Hello, Brothers! I am the new Mentoring Chair for the District. I am honored with this important task, and plan to follow in the footsteps of my predecessor, Bro. Gabriel Iza (who wrote our Mentoring Manual). I also look forward to each Lodge’s Mentoring officer’s input and suggestions on what has worked for them, or has not. We don’t want to re-invent the wheel!

Mentoring is a very important activity, as it seriously impacts retention of newly raised Brothers. It has at least three important components: Protocol, Liturgy and Social. Every new member needs to learn how to deal with our ceremony Protocol, which is most likely new and different to them. Very important is for them to understand what meaning such ceremonies convey, as Freemasonry’s method of teaching is through images. Finally, the newly-raised Brothers need to quickly feel at home in their new Lodges, and to know their Lodge Brethren.

We look forward to visiting the District Lodges with our DDGM, and to getting in contact and working with our Lodge Mentoring officers, to accomplish this task.

Fraternally/Jorge.

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September 18, 2014.
Hello, Brothers! Just a short follow up on our Mentoring activities. We have been visiting some of our District Lodges with the DDGM, meeting some of you, and leaving my email and phone (which are also included below) in case you want to contact me.

We have mentioned in such visits how Mentoring activity is different from Masonic Education. Mentoring takes place during the crucial first year of newly raised Brothers’ Lodge life, and can seriously impact their retention. Masonic Education is a lifelong endeavor, and builds upon that.

One of the first questions that we may deal with, during Mentoring, pertains to explaining what is a Mason. For, many of our newly raised Brothers may not have a clear idea of what we are, or stand for. There are many explanations, all of them very correct. But I prefer Brother George H. Free’s poem: “What Makes a Mason?” which begins and continues as follows:

What makes you a MASON, o Brother of Mine? It isn’t the duegard nor is it the sign (…)
That you to your sworn obligation are true – ’Tis that, Brother mine, makes a Mason of you (…)

The entire poem can be found in [http://www.masonicworld.com/education/files/feb03/nov.htm](http://www.masonicworld.com/education/files/feb03/nov.htm)

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October 8, 2014.
Hello, Brothers!

Our Institution has many facets, and allows us to develop different interests in it. For, *Freemasonry is like a mirror: you get out of it, just as much as you put into it.*

A new Brother may already have, in his mind, a specific objective to achieve. For example, he may seek Fellowship, which is very legitimate. Or he may look for self-improvement, or esoteric knowledge. But Freemasonry offers much more! As mentors, we should discover these specific objectives, and help our new Brother to accomplish them. And we should also show him, how to achieve so many other goals that our Institution inspires.

Our M.W. Grand Master W. J. Thomas ended his St. Johns Day speech, in Utica, quoting from the poem The Builders ([http://www.ellenbailey.com/poems/ellen_152.htm](http://www.ellenbailey.com/poems/ellen_152.htm)):

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Am I a builder who works with care  
Measuring life by the rule and square;  
Or am I a wrecker as I walk the town  
Content with the labor of tearing down?
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For, through its ethical component, Freemasonry helps build better men and citizens, stronger families and friendships, fruitful communities, and fuller lives.

Fraternally/Jorge.

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Hello, Brothers!

I received an interesting question (and they are most welcome!). *Who can be a Mentor?* First, there should be at least two. One is the Brother who introduces the candidate. He can acquaint the new Brother with other Lodge members, sit with him in Lodge, and explain to him what is happening, and what to do, when. The second Mentor deals with the significance of our Ritual and our Craft. And the case can be made for selecting, as Mentor, a relatively novel Brother.

When instruction happens, the teacher usually learns as much as the student. The novel Mentor has an opportunity to fix and expand on what he has, himself, learned. He also has a more recent experience about what a candidate, or a newly raised Brother, encounters after joining our Institution. The novel Mentor should regularly consult an older, and more experienced Brother. And above all, he must Read! For there are certain books the Mentor must review.

