
TO LIGHT!



Bringing Masonic Education To Light

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Moral Courage

For you Masons who read *Time* Magazine, I hope the announcement of *Time*'s Person of the Year choice for 2002 resonated with you the values for which our gentle craft exists. The "Person" was not a hero, a politician or a soldier, as is often the case. No, in this case the "Person" was actually three women – two who blew the whistle on major corporate mismanagement (Enron and WorldCom), and one who stood up to government nonresponse (FBI).

Three dedicated, professional employees who had everything going for them – including **moral courage**. Dr. Rushworth Kidder, President of the Institute for Global Ethics, noted this in a recent newsletter, "In varying degrees, each of these women understood the danger they faced, found the will to endure the risk, and based her action on clear moral principle. These three characteristics -- awareness, endurance, and principle -- are the defining features of moral courage. In part, of course, it's our want of heroes, our longing for bold leadership in an age of insecurity. The tragedy of 9/11 supplied us with a few heroes in the form of firefighters. Now the pendulum has swung to a different sort of courage, where what's endangered is not life and limb but reputation, ethical standards, and the need for principle."

These are terms that are not unfamiliar at all to Masons – they are the core of our ritual and our purpose. We don't jump on a soapbox and say "See, I told you so". We are much too humble and above those types of tactics. But on the other hand we must not be complacent in citing the absolute relevance of our timeless core values. Yes, they've always been important, but never more important than today. We only need to read the newspapers. The relevance of Masonry hits you with nearly every page. How often do we find those who have the moral courage "to do that which it is right to do?"

If you are a student of Masonry, you know that Masonry makes you think. You may think about ideas of your own life's path, or that of your family or community, but you cannot really escape the concept of the universality of Masonry – the simple fact that these core values we hold as an organization (and as a free society) are applicable to all, regardless of your culture, economic status, gender, religion, race, etc. We are "big picture". Masonry is not a narrow-focus, targeted advocacy group. If what is happening in today's world does not strike the anvil of Masonry's conscience, then it never will.

Returning to the three women who were honored by *Time*, Dr. Kidder closed with this poignant observation, "So, ultimately, do we, sobered by 9/11, rocked by corporate scandals, clouded by rumors of war, we long to unite motion and action, dissolve the shadow, and *connect our ideas and our lives*. That can be hard, discomforting work. That three women did it -- and that some editors thought what they did was supremely important -- is a sign of hope for the new year."

"Connect our ideas and our lives". Moral courage. What can be more core to our Masonic philosophy than that?