

ANCIENT CRAFT MASONRY AN INVITATION TO MASTER MASONS TO CONTINUE

THE YORK RITE

We present a brief outline of the degrees and orders of York Rite Masonry, in the hope that this information will reach Master Masons, who otherwise would not receive it. In bringing them this under the heading "Ancient Craft Masonry", we are actuated by the fact that a number of these degrees were originally conferred under the jurisdiction of Grand Lodges, and ALL are related to the Symbolic Degrees. The York Rite, therefore, is an aggregate of four bodies, forming one whole. One cannot stop on the way and have a complete understanding of Ancient Craft Masonry.

LODGE – MASTER MASONS (SYMBOLIC DEGREES)

The *ENTERED APPRENTICE* is a bearer of burdens, symbolically taught to labor to subdue his passions and improve himself in Freemasonry.

The *FELLOWCRAFT* is a skilled workman, carefully instructed in the principles of architecture, the five human senses, the seven liberal arts and sciences and the importance of the Deity.

The *MASTER MASON* is an overseer of the work and is taught many moral lessons and prepared for the life to come, BUT . . .

The Temple of life is not yet complete, and those faithful Craftsmen who have labored so long are deprived, by the wickedness of others, of that for which they have wrought so faithfully – the WORD, which would entitle them to WAGES. Because the symbolism used in the Symbolic Degree is often difficult to comprehend, the following Degrees exist to explain and clarify the knowledge imparted to us in symbolic form and to supply that which was lost but later found.

LODGE – ROYAL ARCH MASONS (CAPITULAR DEGREES)

MARK MASTER – The work on the Temple continues. Amplifying the Fellow craft Degree, we are taught that the knowledge we received there can be

honor and the profit of others. A beautiful profit of others! A beautiful lesson is exemplified, inculcating the truth that although we are often misunderstood, underrated and traduced, there is ONE who will make the rejected stone the head of the corner.

PAST MASTER – This Degree begins the preparation for the Royal Arch, which, we are told, was removed from the Symbolic Degrees, of which it was once a part, to reserve it for the more earnest seeker of more Light in Masonry. Originally only Past Masters of Lodges were admitted to the sublime secrets of the Royal Arch. This meant that very few could receive them. The Degree of Past Master (virtual) teaches the candidate that he must first learn to obey before he can rule, and to govern himself before he can govern others.

MOST EXCELLENT MASTER – This is a significant Degree in Ancient Craft Masonry. King Solomon's Temple, which was begun so auspiciously and halted so dramatically in the Third Degree, is completed amid much rejoicing and great splendor. The labors of the Craft are given the blessing of the Lord, who descended as fire from heaven. King Solomon, in his gratitude, received and acknowledged them Most Excellent Masters, empowered to travel and receive Master's Wages, and charged them with the responsibility of sharing their Masonic Light and Knowledge with those less informed.

THE ROYAL ARCH – In This Degree we find the completion of the Master's Degree and the Recovery of the Word. After the death of King Solomon, his magnificent Temple was destroyed, and the Israelites carried away as captives to Babylon, where they lived for about 70 years. Here, many acquired considerable wealth and attained high rank and influence in the Chaldean government. However, when liberated by King Cyrus, many of them returned to Jerusalem and began rebuilding the Temple. While this work was going on and the rubbish of the ruins of the first Temple was being cleared away, many interesting and valuable discoveries were made, chief of which was the recovery of the Lost Word.

With the recovery of that which was lost, it would seem to the novice that his search for Light was ended. However, in order that he might better acquire the lessons, a seemingly inverse movement of the Degrees, historically, is set up.

COUNCIL – ROYAL AND SELECT MASERS

(CRYPTIC DEGREES)

ROYAL MASTER – This Degree takes us backward in time to a day prior to the death of the builder, who is again the central character. He imparts sublime teachings of a useful labor on earth to the candidate and gives him instruction as to the preservation of our valuable secrets. This is one of the most beautiful Degrees in all Masonry. Its lessons are so impressive that they are seldom forgotten. It is especially illustrative of the third and seventh Degrees.

SELECT MASTER – Historically, this Degree occurs also prior to the third Degree, and deals with incidents that occurred at the building of the first Temple. It is closely connected with the Royal Arch Degree and affords the explanation needed for its perfect understanding. It is highly dramatic.