First, is the *Standard Work and Lectures of Ancient Craft Masonry* (the little black book). Then, the *MDC booklet* that, most likely, the novel Mentor has studied, himself. Then, is the *Mentoring Guide* that V.W. Gabe Iza carefully prepared: every Lodge in our District has a copy. Finally, there is a jewel of a book: *The Builders* (http://sacred-texts.com/mas/bui/index.htm), written one century ago by Bro. Joseph F. Newton, Grand Chaplain of the Grand Lodge of Iowa. It remains very current and instructive, and has an excellent and complete discussion of the history of our Institution. One can borrow *The Builders* (and other books) from our own *Chancellor Livingston Library* (http://www.nymasoniclibrary.org/), or buy it from *Macoy* (http://www.macoy.com/)

Finally, if a Mentoring team combining a novel and an experienced Brother is formed, it is even better!

Fraternally/Jorge.

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Hello, Brothers!

We have been talking about ideas to implement with new petitioners, entered apprentices, fellow craftsmen, and raised brothers, to combat attrition and help them in their first steps toward becoming good masons. Notwithstanding all things already said, there is one that stands out, and that has been raised time and again throughout the years by many Brethren, including our own Grand Master William J. Thomas: *avoiding Boring Lodge Meetings*!

Reasons for Boring meetings, as well as ideas to enrich them have been identified in many books and articles (e.g. About Time: [http://www.msana.com/aboutime_foreword.asp](http://www.msana.com/aboutime_foreword.asp)), as well as opinions, from developing new ideas (e.g. “A Pilgrim’s Path”, by Bro. John J. Robinson), to better implementing older ones (e.g. PGM Dwight L. Smith’s “Withering are we Travelling”, in: [http://pictoumasons.org/library/Smith,%20Dwight%20L.%20-%20WhitherAreWeTraveling%20%5Bpdf%5D.pdf](http://pictoumasons.org/library/Smith,%20Dwight%20L.%20-%20WhitherAreWeTraveling%20%5Bpdf%5D.pdf) and "Why This Confusion?", also available in the Internet: [http://masonicrestorationfoundation.org/documents/DLS_WhyThisConfusion.pdf](http://masonicrestorationfoundation.org/documents/DLS_WhyThisConfusion.pdf)). All of them present and illustrate very interesting, valid and persuasive points of view.

Some ideas include developing a *Bank of Speakers* in our Districts, available to all Lodges; or inviting outside speakers, to develop interesting topics. Drawbacks include difficulties in finding skilled speakers with appropriate subjects, that will interest most lodge members.

Liverpool Syracuse Lodge has successfully used the *Question Box*. A box is placed in the foyer, where anonymous questions are submitted. At the end of each meeting, questions are introduced, then resolved by general participation. Seasoned brethren enjoy sharing their knowledge about the issue at hand, while novice ones enjoy acquiring more *Light in Masonry*. Everyone gains.

Whatever the approach, it is definitely necessary to make Lodge Meetings *interesting*: not only to keep in the new members, but also to raise attendance among the old ones! Interesting lodge meetings build stronger lodges and better educated masons. They also build a stronger Craft.

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Hello, Brothers!

As Mentors, we often receive these questions: What is Freemasonry? What are its aims and objectives? What does it do? We want to share two points of view that address them: one from within our own Craft, and another from outside of it.

PGM Bro. Dwight L. Smith, in his book *Whither are we Traveling*, answered it: “Freemasonry erects its temples within the hearts of men. Our own Declaration of Principles proclaims: Through the improvement and strengthening of the character of the individual man, Freemasonry seeks to improve the community”. Then, PGM Smith added: ”The purpose of Freemasonry is to take an individual –one man at a time – and try to make a better man out of him”.

Bro. Smith also quoted Venerable Bro. Nathan Roscoe Pound, Deputy Grand Master for the Grand Lodge of Massachusetts, and Dean of Harvard’s Law School. Bro. Roscoe Pound, in his message to the Craft, considered that “Freemasonry has more to offer the Twentieth Century than the Twentieth Century has to offer Freemasonry.”

An independent point of view is advanced by Prof. Jose A. Ferrer Benimeli, who is not a Mason but a Jesuit researcher. Ferrer Benimeli, who founded and chaired CEHME, a European Center for the Study of Masonic History, considers that “Freemasonry is an association that defends human dignity, solidarity and fraternity. Its objective is to obtain the moral and cultural improvement of its members, through the construction of a symbolic temple dedicated to virtue. (…) It is a reunion of men that believe in God, and work together over differences in social rank, and diversity in political and religious opinions”. [http://www.aragoninvestiga.org/tag/centro-de-estudios-historicos-de-la-masoneria-espanola/]  

Sometime soon, we plan to convene a meeting with all Mentoring or Education Officers, from our Onondaga District Lodges, to overview and implement the excellent Mentoring Handbook that V.W. Bro. Gabe Iza prepared, when he was the District Mentoring Chair.

