

THE ORDER OF DEMOLAY

~ A Brief Biographical Sketch ~

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The Order of DeMolay is a Concordant Masonic (Co-Masonic) order for boys ages 13-21. Like two of its more popular sibling organizations, Job's Daughters and Rainbow Girls, DeMolay was created, sponsored and supervised by Freemasons. Frank S. Land, a Mason and Christian Scientist, founded the Order on March 18, 1919 with nine young men in Kansas City, Missouri, USA, in hopes of increasing Masonic membership in latter years by recruiting these boys. "April 1, 1919, 31 young men, all over 16 and all under 21, met in the first charter meeting of the Order of DeMolay" (*Jacques DeMolay*, by H.L. Haywood, pg. vi). The DeMolay ritual was written by Frank A. Marshall who was a 32nd Degree Mason and newspaperman in Kansas City.

DeMolay's objective is the encouragement and development of good citizenship and sound character among youth. The Senior Deacon tells the candidate during an initiation ceremony that, "the purpose of the Order is to teach and practice the virtues of clean, upright, patriotic, and reverent living as the best preparation for the manhood we are approaching. We are earnestly striving to be better sons, better brothers and better friends that when we reach the years of manhood we may be better men" (DeMolay Ritual, page 14). Its efforts are to create leaders and develop character.

The International Supreme Council of the Order of DeMolay headquarters is located in Kansas City, Missouri, USA. One report states that there are approximately 1,600 active DeMolay chapters, having around 125,000 members throughout Canada, Mexico, Puerto Rico, France, Brazil, Australia, Panama, Germany, Italy, Japan, the Republic of the Philippines and every state of the United States of America.

The name DeMolay was selected in honor of Jacques deMolay, a fourteenth-century leader of the Knights Templars, who was arrested in Paris October 13, 1307 along with 60 other Templars. DeMolay was burned at the stake in 1314 by King Philip IV of France after being held in prison for seven years under charges against the Knights Templars for blasphemy, heresy, "witchcraft and devil worship", (*Jacques DeMolay*, by H.L. Haywood, pg. 51).

The Order's current emblem is a jeweled crown (symbolic of the Crown of Youth) with a five-armed Maltese type of cross (denoting the purity of one's intentions to always remember

the DeMolay motto, “No DeMolay shall fail as a citizen, as a leader, or as a man.” The emblem has ten stars (symbolizing hope) surrounding a crescent (a sign of secrecy and a reminder of the oath to never reveal the secrets or betray the confidence of a friend) at its center. Behind the crown are two crossed swords (symbolizing justice, fortitude and mercy). The shielded head of a medieval knight (a symbol of chivalry) is perched on top of the crown. The emblem was designed to be a constant reminder to DeMolay boys of their obligations and the seven Precepts of the Order (filial love, reverence for sacred things, courtesy, comradeship, fidelity, cleanliness, and patriotism). The ten jewels (rubies and pearls) of the crown honor the founder Frank S. Land and the initial nine boys (Louis G. Lower, Gorman McBride, Jerome Jacobson, William Steinhilber, Elmer Dorsey, Ivan Bentley, Clyde Stream, Ralph Sewell and Edmund Marshall) who were the first DeMolay members. The pearls represent the living members of the original nine DeMolay boys. The rubies honor Dad Land and those of the original nine boys who have passed away.

The Order of DeMolay consists of three degrees: Initiatory Degree, DeMolay Degree and Legion of Honor Degree (honorary). It also has an Institution Service, Memorial Service, Funeral Service, and Majority Service. Upon reaching age 21, a DeMolay member becomes a Senior DeMolay and may no longer attend DeMolay meetings unless he becomes a Master Mason. Honors include Order of Knighthood (formed into a priory in 1947), Representative Award, Legion of Honor, DeMolay Medal of Honor, Chevalier, Medal of Heroism, Blue Honor Award (Key), and Merit Medals.

Local DeMolay bodies are called Chapters (presided over by a Master Councilor), and are governed by a Grand Council. Each Chapter has an advisory council of Master Masons, plus one advisor who is usually known as “Dad”. Chapters also have offices of Senior and Junior Councilor, Senior and Junior Deacons, Senior and Junior Stewards, Orator, Chaplain, Marshal, Scribe, Treasurer, Almoner, Standard Bearer, seven Preceptors, and a Sentinel.

