

**First, giving honor to the Most High God, the great “I Am”, that makes all things possible. To our Past National Grand Masters, to my National Cabinet, to all Grand Masters, to our National Department Heads, to all of my Sisters, to all of my Brothers and to all of my Comrades, good morning! Brothers and Sisters during these times of economic uncertainty, it is incumbent upon me to stop, and thank you for attending our National Session. As I have stated in the past, you setting aside your personal business and pleasures to be here with us, is appreciated. As always, I 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 Alabama. In October of 2005, I was privileged to witness the delegation from Alabama at work. Let me state publicly, I was indeed impressed with their preparations and was in awe of their presentations. These Sisters and Brothers set a new standard of excellence and I suspect going forward, other states will find Alabama a tough act to follow! I take this time to thank the delegation**

**from Alabama for all of their hard work and I am certain that we, the members of the National Compact will be in the “good hands” of your graciousness!**

**Well Sisters and Brothers, since we last convened, our beloved National Compact has experienced several wonderful milestones and unfortunately some extreme low points. One of these milestones is the state of Arkansas. I feel such a sense of pride every time I think about these fine Brothers and Sisters! They exemplify the finest tenets of Brotherhood and Sisterhood. When you are in their presence, you will be overwhelmed by their “good and square work!” On June 3, 2006, three regularly constituted Lodges of the Most Worshipful National Grand Lodge of Free and Accepted Ancient York Masons – Prince Hall Origin; National Compact convened a solemn convention for the express purpose of establishing a Grand Lodge in the state of Arkansas!! These Brothers, who are members of Nubian Prince Lodge No. 11,**

**Hiram Abiff Lodge No. 12 and F.N. Ferguson Lodge No. 13, formed all of the necessary committees and began their history making work. The Hon. Cedric Lewis, 32° – M.W. Grand Master of the state of Mississippi, assisted these esteemed brethren through this historical process. I am proud to report that this solemn convention of Master Masons, elected the Hon. Christopher Graham, 32° as the first Grand Master of the Most Worshipful Compact Grand Lodge of Free and Accepted Ancient York Masons in and for the state of Arkansas! When we assemble on Monday, along with the Brothers, it will be my honor to welcome the Most Worshipful Compact Grand Lodge into our sacred society! Will the delegation from Arkansas to please stand? Brothers and Sisters, please join me in giving a warm round of applause for the latest member of our National family! Thank you.**

**When I hear the words Hurricane Katrina, it brings back memories of those seemingly endless days of news coverage that we all witnessed. During my lifetime, I have never seen such devastation. During those chaotic days and weeks, my prayers to the Most High God were that He would provide a portion of strength to all those affected, more especially, our Brothers and Sisters on the gulf coast. When trials and tribulations affect our members, we the National Grand Lodge must take action and we did take action. With the assistance of my National Secretary and National Treasurer a proverbial sign of distress was sent out across the National Compact to our Grand Lodges to provide whatever financial assistance they could afford. This effort was styled “Operation Cable Tow”. As a result, we were able to make contributions directly to members that were affected by this terrible tragedy. During those dark days, we were humbled by the show of support that came from virtually every corner of the National Compact. In fact while there were members who did not support our**

**national effort, however, we cannot forget those who made state and individual contributions directly to the citizens of the gulf coast. For example, as reported in the York Rite Bulletin, the Hon. Rev. Roosevelt Franklin, 33°, donated much needed supplies in excess of \$100,000! There were so many individual members, lodges, chapters, and other Masonic bodies that contributed to our efforts and we will thank everyone before this session is closed. The efforts of our York Rite family deserve a thunderous round of applause, do you agree? Thank you. As a final note, all of the funds were not distributed and they will remain in a special bank account. It is my intention to set up a perpetual disaster relief fund so that in the future, we will be able to demonstrate the “length of our cable tow” immediately.**

**During our 2005 triennial session, we began in earnest to move forward with establishing a national building fund. We have developed a solid financial beginning to address our need for a**

