

LIBERAL GRAND LODGE OF SERBIA - CONVENT 2025

Welcome speech by the M.:W.: Grand Master Vladimir Marković

In the name of all Brothers and Sisters of the Liberal Grand Lodge of Serbia, I welcome you to our Convent 2025, and thank you for honoring us with your presence and support. I strongly believe that our mutual visitations, interactions, and communications strengthen the Masonic Chain of Union and enable us to streamline our actions for the benefit of our Brotherhood and of the humankind in general.

After thirty-five years since the reestablishment of Freemasonry in Serbia, it can be joyfully stated that Serbian Masonry is now on solid ground. Of course, since its rebirth in 1990, it has inevitably gone through crises and changes, which are normal in the process of creating, growing, and educating a true and healthy Masonic community. But I have to say, without modesty, that a creation of the Liberal Grand Lodge of Serbia, represent a crucial moment in the development of Freemasonry in Serbia.

The global crises of the 'global village,' which we face today, like many others in the past, are simultaneously political, economic, and social, but above all, they are crises of morality. The main cause and root of most crises is always the lack of morality in society at all levels. Events in the world, and particularly in Serbia, prove that society cannot overcome political and economic problems without a moral revival as the main prerequisite for everything else. So, many might cynically ask, 'What is the price of morality?'

Any individual with basic sense of morality would answer this question the same way – morality does not cost anything; in fact, it is priceless, or in other words, its price is immeasurable. However, the material damage to the individual or society as a whole caused by lack of morality in any organized society is measurable and can be expressed in financial and economic terms. In fact, modern political science has two defined categories in its theories: 'the ethics of economy' and 'the economy of ethics'.

The nature and character of Freemasonry, its basic principles, history, and tradition, the history of Freemasonry in the world and in Serbia – in essence, all the Masonic heritage passed down to us – pose a question to each Freemason every morning: In this time of crises and significant moral and social challenges, what did I do yesterday, what am I doing today, and what will I do tomorrow for my own benefit, the benefit of my fellow men, and our society? In doing so, we must understand that the success of our social mission cannot solely come from our good deeds. The key is to set positive examples that will ultimately inspire and motivate people around us in the profane world.

For us as Freemasons, it is more important to channel our creative energy to serve others and the common good of society than to acquire personal material wealth or positions of power. It is only when we selflessly use our energy and work for the common good that we achieve the best results. We know that the primary condition for an individual to attain personal freedom, dignity, happiness, and fulfillment is to live in a society where everyone has equal opportunities to enjoy those privileges.

This concept of moral advancement, ingrained in the foundation of Freemasonry and hopefully in the foundation of every good man, places an obligation on us in these challenging times of political, economic, and social crises worldwide – that obligation is to be courageous, strong, and committed in confronting all the challenges and problems of society. We must not be afraid to speak up or act for the true cause and not shy away from any challenges, for it is only through action that we can solve problems and aid the advancement of humanity.

History teaches us that in economically poor societies like Serbia, it is very hard to maintain humane standards of living and social justice. Usually, the distribution of wealth only guarantees that the poor will get even poorer. As citizens, and particularly as Freemasons, we cannot close our eyes and ignore the obvious problems of society such as corruption, social injustice, unemployment, poverty, and the hopelessness of living for many. In fact, it is our duty to speak up and support all activities in order to find solutions for these problems and overcome them. We cannot be happy and fulfilled individuals if we live in a poverty-stricken society.

In connection with this, we cannot ignore the fact that poverty is not caused by natural disasters. On the contrary, poverty is the result of economic injustice and the greed of those who own and manage economic resources, who have failed to incorporate ethical norms into their business strategic plans and programs. The level of economic and technological development of any society is directly proportional to the condition of business ethics and morality.

Our major duty, as Freemasons, is to put forth maximum effort in preserving and strengthening Masonic ideals, with the primary purpose of advancing and improving our societies in general. I am convinced that we all agree this is the meaning and purpose of our mission in all times and circumstances. Regardless of the strength of our moral principles and our readiness to work to the best of our abilities, in order to succeed, the Liberal Grand Lodge of Serbia must constantly work on increasing their membership. Fulfilling our mission on a national level will be more effective and efficient if more Brothers work together in the quarries simultaneously. Our weakened and impoverished homeland needs our assistance.

I believe I share the opinion of all my Brothers and Sisters when I say that we are committed and have enough strength and readiness to complete our work, without which Freemasonry would not make sense.

When speaking about our readiness and capabilities to fulfill our mission in these complex times, it is necessary to highlight the connection between our mission, aims, public activities, and internal work. When we speak about solidarity, justice, truth, and love for each other, we must constantly reexamine ourselves and our efforts using the tools of Freemasonry, as our Inner Temple and the Temple of Humanity can only be raised by using the right stones, **on the angle of the square**, on the level, and by the plumb. Without this, our building will not succeed.

Freemasonry is based on universal principles and values, defined by the philosopher Emanuel Kant as a "moral law" that is universal and timeless. According to Socrates, each human being has a center within, and the whole world is centered within man because his conscience of himself is the center of his understanding of Creation. This is a crucial part of our story of Masonic morality.

Similarly, the history of Freemasonry in Serbia proves the moral strength and importance of solidarity among Brothers and Sisters. Without fraternal support from Brothers and Sisters of other obediences from Serbia and throughout Europe, this process of renewal would not be successful.

Only through respecting universal Masonic principles within our national and international organizations can we join other Masons around the world in our common goal of building the universal Temple of humanity. Within this context, we must develop, reexamine, and uphold our internal laws, rituals, and regulations, whose main purpose is to build our discipline, responsibility, and respect for each other. Only by applying these tools and the cement of our moral values can we complete our Temple.

We cannot halt the construction of our Temple. As Elias Levi says, "Everything done in the world will not make sense if the work on the Temple is not completed."

During the dedication of the new Masonic Temple in Belgrade in 1931, Deputy Grand Master of the Grand Lodge "Yugoslavia" Dušan Milićević, among other things, said: "Let this serene sanctuary be the place where truth is explored, justice is served, free thoughts flourish, characters are strengthened, and where the young Masonic generation is nurtured and trained for great things. Let powerful melodies always resonate under these arches, in ideal harmony, reconnecting pure human souls and lifting them to bright heights, where the human spirit, free from any profane or harmful influences, moves freely in the pursuit of our highest ideals. May all brothers, united in love and solid harmony, pool their efforts and strive so that everywhere and always they remember and know: that we, as Masons of Yugoslavia, envision and execute our Masonic activities solely and

always for the happiness and progress of the people and countries to which we belong, and in doing so, keep pace with all those who are sincerely and faithfully dedicated to securing lasting peace and genuine happiness for all mankind.”

Let's follow this inspirational statement by our Brother Dušan Milićević.

I have spoken.