



Independent Order of Odd Fellows
Dedicated Members for Change

October 24, 2014

Dear Dedicated Members for Change,

I have not sent out a DMC Newsletter in about a week now - I have been away attending the Grand Encampment of California and the Military Council of California annual sessions in Stockton. More about that later.

At this time, I forward to you an article from Louie Sarmiento, our brother from the Philippines. In addition to organizing for Odd Fellowship in the Philippines, Louie has shown his great talent in researching the statistics and facts about this Order. I am pleased to be able to forward his latest stats and thoughts.

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Dave Rosenberg
Deputy Grand Master

Hello brother Dave,

Here are the exact estimations based on the Annual Reports ending December 31, 2013 submitted by the Grand Lodges in the United States and Canada (only):

The total number of members of the Odd Fellows Lodges in the U.S. and Canada is 36,989 dues paying members.

The total number of Odd Fellow lodges, including jurisdictional lodges, in U.S. and Canada is 1,487 lodges. The reason why SGL reports more than 100,000 members is that 1 member is counted 2-4 times if he/she is a member of the Odd Fellow Lodge, Rebekah Lodge, Encampment, L.E.A., Patriarchs Militant, and L.A.P.M.

This figure, however, EXCLUDES the number of members of the Rebekah Lodges and the number of Rebekah Lodges in the U.S. and Canada. But as EYE OPENER, there are eleven (11) Grand Lodges in the U.S. and Canada that have a membership of less than 200 members and less than 10 lodges. In addition to the eleven (11) Grand Lodges with less than 200 members in the whole State or Province, there are three (3) Grand Lodges with less than 100 members namely: Grand Lodge of Utah, Grand Lodge of Louisiana and the Grand Lodge of South Carolina. Of these three, two jurisdictions actually have less than 50 members in the entire State.



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The Sovereign Grand Lodge needs to have a program to help these struggling jurisdictions and lodges increase their membership at least to 100 members again. This surely sends a message that the Sovereign Grand Lodge needs to invest and focus on assisting and supporting its Grand Lodges and Lodges. SGL may need to come up with activities or projects or "benefits" for members that will give people to appreciate their why they join. There are some people who post on the Odd Fellows facebook.com page that they are wasting money joining the Odd Fellows for nothing because they say that many of our lodges actually do not do anything other than just hold regular meetings. We need projects that allow our members to get involved "physically". We need to offer something that our members can enjoy and find fulfillment in doing so. Our organizational structure is still bureaucratic and "old school" that some of our lodges perceive our Grand Lodges and the Sovereign Grand Lodge as higher organizations that drain the finances of our lodges but do not give back to help their lodges. Most of our Grand Lodges and the Sovereign Grand Lodge give out thousands of dollars and millions to other charity foundations instead and these other organizations do most of the good works while our lodges suffer and our whole Order suffers because people barely know us because we, Odd Fellows and Rebekahs, are not the ones really doing all the good works. Maybe SGL should try to focus on supporting our lodges by creating a "grant program" for lodges who have a local charity project or social event in their local community. In this way, it is the Odd Fellows or Rebekahs who are really doing the good works in the community rather than just SGL giving out most of the money to big charity foundations that barely help get members into our Order. Also, with projects and activities, members may find more fulfillment in being members because they sense that their lodge actually do something good to express the principles. And if the I.O.O.F. wants to focus on character improvement and wants to maintain its rituals, its rituals may need more moral substance. I have reviewed the rituals that the Odd Fellows in Denmark, Sweden, Norway, Iceland and Finland use and the moral/philosophical content of their version of the Lodge rituals is, in my opinion, more interesting and may have more impact to a person's character and outlook. The Unwritten work that they also use have deeper philosophical meanings so the signs and passwords are not mainly just a way of identifying each other but also hold some moral teachings. The 2003 version of the Odd Fellows ritual issued by SGL, in my opinion as a person fond of ritualism, is so plain and seems to be cut-off of most of the moral substance as compared to what the Odd Fellows in Europe use. In Europe, the rituals clearly shows a member that the Odd Fellows is not a mere charity organization or social club but also as a "school of ethics" and I loved their rituals as I reviewed them. The obligations also have the psychological attachment of treating members with respect and avoiding bickering and back-stabbing which is good noting the bickering and conflict that can be seen in some lodges in North America.



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In addition to the 36,989 Odd Fellows in the U.S. and Canada, about 15,000 Odd Fellows are located in Puerto Rico, Philippines, Nigeria, Puerto Rico and few other Latin American countries. As of 2013 Annual Report, there are also 1,531 "fraternal" members in Australia and New Zealand. All others are beneficial members which means that they joined for the financial/insurance benefits of the I.O.O.F. in Australasia and they did not go through any initiation or ritualistic work. This condition is the same in the United Kingdom, of the reported 280,000 members of Manchester Unity, a big percentage are "beneficial" members not "fraternal". The Oddfellows in U.K. is still a friendly society that offers some financial and health benefits. The social and fraternal side remains but it depends on the members if they want to undergo initiations or not. By fact, the strong-hold of the Independent Order of Odd Fellows in terms of membership and keeping traditions in tact is indeed in continental Europe with more than 95,000 members --- all are fraternal members unlike the United Kingdom.

In Friendship, Love and Truth.

Louie