**National Headquarters. Our National Building Fund**

**Committee has worked diligently and I personally thank each member who is currently serving and more especially those of us who have given their hard earned money to create a lasting legacy for those who will follow us. Brothers and Sisters, our pledges year after year must continue to grow. If we continue at our current pace, my calculations tell me that it will take us 8.9 years to accumulate a twenty percent down payment. At that time, we will then have to gather the brightest minds in the National Compact to develop a plan for securing a mortgage. Let me clearly say to all assembled today: 8.9 years is too long!! As this session unfolds, it is my intent to champion an enhancement to our existing effort. It will be a proposal that in prior years we would not have approved, however, this is not prior years and we are forward thinking people, willing to do for ourselves in a way never before witnessed in the National Compact. National Department Heads, Grand Masters and all Grand Department Heads, male AND female,**

**we will be speaking with all of you before the end of this session. By the way, please do not stop your individual pledges.**

**Our other national initiative is of course the Jefferson D. Tufts, Sr. Scholarship Fund. We made a quantum leap in funding last year and if we continue our current level of support we will be able to provide financial help for a few deserving young men and women every year. I have one caution: never forget whose name is on this scholarship fund. We must never tarnish his legacy.**

**Just as some of you, I too attended the National OES Workshop and the Imperial Conclave. Both gatherings offered me solid information that I will use going forward. I want to personally thank Sister Mattie Baker, Noble Robert Curry and Daughter Hattie Sutton for their hospitality during both sessions! Recently, I read a book called The Servant. It is an inspiring book, that passes on the model that is necessary to**

**improve your leadership skills by showing compassion, being willing to be available as a resource and the understanding that a leader is actually a servant. When I finished the book, I smiled and thought to myself, I saw several of those positive traits during those two weekends. I smiled again and thought to myself, while we may have quite a distance to go, we are growing as an organization! This is for every Brother and Sister assembled; if you are in a position of leadership and you do not know how to compassionately apply Masonic law, if you love this organization, do what I did, please read the book The Servant. You see, as a leader and by virtue of your position, you have Power. However, what you must possess is Authority!! Let me differentiate the two: “Power” is intoxicating and as a result, our judgment can get clouded. Power will have you spending far too much time telling our members who you are. If your leadership style relies on Power, you will never have enough time to act in the capacity of the servant. On the other hand, “Authority” provides an**

**opportunity for you to lead with vision, foresight and compassion. We will follow you willingly and assist you in reaching our mutual goals.**

**I will continue my tradition of leaving you with a biblical passage. It is written in the book of Colossians, 3<sup>rd</sup> chapter, 23<sup>rd</sup> verse: “Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men”. From my perspective the operative words in the bible verse are “all your heart”. To me, working with all of my heart means no matter what you or I do, we must do it with passion! If you demonstrate passion for the National Grand Lodge, it will be impossible for our initiatives to fail. In the book “21 Indispensable Qualities of a Leader”, experts say that successful leaders have superior credentials, intelligence and education. However, more than anything else, their passion is what makes the difference. There are four simple truths about passion – 1) Passion is the first step to achievement – Our desires determine our destiny. The**

**stronger our fire, the greater our desire will be to achieve the unachievable. 2) Passion will increase our will power – There is no substitute for our passion. It is the fuel that increases our will to do great things! 3) Passion changes you – If we follow our passion instead of others’ perceptions, we cannot help but become a more dedicated and productive organization. 4) Passion makes the impossible, possible – Rest assured, when something fires the soul, impossibilities vanish!**

**As I prepare to close, I would like to reflect upon the Sacred Temple, and its meaning. The Holy Bible speaks in great detail about the first Temple in Jerusalem. Every Brother, Sister and Comrade under the sound of my voice, represents the brick and mortar of the Temple. Every Brother and Sister under the sound of my voice has taken an obligation to perfect a union with the Temple, as we individually stand united to support a common goal. We are as individuals, the brick and mortar; we are collectively a Most Worshipful Temple, dedicated to**

**pleasing the MOST HIGH GOD. Each Brother and Sister who is about our Father's business knows about this Temple, that magnificent spiritual temple.... THINE HOUSE NOT MADE BY HANDS!!! As the Sun falls from its place of high meridian on each of us, let us not stand still in perfecting that House Not Made by Hands, which will last eternally, forever and ever.... AMEN, AMEN, AMEN!**

**Sisters and Brothers, this morning, one of my goals is to continue to share my passions for our sacred society with you. It is my prayer, that you will adopt the same passions, as we move forward. 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 148<sup>th</sup> Grand Masters Council and National Department Head's Workshop 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.**