



R.: S.: L.: Plato Nr. 2010, in the East of Athens

Address of the W.: M.:

Twenty years of Plato, one hundred years of mixed Freemasonry in Greece

Sisters and Brothers, dear guests,

Tonight we stand between two anniversaries. Twenty years ago, on 23 February 2006, our lodge was founded. One hundred years ago, in 1926, the first mixed lodge began its work in Athens. The International Masonic Order Delphi carries that tradition today. I will speak about both anniversaries, and about what joins them.

Let me begin with our name. When our founders chose the name of Plato, they chose a school before they chose a building. The Academy stood outside the walls of Athens, among trees and open ground, and people came to it to ask questions. Tradition says that these words stood above its door: *Let no one ignorant of geometry enter*. The words do not ask for a diploma. They ask for a method: measure with care before you build. In twenty years we have tried to keep this first demand.

ΜΗΔΕΙΣ ΑΓΕΩΜΕΤΡΗΤΟΣ ΕΙΣΙΤΩ

Twenty years is a short time for a Craft as old as ours. It is a long time for a lodge. A child born in the year of our foundation is now an adult. In these years we have met, studied and talked. We have received new members and we have walked with them from one degree to the next. We have also said goodbye to friends. Every one of these evenings added a stone to the work, and I thank all those who carried them.

The founders of Plato did not start from nothing. In 1882 Maria Deraismes, a writer and a campaigner for the rights of women, was initiated at Le Pecq in France. In 1893 she and

Georges Martin founded Le Droit Humain, the first international mixed order. Their idea was simple and was then very bold: a woman and a man can take the same degrees, hold the same offices and cast the same vote.

That idea reached Athens on 28 October 1926, when the lodge Athena No. 815 was founded. It was consecrated on 8 November. Greek women did not win the vote until 1952. For twenty-six years, then, women and men sat together as equals in a lodge in Athens while the state still refused women a ballot. I want us to remember how far ahead of its time this was. It was not fashion. It was courage, and it was patient work.

On 14 December 1996 the Greek lodges declared their independence. They founded the International Masonic Order Delphi and re-founded the Grand Mixed Lodge of Greece. At that time thirty-four lodges worked in Greece, Romania and Bulgaria. Today the lodges of Delphi work in Greece, Bulgaria, Romania, the United States and Brazil. The Order took the name of the place where, tradition says, the words *Know thyself* were carved. Self-knowledge and geometry belong together: both begin with honest measure.

What do we owe to these hundred years? First, gratitude to the Sisters and Brothers who came before us, and who worked when work was difficult. Second, a duty to keep the doors of our Order open to women and to men on equal terms. Third, a duty to keep the lodge a place for study. We ask every member to bring a question, not a verdict. A lodge that only repeats answers has ceased to be an Academy.

Plato Lodge works in English, in the Ancient and Accepted Scottish Rite. Our members come from many countries and many walks of life, and one common language lets them sit at the same table. The language is only the tool. The work is the same work that was done in 1926, and the same work that the Academy began more than two thousand years ago: to make the rough stone smooth, and to make ourselves better than we were.

So tonight I ask three things of you. Remember the founders, in 1926, in 1996 and in 2006. Be patient with each other, because a lodge is built slowly. And keep measuring with care. If we do these three things, our successors will stand here in twenty years, and in a hundred, and they will find the door open.

I thank you for your presence and for your work.

*The W.: M.:
R.: S.: L.: Plato Nr. 2010, in the East of Athens*

