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Masonic Reflections: Freemasons And Literacy

By Jeffery Parham

Bremerton Lodge #117, F.& A.M. was the recipient of the Jen Southworth Community Service

Award presented by The Literacy Council of Kitsap on their Annual Student/Volunteer Recognition Event on Wed, Jan 26th 2004. The Honor Night is an annual tradition of the Literacy Council that was sponsored this year by Bremerton Lodge #117 and the Bremerton Valley Scottish Rite. The Literacy Council of Kitsap recognize students who earned GEDs, became citizens, and met other goals; and presented awards to Tutors of the Year, Volunteers of the Year and recipients of the Jen Southworth Community Service Award.

Six students who completed the program and were also awarded citizenship and in tribute the theme of the evening was "American Pie" a combination of patriotic symbols and Americana- hamburgers, model Ts, Native Americans, barbershop music and, of course - pie!

WB Charles "Red" Andersen accepted the award in the name of masonry and our lodge. During the past 2 years Bremerton Lodge #117 has partnered with the Literacy Council to advance literacy in our community. We raised money thru raffles and sponsored and created the Kitsap Family Literacy Project, have two lodge members on the Grand Lodge Literacy Committee, awarded scholarships to literacy students and sponsored their various programs. Our involvement with Literacy was announced during visit of Grand Master MWB John McNab two years ago. The Grand Master donated \$100 to our program that night. The Temple Board also has allowed the Literacy Council to utilize space at the Bremerton Masonic Temple for their Board of Directors meetings and various Literacy events, including this one. Additionally, one of our officers, Bro. Pat Marley, is a tutor at the Literacy Council and I am on the Board of Directors for the Literacy Council.

Accepting the award, the WB thanked the Literacy Council of Kitsap for the recognition and honor and for the opportunity to say a few words about Masonry and our involvement and dedication to literacy. I adapted a speech I had given earlier on Literacy, which was well received by those present and reads as follows:

Freemasonry is a fraternity or brotherhood dedicated to making good men better, thus making individuals stronger, their families, communities and society. Masonry is not a religion but is

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brotherhood of men that follow a system of teaching to instill all of the virtues in a individual that are key to the development of character and productive lives. No one is certain how old our fraternity is, but records of freemasons go back hundreds if not thousands of years. Thus from the first Stonemasons that built the pyramids to those that built the great cathedrals, knowledge was passed from person to person, and those enlightened or literate individuals were better enabled and "free" to provide for their selves, their families, as well as those less fortunate.

In the broad sweep of human history, we have been dependent upon oral tradition to pass knowledge, learning and culture from generation to generation. The early development of writing, initially on stone and papyrus, was the first milestone in the preservation of ancient knowledge, tradition, lore, and history. However, since the ability to both write and read was limited to a few scholars, shaman, and priest class, this had little effect in raising the consciousness of the masses, and in the promotion of democratic participation in ones self development, and that of local and regional society and culture.

Guttenberg's development of the printing press marks the threshold of modern society, in that it ushered in the availability of the written word, and the possibility of expanding literacy to all people, with all the attributes and benefits that literacy entails.

With literacy comes the art of grammar that is the ability to arrange words in a manner that affords Excellency of expression of individual and common thought. The ability to preserve and communicate thought for present and future benefit, such as in the recordation of history, is of keen importance, for we are told that if we do not know history we are doomed to repeat it.

Rhetorical ability is honed through literacy, so that we are able to both write and speak with elegance and strength of purpose. Literacy refines our logic, and allows us to think, deduce, and conclude with reason and persuasion, both for our personal benefit and that of our brothers and sisters in our respective communities and on the world stage.

There were many other Masonic influences in early American history: Lafayette, the French liaison to the Colonies, without whose aid the war could not have been won, was a Freemason; the majority of the commanders of the Continental Army were Freemasons and members of "Army Lodges"; most of George Washington's generals were Freemasons; the Boston Tea Party was planned at the Green Dragon Tavern, also known as the "Freemasons' Arms" and "the Headquarters of the Revolution"; George Washington was sworn in as the first President of the United States by Robert Livingston, Grand Master of New York's Masonic lodge, and the Bible on which he took his oath was from his own Masonic lodge; and the Cornerstone of the Capital Building was laid by the Grand Lodge of Maryland."

Widespread literacy is the key building block, and indeed the foundation and pillars upon which rest the temple of democracy. Literacy, the ability to read and write, and its expansion to both child and adult is the greatest gift that can be given to ensure self development, meaningful and constructive participation in our communities, and preservation of the democratic institutions we cherish, but which could only arise through mass literacy and can only survive by virtue of literacy.

Bremerton Lodge #117, Free and Accepted Masons of Washington would like to help empower families by continuing to offer a scholarship to low income students to help defer the cost of the GED

test, provide resources, such as Project Outreach to encourage family literacy and to direct families to the proper community resources. Additionally, we will entertain collaborations with the Literacy Council for the good of future students.

In closing, I would like to congratulate all of you for your dedication to learning and improving your lives and those around you. I would like to encourage you to not take your accomplishments lightly. We are all on a path of self improvement in life, and it is important to know that you are not alone, that who you are and what you do is relevant to you, and ultimately to those around you.

Jeffery S. Parham, M.S. Plant Pathology, M.A. Biology, Master of Bremerton Lodge #117, Free and Accepted Masons of Washington

<http://www.masonicreflections.blogspot.com>

Reflections on the Peace Prayer of Saint Francis of Assisi

By Lisa M. Hendey

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Book Review – Reflections on the Peace Prayer of Saint Francis of Assisi

By Albert Haase

Reviewed by Lisa M. Hendey

Certain inspirational sayings and prayers transcend denominational lines, becoming part of the fabric of faith and inspiration for masses of believers seeking solace or comfort in difficult times. In *Reflections on the Peace Prayer of Saint Francis of Assisi* (Saint Anthony Messenger Press & Franciscan Communications, September 2004, paperback 84 pages) author Albert Haase, O.F.M. dissects the classic "Peace Prayer" which is attributed to St. Francis of Assisi. In his enlightening introduction, Haase offers a brief history of the prayer, noting that it has been embraced by as a "prayer for all times and all peoples", having been used by such notables as Margaret Thatcher at her inauguration and at the funerals of Mother Teresa of Calcutta and Diana, Princess of Wales.

Given today's climate of political upheaval and war in so many areas of our world, contemplation of the Peace Prayer seems to be even more relevant than ever. This compact, twelve chapter book examines each phrase of the prayer in detail. Personal reflections and stories of individuals living out the aspects of the Prayer are offered and draw the reader into a closer understanding of what is meant by each simple expression. Each chapter ends with four reflective questions for individual or group consideration.

For individuals looking to truly live out the concept "Lord, make me an instrument of your peace", Albert Haase's book will become a treasured resource and invaluable prompt to both prayer and action.

Groups looking for a concise study should enjoy gathering to read and contemplate the book as they examine how to become peacemakers in their own communities and in the world at large.

For more information on Reflections on the Peace Prayer of Saint Francis of Assisi visit <http://www.amazon.com/exec/obidos/ASIN/0867165723/catholicmomcom>

Lisa M. Hendey is a mother of two sons, webmaster of numerous web sites, including <http://www.catholicmom.com>, <http://www.digitalcropper.com>, and <http://www.christincoloring.com>, and an avid reader.

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