There are various surveys that list some interesting statistics about DeMolay members. For instance, approximately one out of every 1,000 young men in the USA will join DeMolay. There have been approximately four million boys initiated into DeMolay since its inception. At the time of their initiation, 55% of the boys had fathers who were not Masons. Of any 100 members, thirty will drop out in their first year. One out of 100 members will be awarded the rank and honor of Chevalier, the highest honor granted to an active DeMolay. Eventually 65% of all DeMolay seek admission to Freemasonry. Approximately 40,000 DeMolay members have become Protestant ministers. One eastern state reported that 82% of all men joining the Masonic Lodge during a five-year period had been members of DeMolay. More than 17,000 former DeMolays have become Worshipful Masters of Blue Lodges in the USA. One out of

every twelve State Governors and one out of every ten United States Senators is a Senior DeMolay.

During opening ceremonies, the Chapter is purged, leaving only members in good standing and those who are eligible to witness the ceremonies because of their Masonic or Eastern Star membership. The Senior Steward is instructed to prepare the altar. He does so by approaching the altar, opening the Bible upon it, and saying, "I open the Holy Bible upon our altar as a SYMBOL of the religious liberty we enjoy; and to remind us of the never-ceasing love of our heavenly Father" (Ritual page 9, emphasis added).

In the Preparation Room, before the candidate is taken to the Chapter room to receive the Initiatory Degree, the Marshal addresses the candidate by saying, "You must approach the door of our Chapter in a serious frame of mind, realizing that the solemn purpose of our ceremonies is to impress upon your mind great truths of right living" (Ritual, page 13). The candidate is hoodwinked (blindfolded, just as candidates for Blue Lodge Masonry are), asked a series of questions and swears an oath of allegiance and secrecy. He seals these vows by kissing the Holy Bible and the hoodwink is then removed.

The candidate is escorted to the seven Preceptors, and each place a jewel in the Crown of Youth. These jewels are: filial love, reverence for sacred things, courtesy, comradeship, fidelity, cleanliness and patriotism, and each is explained in terms of its meaning. As the second jewel is placed into the crown, the Preceptor explains, "As we are all sons of earthly parents, so WE ARE THE CHILDREN OF THE UNIVERSAL FATHER. My comrades, in our chapter we teach no religious creed. Your religious opinions are your own. But we do earnestly enjoin upon you the sacredness of faith, the beauty of an humble reliance on the goodness of God. Let us strive to be true to this UNIVERSAL SONSHIP" (emphasis added).

The Junior Councilor conducts the candidate to the Senior Councilor in the West who tells him, "When you reach the evening of your lives, may you be able to look back upon a long and happy journey, filled with memories of duties well performed, the western sky glowing with THE PROMISE OF THE EVERLASTING MORNING" (Ritual, page 19, 33, emphasis added).

The DeMolay degree dramatizes the trial and execution of Jacques DeMolay. The opening ceremony has no religious features. This ceremony is to teach the candidate, fidelity which is loyal unto death. The Master Councilor informs the candidate that, "Your merit will be measured not only by these standards (punctual, proficient, decorous), but by the extent to which you carry into your daily lives the lessons and the examples we have set before you and by the extent to which you translate these lessons and examples into service among your fellows" (Ritual, page 28). Near the end of this ceremony, candidates are told, "Before....we will receive you into the fellowship of lasting fraternity, you must kneel at the Altar and bind

yourselves to us by a final vow, taken in the light of experiences unknown to you when you first entered our Chapter Room.” The Master Councilor urges the members to “live by the principles of the Order.” After saluting them with the sings of the Order, he declares the ceremony closed.

The ritual for the memorial service / funeral assures the mourners and survivors that “the dead who have lived according to the precepts of the Order of DeMolay are enjoying the joys of eternal life.” After the Orator reads Ecclesiastes 12:1-7, the Chaplain prays, “Our Father in Heaven, we thank Thee for the comfort and assurance of the Faith implanted in our hearts without which we would indeed sorry as those without Hope. We mourn the departure of a Comrade dear to us. HIS SOUL HAS GONE TO THEE, and Thou art Love and Mercy without bounds” (Ritual, page 41, 33, emphasis added). The Senior Deacon places an evergreen upon the altar of memory, “emblematic of the everlasting chapter into which our brother has entered through the open doors of Faith” (Ritual page 41). At the funeral service, the Marshal states, “Our brother knocked at the portals of our Order as a stranger and became a friend and comrade. I bring the consolation of a life before which the everlasting gates have opened wide to receive one who was true to all the demands of comradeship and brotherhood: (Ritual, page 45). The Senior Councilor goes on to state, “I bring the sweetest consolation of all the assurance of the holiest promises of our faith, the attainment of the goal of all our striving, the reward of all our hopes. Our brother’s life, cut off in its morning years, is glorified with duties well performed and upon it shines the splendor of EVERLASTING LIFE” (Ritual, page 46, emphasis added). The Master Councilor commends the relatives to “the infinite love and pity of the universal father” (Ritual, page 46). The Chaplain then prays, “Our Father, the soul of our departed brother is with Thee” (Ritual, page 46, 47).

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