SUPER EXCELLENT MASTER – This Degree refers to circumstances and incidents during the siege of Jerusalem and the final destruction of the Temple. The work is dramatic and most impressive. This work completes the Circle of Perfection of Ancient Craft Masonry, but to the follower of Christ there is a definite need and desire for the application of these impressive lessons and beautiful ceremonies to his way of life. To fulfill this need we have the:

COMMANDERY – KNIGHTS TEMPLAR

ORDER OF RED CROSS – Here again we revert to the period of the Royal Arch Degree when the Jews were returning from Babylon to Jerusalem to rebuild the Temple. One of their number prevails upon King Darius to restore the Holy Vessels to the new Temple. The Babylonian armies had carried them away when the first Temple was destroyed. In presenting his plea before the king, the companion gives a powerful testimony to the almighty force of Truth.

ORDER of MALTA and the **MEDITERRANEAN PASS**

Shifting to the time of the Crusades, admission to the Mediterranean Pass is sought so that a safe Pilgrimage to the Holy Sepulcher might be undertaken. This is a sublime and sacred Order, which culminates in the enrollment of the suppliant as a Knight of Malta.

ORDER OF THE TEMPLE – No Degree or Order in Masonry is more solemn, impressive or soul-searching than the Order of the Temple. It is a fitting climax to the labors of the humble penitent, who has faithfully performed the symbolic seven years of preparation for this consummation of his endeavors. He is knighted as a Christian warrior.

Knights Templar were so named because of their close association with the site of the Temple during the years they occupied Jerusalem. The Ancient Order of the Temple has been dispersed and its warlike spirit has passed away. There remains, however, a spirit of refined and moral Chivalry, which prompts its members to be ever ready to defend the weak, the innocent, the helpless and the oppressed.

The Order of the Temple is often called the most beautiful of all the Orders and Degrees of Masonry. No Mason, who is a believer in the Christian religion, should be satisfied until he has received this – the capstone of the York Rite.

Honors Available to York Rite Masons in South Carolina

(The Order of High Priesthood, Order of the Silver Trowel and the Knight Crusaders of the Cross are referred to as the “Chair Degrees.”)

ORDER OF HIGH PRIESTHOOD – For those elected to preside over a Chapter of Royal Arch Masons.

THRICE ILLUSTRIOUS MASTERS COUNCIL

For those elected to preside over a Council of Royal and Select Masters. In some jurisdictions it is called the “Order of the Silver Trowel”.

KNIGHT CRUSADERS OF THE CROSS – For those elected to preside over a Commandery of Knights Templar.

RED CROSS OF CONSTANTINE – By invitation only to those who have served Masonry, particularly in the Royal Arch, with distinction, and who have similarly conducted themselves in their family, church, community, state and nation. (Limited to 50 members per Conclave)

KNIGHT MASONS – In South Carolina an invitational Body for those who have been elected or have presided over at least one of the York Rite bodies – the Lodge, Chapter, Council and Commandery. (Known as the Green Degrees having originated in Ireland)

ALLIED MASONIC DEGREES – By invitation only Body for those interested in pursuing further “Light in Mason” by research and writing Scholarly Papers. (Limited to 27 members per Council)

MASONIC SOCIETAS ROUSICRUCIANA IN CIVITATIBUS FOEDERATIS (MSRICF) – By invitation only Body for those interested in pursuing further knowledge by research. (Limited to 72 Members)

YORK RITE COLLEGE – an invitational Body whose goal is to be of service to the other four York Rite Bodies (Lodge, Chapter, Council and Commandery)

KNIGHT OF THE YORK CROSS OF HONOUR
In South Carolina, by invitation only Body for those who have presided over all the York Rite Bodies: (the Lodge, Chapter, Council and Commandery)

How to Proceed

This consummation of Masonic Light as exemplified in the York Rite, must be sought in the same manner as the first three Degrees. You may present your petitions to these three bodies singularly or all at one time. When elected, you may receive the Degrees and Orders at evening meetings over a period, or at York Rite Festivals or group meetings. In case of the latter, the work is conferred on classes of candidates in close succession. This plan is growing in popularity and is preferred by those who are out of town frequently or for other reasons may wish to complete their Ancient Craft Masonry more quickly. There are no waiting periods, proficiency requirements or memory work of any kind.

Do not wait to be Invited, ASK!

You started into Freemasonry of your own free will and you should seek to advance in like manner. Consult your Lodge secretary or any member of the Chapter, Council or Commandery.

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The York Rite

The Completion of Ancient Craft Masonry In South Carolina

