



Grand Chapter of Royal Arch Masons of Alberta



CHRISTMAS MESSAGE

My Companions,

God Rest Ye Merry Gentlemen, Let Nothing You Dismay

The Magic of Christmas is not lost in the outside world with its pandemic and economic/social unrest. The warmth of Christmas exists in our hearts and souls as we share our love for one another. It exhibits itself as we continue to care for others by practicing every possible containment measure for this hidden enemy's spread. Your actions are what sustains each of us as we place our trust in the future.

In 1992 Queen Elizabeth II, in her Christmas Message to the Commonwealth, referred to the year as an “*annus horribilis*,” a Latin phrase meaning horrible year. She added “1992 is not a year on which I shall look back with undiluted pleasure . . .” We too may have considered 2020 as our “*annus horribilis*”; however, I am sure we can all look back on this year and find moments which have given us memories of pleasure even though it was different and often difficult.

As Masons of the Royal Arch we have still been able to share times together, to experience that unique brotherhood that comes only with our Companions. Often this sharing was of a virtual nature; a phone call to simply touch base, a birthday wish posted on Facebook or sent via email or text, or possibly face to face even if only on “Zoom”.

Of course we were all disappointed by the cessation of actual meetings; however, but for a handful of queries, your Officers have been overwhelmed by the support and encouragement we have received from across this vast Jurisdiction. If there is one thing Capitular Masons are known for, it is *caring for one another*. This past year has shown the true meaning of that. We not only care *about* one another, we step up, pitch in and care *for* each other.

To each of you who have made that personal call to a Companion who is elderly, ill, needy, or simply alone – thank you. For all the extras you have done for others in your everyday life – thank you. For each time you have put on a mask, kept two meters apart, and washed your hands – thank you for protecting others. We all know that there is strength in numbers, however compassion comes one person at a time.

For over 18 months I have been asking that you “*Let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father in Heaven*”. Thank you for the light which you have carried into the darkness and the good works you have performed in your daily lives, doing what you know is kind and correct.

Now I wish to pause in my message to all of you and address our Companions in Stoney Chapter #41. My good friends and Companions from west of Edmonton – you have shone brightly during this time of seeming darkness in Alberta. Because of your initiative, the funds raised for the Food Banks of Alberta, and the families thus helped, are truly an inspiration. On behalf of all of the Royal Arch Masons in Alberta – thank you.

Christmas in a Pandemic – what will it be like?

For many of us who are among the more fortunate in society, Christmas will be a little quieter and a little less crowded in the home and around the dinner table. However we will still talk to and see (possibly virtually) our family and friends. There will still be gifts, too much food, and we will carry on believing that this too shall pass and “next year” will be back to normal.

For others in our communities this will be a time like no other. Some will be without family as they may be stranded in unfamiliar settings by reason of work or travel restrictions. Some may be international students unable to travel home, others unemployed and perhaps desperate, and there will be those unable to put food on the table for their children.

There will be families deeply saddened at what should be the happiest time of the year. Family members may have fallen victim to the Virus. Loved ones may have passed away. Families may have been torn asunder by minor disagreements or major conflicts. Some will spend the holiday season sitting at the bedside of an ill child. Many will simply be alone or suffering from deep depression.

Dr. Deena Hinshaw recently said that “*from darkness will come light*”. We in the Arch will have opportunities to carry light into that darkness experienced by others. Possibly there will be an occasion where you can safely integrate others into your celebrations. Perhaps you will recognize a time or place where others in your circle can be of assistance to those in need at Christmas. Please be mindful to observe others and find ways to make everyone’s holiday season a little brighter. We pride ourselves on being a part of the *Brotherhood of Man* – so let’s be brotherly.

On a similar note, please remember that local and national charities will find fund raising an even greater challenge this year. Many fundraising events and promotions have been cancelled yet the need for their services and programs has grown exponentially with COVID-19. Remember those who will not have a Merry Christmas and support charitable good works as you are able.

“Somehow, not only for Christmas
But all the long year through,
The joy that you give to others
Is the joy that comes back to you.”

On behalf of the Officers of the Grand Chapter, may each of you, and those dear to you, have a Merry Christmas and may your New Year be filled with good health and happiness.

Fraternally and *with Tidings of Comfort and Joy,*

Rod Ponech

Grand First Principal “Z”

***“Let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works,
and glorify your Father, which is in heaven.”***