



Independent Order of Odd Fellows
Dedicated Members for Change

August 29, 2012

Freedom to Be Who We Are

America is a wonderful place: a place founded upon the ideals of religious freedom, democracy, and the pursuit of happiness. There is nowhere else quite like it. Other countries try to mirror our ideals but they can't quite duplicate them. This is what gives us strength and the ability to look at each citizen with empathy even though they might have totally different political or religious views than we do. When we band together, our strength is as much our differences as it is our similarities. Our unifying bond is our love for our country. No one person knows the correct path. No one person can decide for others the proper religious views, the ideal sexual or personal moral attitude, or even how we conduct our lives. This is what America in her wisdom has given us; the freedom to be who we are.

Many wars are initiated by dictators thinking they have the divine right to guide other countries, but America gets it right. America's strength is its own permissiveness; its own ability to see that all men are created equal and that all men have the same privileges by law. As long as a man or woman does not do injury to another, they are within their rights to live as they choose. This is America, as lined out within our constitution, as stated purely by our bill of rights, and as practiced by all our happy citizens down through our history. All mistakes, by all peoples, are made when one person, one political group, or one moral attitude believes that they can control all other people. This is where mistakes can be made, both within and without, our order. Simply stated, we are a microcosm of the world itself, because within our lodge halls can be many religious beliefs, different socio-economic backgrounds, contrasting sexual attitudes, and a multitude of differing points of view.

Lately, within our lodges there has come discussion about religion. Some feel that since we say the Lord's Prayer in our ritual, that we are a Christian group. True, many of our members were Christian to begin with, but in the last 200 years, we have added many faiths, and many different attitudes even within the wide moniker of "Christian". It should be our goal, just as in our country, to be understanding of all faiths, to realize that all members who practice friendship love and truth are as one and not be divisive no matter what the religious faith, no matter what the sexual practice, no matter what the opinion may be of our partner in our lodge. We are one in Odd Fellowship. This is what will give us our strength to grow and attract other people to our group; our own acceptance of each other, and of the world. When we fail to be accepting, we tell the world that most people are not welcome and most people will not be accepted as part of our Odd Fellow universe.



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Let's try and remember that we want members and accepting the fact that someone who does not think just like you may be just as good, just as loving, just as moral, as those we already have in our midst. If someone in your lodge does not want to say the Lord's Prayer, find out what would make them happy. Don't be punitive because that person may be as devout in their religion as you are in your own. Remember, that religion is a personal right, just as is the pursuit of happiness, given to all souls thankfully in this great and unique country called America.

In Friendship, Love and Truth, Rod Metoyer and Rick Boyles