

ALL HAIL!!! ALL HAIL!!! ALL HAIL!!!

First giving honor to the Most High God, the one that sustains all that is good. To our Past National Grand Masters, to my National Cabinet, to all Grand Masters, to our National Department Heads, to all of my Brothers, to all my of Sisters, and to all of my Comrades good morning! Without sounding redundant, I cannot go forward without first saying thank you. There are so many other things that you could be doing with your precious time and resources, however, you decided to be in this place, at this time. Again, thank you, from the bottom of my heart. To that end, on behalf of the National Cabinet and myself, welcome to the great state of Ohio. After fourteen (14) years, it is an honor to be back in the state that gave us the “great one”, Hon. Jefferson D. Tufts, Sr. Also, we must thank Grand Master Jefferson D. Tufts, Jr. and the entire Ohio delegation for hosting our 53rd Triennial Session. Let us

acknowledge and praise the Ohio delegation for all of their hard work.

Before going further, I would like all of us to pause for a moment and reflect on our accomplishments as a National Masonic Organization. The Most Worshipful National Grand Lodge has been in existence for 158 years. Among Masons of color, there are only four (4) Grand Lodges that pre-date us. Those Grand Lodges are: African Grand Lodge of Massachusetts, 1st Independent Grand Lodge of Pennsylvania, Hiram Grand Lodge of Pennsylvania and Boyer Grand Lodge of New York. Our 158 years of continual existence is truly an amazing feat! I can only stand here today and speak of this legacy because I am convinced that our Masonic forefathers and foremothers were incredible men and women. It is because of their perseverance that we are here today, and as a result, we must salute and honor them! Please stand with me, so that

we can have a quiet moment of reflection, for those who performed the hard work during extremely difficult times.

Well Brothers and Sisters, I started this amazing journey three years ago. I was full of excitement, because I believed there was so much to be accomplished, and our trestle board was clearly defined. With the assistance of my National Cabinet, and several other wonderful Brothers and Sisters, we experienced growth in states where we did not have a presence. I believe these lodges and chapters will flourish, and one day, in the very near future, we will be welcoming new Grand Lodges and Grand Chapters! We must also recognize, that there has been a decline in our membership in some of our states. This only means that we must work harder in our quest to advance York Masonry. Our challenge is to make being a member relevant, especially for the newly initiated. Our leaders must create an atmosphere that makes it important to be a member. This will require that we make our meetings educational and enjoyable.

There is nothing worse than coming out for a meeting just to hear a lot of endless squabbling. Also, we must participate in undertakings that makes our presence essential. Everyone wants their time to be respected and we all need to know that our contributions are needed and welcomed. Let me submit that if we do not create the aforementioned atmosphere, even our most loyal members will eventually lose interest and channel their energies in other directions. A presence in Boston and a National Headquarters remains unfinished business.

While these journeys have not been completed, I am not discouraged, because we have dedicated York-Rite warriors, who I believe will remain on their mission, until these essential and worthwhile projects reach fruition. Brothers and Sisters, there is still much work to do all over the National Compact.

We need everyone to be excited about our work and please, let us not spend any of our time on negative thoughts, actions nor members. Our organization will flourish if we accentuate the positive. In all sincerity, no one will ever be 100% satisfied

with our Masonic family. My challenge to you is this: show me something that we are 100% satisfied with and I will show you a church, a neighborhood, an organization or any association that no longer is growing, evolving or changing for the best.

“Change”... at times that word brings so much discomfort. Let me submit, that change is inevitable. Change will cause us to develop better solutions to issues that face us. Also, change will sometimes cause us to make mistakes. However, a mistake is nothing more than an opportunity to do a task even better!

Well, before closing, let me salute our class of 1999! Please... let us give them a round of applause! I have enjoyed getting to know you and it has been my pleasure working with you. Now just because you are coming out of office, doesn't mean that we will not need your expertise. You should be proud of even the smallest accomplishments, because there are not many who have walked in your shoes! On a personal note, one of our National Department Heads told me three (3) years ago that I

should smile more! Hopefully, they realize that I took the comment seriously, and in fact, I do smile more!! National Cabinet, you have been a blessing. Thank you for your support and especially thank you for challenging me to think and for not always agreeing with me!

Finally, let me share a Biblical passage with you. “He who dwells in the secret place of the Most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty. I will say of the Lord, He is my refuge and my fortress; My God; in Him will I trust.” I enjoy tremendous security because I put my faith in God. My faith is unmovable because God has made me the following promises: God has promised me His Presence, so that I don’t have to be lonely at the top. God has promised me His Protection, so that when I take risks, He will keep me safe. God has promised me Peace, so that I won’t feel insecure in unknown territory. God has promised me Prospective, so that my eternal view of life remains steady. God has promised me his Provisions, so that

no matter what my needs are, He will meet them. And God has promised me his Power, so that in adversity he will deliver me and help me reach my goals.

Brothers and Sisters I am going to continue to travel under the guidance of the Most High God's all seeing eye. I can do this proudly because 25 years ago during the first minute of that new day, I was raised from a dead level, to an upright perpendicular, on the square. I passed from the square through the compass and saw the letter "G". Then, I saw the Star In The East and went to worship it. I received the mark of a Master, passed the chair... and was honored to do so. I was also tried by the cap stone, which completed the temple, then three times three, but I wasn't finished. I went threw the chamber of reflection and was crowned the son of the King, and looking at the blazing sun with my naked eye, and I never blinked. My feet are still burning from that walk across the desert, where I tied my camel, to a date tree, just like all men

of Noble Birth should do, and after being accepted and then elevated to the 33rd and last degree, I was humbled by the Most Worshipful Grand Masters of the greatest Masonic family on the face of this or any known planet and allowed to be YOUR National Grand Master!

As always, Execution, Not Excuses. Peace be with you, and thank God for allowing us to assemble again!

Brothers, Sisters and Comrades, I, Felton N. Ferguson, Most Worshipful National Grand Master of the Most Worshipful National Grand Lodge of Free and Accepted Ancient York Masons, Prince Hall Origin – National Compact in and for these United States, on the continent of North America, declare this 53rd Triennial Session open for the dispatch of business.

Take timely notice and govern yourselves accordingly!

This I declare once, this I declare twice and this I declare a third and final time.

Hon. Felton N. Ferguson, 33^o

M.: W.: National Grand Master

M.: W.: National Grand Lodge

Free & Accepted Ancient York Rite Masons

Prince Hall Origin, National Compact

In the United States on the Continent of North America