as we travel along life's journey and be columns of mutual help and support. Indeed, the word enjoy has its origin in the spiritual rather than the secular world as it was introduced into the English language by a 14th century mystic, Mother Julian of Norwich, and used no less than 75 times in her delightful and spiritually optimistic book Revelations of Divine Love. Julian, like countless mystics before and after her, emphasises that love and joy are Divine qualities that go hand in hand. Likewise, Canon Paul Oestreicher, who did so much for reconciliation in post-war Europe, remarked, '*God is another word for Love*' and an unknown Hindu songwriter proclaimed, '*God is the purest form of joy – complete joy!*'.

Pope Benedict XVI has described eternal life, the goal of all our spiritual journeying, as being '*like plunging into the ocean of infinite love, a moment in which time – the before and after – no longer exists. We can only attempt to grasp the idea that such a moment is life in the full sense, a plunging ever anew into the vastness of being, in which we are simply overwhelmed with joy*'.

So enjoy Freemasonry, have fun, be happy and communicate happiness and you will shed much needed light and lustre on a darkened world.

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##END##

## Recommended use of Papers

Papers offer a simple, direct means of advancement in a particular aspect of Masonic knowledge. They can be used in a variety of ways:

- Read at home for private study
- Shared for pre-reading by members of a discussion group
- Read aloud in Lodge or Chapter, or in an LOI/COI/new members forum
  - Followed by 'any questions'
  - As a precursor to a discussion (*in which case much more time is needed, possibly more than double that allocated to the paper itself*)
  - Supported by audio-visual aids, if necessary.

They can be delivered by a single person or split into bite-sized pieces and read by multiple presenters (*in which case, the speaker(s) should have read and practiced the delivery of the paper beforehand*).

If the paper is to be used to introduce a discussion, the presenter will need to have thought about the material, done a little research, and prepared some open questions to engage with the audience. Kipling's dictum can be of help in preparing open questions, which should begin with one of his 'serving men', as follows: '*I keep six honest serving men (they taught me all I knew). Their names are, What and Why and When and How and Where and Who*'.  
Rudyard Kipling

If used as part of an event, the paper should be advertised and promoted by way of trailers, flyers and announcements, in summonses, letters, emails, notice boards, and on social media.

**For further papers and other learning materials visit "Solomon" at <http://solomon.ugle.org.uk>**

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