



Grand Collège des Rites Ecossais

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On the walls of the chamber of reflection - that primary matrix of the masonic path of initiation - the candidate can read among others, the following sentence:

"If curiosity spurred you towards us, go away!"

This evidently refers to that type of idle and unwholesome curiosity which will discard its object as soon as discovered. It is to be avoided inasmuch as it is nothing but a means of turning away from ourselves, of escaping from ourselves.

Out of curiosity, Pandora opened the box of the same name. Out of curiosity, Eve ate the forbidden fruit. Out of curiosity Bluebeard's wife used the key he had left to her and forbidden to use. The fact that women are the main characters in those tales does not mean that curiosity is an exclusively female characteristic. Just as laughter, it is a distinct feature of human beings. Those tales deal with curiosity, which is keenest when it faces a prohibition. They also deal with its admissibility: if curiosity in general is inherent to human nature, does it mean that any curiosity is admissible, and if not, which type of curiosity might be inadmissible?

Curiosity vanishes from our rituals until the 6th degree of AASR that of *Intimate Secretary*, who is, by definition the holder of a secret and is also called *Master by Curiosity*. As far as I know, this is the only degree with such an addition, which makes it all the more singular. We should give it some serious thought.

The central theme is curiosity. The disclosure of something secret, something concealed. Is it a good thing, though, to discover all secrets?

Is total transparency desirable?

The *Intimate Secretary's* duty as well as his right, is to preserve his intimacy, his secret. Other themes of the degree are appearances, alliances and respect of the given word. Thus curiosity has a double meaning, at once and alternately a vice and a virtue, an innocent or guilty attitude which goes way back to the days of childhood and is expressed by a single recurring word: "why?"

It will also be our last word, which we will take with us to the Eternal Orient and bequeath to those who will survive us and in whom we will also survive. A word which our Brother Lafayette, who was a member of our Jurisdiction, answered with his motto: "Cur non", Why not!

Let idle curiosity remain confined in the chamber of reflection. In the 6th degree we are inwardly driven by the presence of two forms of curiosity:

- first, a passion for the "why?" word which we throw out to others and which raises the question of limits, all the more so as it is boundless in itself, as it endlessly pushes the horizon. That is a curiosity for knowledge which makes the outside world visible.

- secondly an internalization of that same passion for the "why?" word which we direct towards ourselves. That is the curiosity of the initiate which makes our inner world perceptible by ushering us into the invisible.

One of the *Intimate Secretary's* identities is Johaben, otherwise called "Curious Brother". We are, all of us, "curious".

III.:Br.: Jacques OREFICE

33rd

Sovereign Grand Commander