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Hello, Brothers!

We want to probe further into three important questions regarding the nature of Freemasonry. We share an address given by Bro. Laurence Healey, Senior Grand Warden of the Grand Lodge of British Columbia (http://freemasonry.bcy.ca/grand_masters/healey_l/service_club.html) and delivered to the 10th Annual Conference of Western Canadian Grand Lodges, in response to the important question: "Should Our Grand Lodges Sponsor a Specific Program?"

Bro. Healy addresses a topic often raised by some brethren: why doesn’t the Craft directly put its principles into practice through specific social or community projects? Its answer may help better understand what is Freemasonry, what are its aims and objectives, and what does it do.

Bro. Healy explains how “In the masonic design the major effort is directed toward the development of character and improvement of life and conduct in the individual man. (...) By a peculiar system of ritual and ceremonies, great principles of morality and virtue are inculcated. (...) Lessons are derived from the powerful drama of life and death as portrayed in its allegories (...) keeping the great principles of Truth, Honor, Charity and Justice strong and active in the lives of individuals.”

Bro Healy concludes that Freemasonry “deals in principles rather than in projects, in the dissemination of ideals rather than in programs of self-advertisement”. Then, he provides this image: “A masonic lodge may be likened to a school, or university. (...) Its graduates, having learned that Freemasonry is a way of life, a quality of life to be lived day by day, go out into the world and give practical effect to the principles and ideals which they have acquired”.

By the time The Word issue appears, we will have scheduled a meeting with all Mentoring or Education Officers, from our Onondaga District Lodges, to discuss the Mentoring Handbook that Bro. Iza prepared. Mentoring is so important that it is discussed on page 130 of the 24 Inch Gauge, the Masonic Resource Guide used in the Road to the East course, which is taken by all those interested in becoming Lodge Wardens and Masters.

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Hello, Brothers!

A Brother asks us what other activities, in addition to attending Lodge and building our character, can we undertake as Freemasons. Indeed, *in the masonic design the major effort is directed toward development of character*. This is our main objective, from which everything else stems. However, from the application of this tenant, and of our principles of *Truth, Honor, Charity and Justice*, many additional outcomes such as Fellowship and Community Commitment are derived. And interested Brethren are encouraged to participate.

Members of other organizations also make good friends. But, the sharing of our ethical principles and values make those we interact with, in Lodge, something special: *Brothers*. Such strong bonding provides many opportunities to create diverse, interesting and useful activities.

A second, important result of Freemasonry stems from its purpose of *making some Good men Better*. For, *some of these better men* may feel a call to contribute to their community, and will do so in many ways. For example, we can, silently and individually, visit the sick, volunteer as school tutors or library story tellers, or create our own service projects, like the one this mentor develops: [http://web.cortland.edu/matresearch](http://web.cortland.edu/matresearch).

We can also work in some of our particular Lodge *formal community programs*, such as *Visits with Santa, Easter Eggs Hunt*, etc. Or we can participate in *Grand Lodge-fostered programs* such as *blood donations* and *pantry drives*, or in our *Masonic Child ID*, among several others.

New programs can be discussed among interested Brethren, before and after our Lodge sessions. Relevant ones can then be implemented by our Lodge, or developed elsewhere. Bro. Mark Tabbert, in his book *American Freemasons* (page 163), describes how clubs like Rotarians and Kiwanis were originally organized by Freemasons, looking to implement their new ideas.

Our Craft, acting as a catalyst agent, has traditionally stimulated and linked Brethren interested in *community* service. Bro. Angel Millar, in his book *Freemasonry: a history*, states how “to some degree American Masonry has remained polarized (...) between essentially civic and community based, and mystical ” (p. 219). Bros. Washington and Franklin are examples.

In every case, however, we must be very careful that our proposals do not disrupt the *Lodge Harmony*. For, *Harmony is the support of all Institutions, especially that of ours*.

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