

Raleigh Valley 2018 Maundy Thursday and Easter Sunday Eulogy by Brother Mark Fusco 32° KSA

Wise Master, Brethren, (Honored Guests),

Once again, in the quiet of this solemn hour, we members of the Valley of Raleigh Scottish Rite and the John C. Drewry Chapter of Rose Croix gather to pay our respects to our departed brothers, good men and true. Once again, Death, the relentless great leveler of Kings and beggars, wise men and fools, has stolen into our sacred chamber and made off with men we dearly loved. Nay, not the best made preparations, nor the miracles of the medical arts could prevent the gloomy shade of Death from spiriting away our brothers—for we are born but to die. Some are called sooner, some later—the time is not for us to know—but it remains our inescapable fate that life is fleeting, a mere blink of the Eternal Eye.

We are privileged to have had such men among us, these brothers we honor tonight. The Latin poet Vergil expresses perfectly how we shall remember them: “As long as rivers shall run down to the sea, or shadows touch the mountain slopes, or stars graze in the vault of heaven, so long shall your honor, your name, your praises endure.” Each of these brothers exemplifies the proper way for Masons to live, but more eloquently, the proper way for Masons to die.

Freemasonry admonishes us to spend our lives in preparation for the inevitable Death, which comes to all men. Shakespeare writes, “Like as the waves make towards the pebbled shore, So do our minutes hasten to their end.” Our days on Earth are numbered and are counted down by the Angels of Heaven—a wise man employs his allotted time to temper the steel of his soul for what is to come.

We labor, laugh, and love, as all men have done, but as each man learns in time, this life will pass, and the moment swiftly approaches when we, too, will lie still under the canopy of stars numberless.

We are likely celebrating our last Maundy Thursday observance together in this building, the venerable Raleigh Masonic Temple. It will pass away, just as our departed brothers have passed away, leaving us only with memories of good times had. But brothers, a lodge is not a building—it is a group of men. A group of men who are bound together, not by a building or anything physical, but by an indescribable bond of love and common purpose. We will soon find a new home for our lodge, our Valley. The building has not aged well and has suffered from years of neglect, decay, and entropy. This building, this Temple, is each one of us. We are all aging, all decaying—the average age of men in this building is about 74, about how long we've called this Temple our home. And soon, we too will be gone, leaving behind only memories of happy times.

But just as a lodge is the inviolable bond between men that will outlive the loss of the physical structure, our lodge, our relationships with the brethren, will transcend death—the bond that binds us to our brothers is a spiritual one, and as we all believe, the spirit survives the death of the body. We sit here now in a spiritual lodge with our departed brethren and will continue to do so for all eternity. And when we are at last called from labor to refreshment by our Creator, we will again sit next to our brothers eternal in the grand celestial lodge. It comforts us to know that we will again be with them, with our parents, families, friends, and that together we will all share the blessed joys of immortality.

Brethren, we say *not* goodbye to our departed brothers, but rather “until we meet again,” for *surely* we will sit with them in that house not made with hands eternal in the heavens, as *surely* as we sit here tonight—the bond that we share as Masons transcends Death, just as our faith in immortality conquers Death.

Once again, in the quiet of this solemn hour, we gather to honor our departed brothers, their lives and works, and recognize that they left this world a better place than they found it—and we are better men for having known them. May the peace that passeth all understanding be unto them, and may they delight in their eternal reward so hard won. In the words of brother Sir Walter Scott, “Is Death the last sleep? No, it is the final awakening.” So mote it be.