

**THE POWER OF POSITIVE THINKING**  
**BROTHER NORMAN VINCENT PEALE**  
**MAY 31, 1898 – DECEMBER 24, 1993**

The Fall season is here, and winter with its arctic blasts of snow and cold will soon be upon us. As the landscape becomes harsh and barren, and the temperatures plummet, it is easy to forget the bounteous harvests that the Fall had just brought and that the glory and beauty of Spring are just a few months away. Similarly, in our personal lives, we often become mired down in the problems that confront us daily; our lives seem to lose meaning, purpose, and focus, as a cold blanket of discontent with our lives and surroundings settles miserably down upon us. Members in our lodges face similar problems in trying to deal with the twin problems of membership and overcoming the apathy within the lodge. All too often, when wrapped in the bitter grasp of despondency, we give up and ignore signs of change around us which signal the return of better times. In so doing we fail to take steps which would hasten the onset of renewed growth and prosperity or, even worse, allow opportunity to wither and die because we give up hope or no longer care. We miss the lesson of the seasons and lie buried in a perpetual winter of despair.

Some men, however, refuse to succumb to the pressures and problems of everyday life, never losing sight of the spring that awaits those who refuse to fail. One of these special men was Dr. and Brother Norman Vincent Peale who touched millions of people during his lifetime with his message that when people seek the assistance of God and utilize the power gained by thinking positively and accepting responsibility for their lives and actions, failure can be turned into success and despondency into happiness. As a minister, he was believed in the lessons of hope and promise contained in the scriptures; as a Mason, he was committed to the positive outlook of the builder for whom the future must hold promise if their work is to have meaning, and as a man, he served as a powerful example for those who heard his message.

Norman Vincent Peale, the son of a Methodist minister, was born on May 31, 1898 in Bowersville, Ohio. After graduating from Ohio Wesleyan University, he began a career in journalism, but soon became disenchanted and decided to follow his father's footsteps and enter the ministry. He was ordained in the Methodist Church in 1922 and served in several pastorates. He received his Doctor of Divinity (D.D.) Degree from Syracuse University in 1931 and was named Pastor of the Marble Collegiate Reformed Church in New York City in 1932 where he led a congregation of over 4000 members.

Peale's message was carried to an even larger audience via the mass media: radio, television, newspapers, and magazines, including the very popular Guidepost magazine which he published and edited. Peale's philosophy was inspirational and based on the principle of self-help. In the preface to his most popular work, The Power of Positive Thinking, which sold over two million copies worldwide and was published in twelve different languages, Peale expressed his philosophy of life and his purpose in writing his book: "The book is written with deep concern for the pain, difficulty, and struggle of human existence. It teaches the cultivation of the peace of mind, not as an escape from life into protected quiescence, but as a power center out of which comes driving energy for constructive personal and social living. It teaches positive thinking, not as a means to fame, riches, or power, but as the practical application of faith to overcome defeat and accomplish worthwhile creative values in life. It teaches a hard, disciplinary way of life, but one which offers great joy to the person who achieves victory over himself and the difficult circumstances of the world."

It is not surprising that Peale was attracted by the teachings of the Masonic Fraternity. Brother Norman Vincent Peale became a Master Mason in Minwood Lodge No. 1062 at Brooklyn, New York in 1926 and was active in a number of Masonic bodies throughout the rest of his life. He served as Grand Chaplain of the Grand Lodge of New York from 1949-1951. He was also a member of the York and Scottish Rite bodies and the Shrine. He served as Grand Prelate for the Grand Encampment and was Imperial Grand Chaplain of the Shrine. In the Scottish Rite, he was honored by receiving his 33<sup>rd</sup> Degree in 1959 and was a recipient of the Gourgas medal for his distinguished service. He received honors from many Grand Lodges including the George Washington Distinguished Service Medal from Virginia.

In his life and his writings, Brother Norman Vincent Peale personified Masonry's finest teachings. Brother Allen Roberts described the contributions that Peale had made during his lifetime in a memorial tribute printed in the April, 1994 Philaethes magazine, "Doctor and Brother Norman Vincent Peale was a man who reached into the lives of more people throughout the world than anyone during his lifetime. He was a good man, a charitable man, a man who loved people, a man who loved God, a man who spoke continually of the principles found in Freemasonry. ... he loved Freemasonry, its principles and everything for which it stands. ... Throughout all his writings was the theme of POSITIVE THINKING. He firmly believed this attribute, along with the love of God, would solve the many problems all of us encounter through our lives. He believed in the tenets of Freemasonry Brotherly Love, Relief, and Truth. He believed in God and always placed his trust in his hands. He asked us to do the same. Perhaps most of all, he believed in Masonry's non-sectarian creed. The wisdom and teachings of Norman Vincent Peale will be missed. But we can all be thankful for the opportunity we have had to walk in his footsteps for so long."

During his lifetime, Norman Vincent Peale reminded people that many things become possible when a person places his trust in God, takes his destiny in his own hands, and works to make his dreams become true. As he said, "You need be defeated only if you are willing to be." His was, indeed the philosophy of a Mason and is one that each of us can utilize well in our lives and in our lodges.

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