



NUGGET

Giving them the Thumbs-Up

Summary: The sign of Reverence versus The sign of Fidelity.

Having closed the Volume of The Sacred Law, the IPM steps forward and delivers the Ceremony's final words 'Fidelity, Fidelity, Fidelity'. Visitors surreptitiously peer around to see if this is a 'thumbs-up' or a 'closed-hand' Lodge. The courteous will adjust their fingers in keeping; the dedicated will proudly maintain the posture of their own Lodge. Which hand position *is* correct? Across the United Kingdom there seems little, or no, uniformity between Lodges, as there seems to be none; or perhaps there is?

The use and misuse of the Sign of Fidelity and the Sign of Reverence has been an issue for preceptors for generations. Let's begin with that Sign of Fidelity. Its purpose is explained in the Emulation Lodge of Instruction, which drives most forms of Masonic ritual, '*emblematically to shield the repository of my secrets from the attacks of the insidious*'. It is defensive in nature, and it seems logical therefore to expand the hand with the thumb to provide the greatest area of protection. For the thumb's position to be at right-angles, makes good sense.

Turning now to the Sign of Reverence. We should remember that a Sign of Reverence was not recognised or taught by Grand Lodge, even though it appears in the custom of Emulation working. However, '*a sign of reverence*' with fingers touching the seat of human emotion, the heart, has long been employed and respected outside Freemasonry. One can see it at the roadside as a cortège passes by, in a church service, at the loss of family member or friend; even when an American President takes his Oath-of-Office. It is not defensive sign; but rather represents a positive outpouring of love, sympathy, respect or reverence from the heart. It is therefore quite appropriate inside a Lodge when the candidate kneels, and we unite in prayer to the Great Architect Of The Universe.

Back to the Closing. Fidelity means simply loyalty and faithfulness. The Emulation practice does not say '*All give the Sign of Fidelity*'. Indeed it cannot do so, as the Volume of the Sacred Law, and with it the Lodge, are closed. It says very simply but clearly '*All touch the left-breast lightly with the word Fidelity*'; which very action mirrors a sign of reverence. The fingers of the hand lightly touching the heart remind departing Masons of their duty to keep faith and remain loyal to those moral principles stored therein. Expressed as respect for one's Creator; the love for our fellow man and relief for his sufferings; or the courage to be true to one's own nature. Indeed these are the principles that should govern all of our life, not least when we depart our Lodge building.

A daily demonstration of those heart-felt principles could well define, and indeed advertise Freemasonry to the community which surrounds us.



Recommended use of Nuggets

Nuggets offer a short, simple and readily absorbed means of progressing Masonic knowledge and an easy way to introduce learning to Lodges and Chapters. It is hoped that they will become a regular feature of Lodge and Chapter meetings as well as a source for private-study.

Nuggets can be included as an item in the summons and read at most Lodge/Chapter meetings. They can be:

Read by either a new or an experienced Mason with the minimum of preparation and practice; though ideally, they need to be read a few times beforehand.

Themed with the meeting or activity.

Used to initiate a discussion within a Lodge/Chapter, LOI/COI, or group.

Read at home and shared as a topic for a future discussion.

Used as a focus for an unplanned, informal discussion.

*Note: All biblical passages are taken from the Authorized King James version and any reference to ritual will be from Emulation unless otherwise specified.

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