Franklin D. Roosevelt — "The Great Communicator"
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The Cardinal Principles of Odd Fellowship

If there is any originality about Odd Fellowship it is the application of certain principles to this and past ages of dramatization we see as we pass through the various stages with dramatization of certain characters who are controlled by certain principles. These principles are old and so we cannot claim originality for Odd Fellowship; but they have taught us three things that are outstanding in the Order:

1. Democracy. When a man joins the Odd Fellows he is not asked about his religious convictions. It does not matter to what church he belongs. The supreme question is, does he believe in God. He is not asked to subscribe to any sect or creed or class or race distinction.

2. Altruism. Altruism is just thinking as much of the other fellow as you do of yourself. Read the wonderful story of Jonathan and David. Watch King Saul as he shows his jealousy in trying to do away with the shepherd boy. As you watch the story move with rapidity and passion, would it not seem to you that the natural thing for Jonathan to do would be to take his father's side and thus save his crown? It is said that blood runs thicker
than water. In this case Jonathan would stand by his father and thus be
certain of becoming King of Israel. But he did not do this. He was altruistic
enough to consider his needy friend and stand by him in his hours of dis-
tress, and in so doing he literally threw away his crown. But what does
this matter when one has learned the supreme lesson of altruism.

3. This world is sick. Every man seems to be demanding his pound of flesh. The barriers of religion are not yet broken down. Political wiles and
schemes still prevail. Class distinction is still prominent. Race hatred is
rampant. And one raises the question, how is the world to be cured of its
ills? The answer can be given in one word—Fraternity—and upon whose
shoulders rests the responsibility of administering this panacea for the
world’s ills.

These three things I have mentioned are enough to cause us to admire
those who are working for fraternities.

The Independent Order of Odd Fellows was born for a great purpose and
to meet these needs of mankind—its three great cardinal principles which
uplift it before the world. It endeavors to instill, cultivate and develop in
the lives of all its members these principles which we believe are fundamental
to the happiness of each individual and through him, to his community, state
and nation. This magnificent Order appeared in this country a little more
than a hundred years ago. Before that it had existed in England, from
which a charter was obtained for the organization of Washington Lodge
No. 1 in the City of Baltimore in 1819. Tom Wildey was a great and moving
spirit in the beginning. He and four companions launched our noble Order
and from that beginning the membership has grown and spread to almost
every land. Today we number almost two and a half million, including the
Rebeccas. The Rebecca Degree was inaugurated for women in 1851. Now
they have nearly ten thousand lodges and a membership of nearly nine hun-
dred thousand. The Oddfellow has sixty-eight Grand Lodges; fifty-six
Grand Encampments; seventeen thousand Subordinate Lodges and more than
three thousand Subordinate Encampments. The Order owns and operates
fifty-seven homes for orphans, widows and needy, which are relieving the dis-
tress of about four thousand five hundred dependent worthy individuals. The
record of our relief work cannot be suppressed. Last year the total relief
paid, reached, I am told, the colossal sum of eight million dollars. That
means twenty-one thousand dollars per day or nine thousand dollars per
hour. With swelling pride we review our record in the realm of benevolence.

This giant of the fraternal world was born into our country during trouble-
some times. The war of 1812 had just ended. The Monroe Doctrine had
been inaugurated to protect American interest. The whole world was in
tumult, with class arrayed against class. Bitterness, jealousy and hatred
were sweeping our own nation. It was a time of social distress and an anti-
dote was the supreme need of the hour. People began to seek a remedy.
They believed the fundamental principles of brotherhood were being neglected.
In their extremity, for the purpose of teaching and emphasizing these
principles the Order of Odd Fellows was called into existence. An foundation,
principles of life, this letter puts forth and emphasizes three essentials—
Friendship, Love and Truth.

Friendship is the most valuable possession of mankind. To obtain material
for lessons on this theme, recourse was had to the most valuable book in the
world—the Bible. The story of David and Jonathan was chosen, for there
is nowhere any truer or more beautiful story of friendship than that which
existed between these two men. In the midst of the selfish ambitions, envy
and hatred of his father, and the conditions of those times, Jonathan,
although endangering his life by so doing, remained a true and faithful friend
to David.

Love was the second great essential,—of these times and of all times. To
Teach this the parable of the Good Samaritan was chosen, and no more urgent
lesson is needed in the world today. The teaching of this parable in all its
beauty will surely adjust and remove every human difficulty, whether racial,
industrial, political or religious. It will completely break down every barrier
that separates the interest of humanity.

The last of these great essentials is Truth. It has a place of tremendous
emphasis. The great Teacher has said, "Ye shall know the truth, and the
truth shall make you free." So, my brothers, do not become overheated in argument in any realm, be it social, industrial, political or religious, for Truth will survive. Therefore be moderate. Truth will not wear out, and it needs no heated defense.

In conclusion let me add we do not claim perfection for our noble Order nor offer to the world a plan of salvation. We recognize the glory and dignity of the church as supreme. There is no conflict nor antagonism between our teachings. We are both doing the same great work. Our Order is temporary for a time only. The church is eternal. Therefore let us combine these two for a perfect citizen; then we will have no worry, for as the man is so will he reflect in his local community, his state and his nation.