



Grand Chaplain's Corner

By RW Grand Chaplain Pat Thompson



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And let us consider how to provoke one another to love and good deeds... (Hebrews 10:24).

What a seemingly prescient passage from the pen of the writer of the Letter to the Hebrews. There has been a great deal of *provocation* in our society of late, and most of it has little to do with good deeds, much less love. But Masons can be a force for the sort of goodness many of us recall from another, gentler time.

This sentiment could easily degenerate to some nostalgic recollection about “the good old days” when we knew our neighbors by name and respected the opinions and sensibilities of every man or woman. I have railed against the deterioration of human community in this space more than once—and I think I’m right—even if I do say so myself! The fractured reality of our communal relationships is deeply concerning to me. We *provoke* one another quite often these days, but the endgame seems to be more about being right or keeping/gaining power. There is a lot of yelling going on, and nobody appears to be listening. It was not always so.

In the post-World War II era, fraternalism, church membership, and involvement in other service clubs (Rotary, Lions, Optimists, etc.) were high. Somewhere all the way—and for a variety of reasons—our sense of civic engagement fell apart. Masonic membership was at its zenith in this period.

The anonymous writer of Hebrews (it’s likely *not* Paul) apparently recognizes the unitive power of a social dynamic in which we encourage one another to undertake good deeds—even provoking the expressions of selfless love (Gr. *agape*). At our best as Masons, that is precisely what we do! It would be tempting to conclude that the sort of widespread goodwill we once knew no longer exists. That is a pessimistic conclusion. I submit that it is far more courageous to do the challenging work of bringing out the best in each other, even as we live out “the brotherhood of man under the fatherhood of God.”

Herbert Butler's essay, "The Children of Drancy," details the story of the 4,000 Jewish children who were held outside Paris in 1942 before being deported to Auschwitz. Butler quotes Francois Mauriac: "The dream which Western man conceived in the 18th century, whose dawn he thought he saw in 1789, and which, until 2 August 1914, had grown stronger with the process of enlightenment and the discoveries of science—this dream vanished finally for me with those trainloads of little children."

Do not let the dream die, my brothers. Humans—Americans—are better than what we have recently seen. And Masons must carry that message!

Faithfully and fraternally,

Pat