

# TO BE OR NOT TO BE?

*That is the  
question.*

Have you been contemplating taking another step in Masonry? Undecided what step to take? If you answered yes to both questions, I'd like to share some light with you. What you are now going through is normal. I've been there - done that. What you don't want to do is rush yourself, or have someone do the rushing for you. Making this kind of decision, is to be of your own free will and accord - and not anyone else's - period!

If I were in your shoes, I would definitely give it plenty of thought before jumping into the frying pan, so to speak, just to say that you belong to another Order of our institution. Do your homework. Inquire from other brothers you know about the various appendant bodies they may belong to. Get as much information as you possibly can and take notes. Ask for brochure material. You can even do more detailed research on the World-Wide Web. If you're still not satisfied, or want more straightforward answers, about a particular institution of Masonry - I would go directly to the source. A Google search will put you in touch with any and all Masonic appendant bodies. They will gladly assist you with your questions and you can be assured of getting the correct answers.

As a Master Mason, the perfect track for progression would be to: Take **The Best First Step To More Light**. And exactly what step is that, that I am leading too? The answer is Royal Arch Masonry, which is the first part of the York Rite system of the Masonic degrees. Royal Arch Masons meet as a Chapter, and the Royal Arch confers four degrees: Mark Master, Past Master, Most Excellent Master, and Royal Arch. In the states of Virginia and West Virginia, you receive two additional degrees: The Royal and Select Master. These two degrees are known as the Cryptic Degrees. In order to take these degrees in other jurisdictions - it is necessary to petition a Cryptic Council after becoming a Royal Arch Mason.

Why then is Royal Arch Masonry **The Best First Step To More Light**? For starters: The Royal Arch is the **only** Order within the various institutions of Freemasonry that reveals the "true" word of a Master Mason. If you recall, when being raised to the sublime degree of Master Mason, you were given the substitute word. As a Royal Arch Mason, you will participate in some of the most beautiful rituals in all of Masonry. You'll also become a member of the oldest Rite in Freemasonry, and meet brothers you never knew were members of this York Rite Institution.

My brother, give it thought, educate yourself and then take action to open that door like so many of us have done before. Therefore, I say, It is Better to Be - Than Not to Be!

Holiness to the Lord,

Edward (Ed) Tooma, High Priest  
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