



Tidings from the East

Simon Bolivar – Liberator of South America and a Brother Mason.

You probably can go to any public plaza anywhere in South America and find a statute or monument to Simon Bolivar. He is considered to be the George Washington of South America because he was instrumental in relieving that continent of Spanish colonial rule.

He was born in what is now Caracas Venezuela in 1783 and died in 1830 from tuberculosis. He is buried in the resort city of Santa Marta, Colombia.

During the forty-seven years of his life, he had a varied and illustrious military and political career. He was able to devote his time and resources to those endeavors because of his family's great wealth. The family owned several copper and precious metals mines in Venezuela. This ownership made his family valuable to the Spanish Crown because of the ability of the Bolivar family to assist in financing Spain's wars with the French and English on the European continent.

Spain's continental wars of the early 1800s distracted it from tending to its colonies in South America. As a result, revolutionaries like Simon Bolivar saw the chance to end the rule of the Spanish monarchy in

South America and allow those countries and their people to rule themselves.

Beginning in 1813, he commanded various revolutionary military units in what is now Colombia and Venezuela. He has the ultimate goal of creating a government similar to that created by the thirteen colonies after the American Revolution. He hoped such a republican form of democratic government would preserve individual liberties by creating a government with the power to resist continued encroachment by Spain. He additionally hoped to take his version of the American Revolution one bold step further by ending slavery in South America.

However, he recognized that all of these reforms would be made difficult by the endemic "ignorance, vice and corruption" that existed in the Spanish colonies. He compared the job of governmental reform to be like the task of "plowing the sea" – an ultimately fruitless endeavor. Although his dream of a unified South America did not come to be, his ideal to abolish slavery did result in the end of slavery in Spanish South America by the 1850s.

Bolivar's revolutionary endeavors were directly influenced by his work and activities within Freemasonry. In 1803 he was initiated as an Entered Apprentice in the Masonic Lodge "Lautaro" in Cadiz, Spain. The Lautaro Lodge was instrumental in promoting the ideals of "Liberty, Equality, Fraternity, and the Dignity of Man" in Spain and its colonies. It is the same lodge in which many of Bolivar's fellow South American revolutionaries also became Masons.

In 1805 he was passed to the degree of a "Companion" or "Fellowcraft" and in 1806 he was raised to the

"Sublime Degree of a Master Mason". In 1807 he received the 32d Scottish Rite Degree in Paris, France. Being thus influenced by Freemasonry, he composed his revolutionary "Oath of the Sacred Mount", which states: "I swear that I will give neither rest to my arm nor repose to my soul, until seeing broken the chains that oppress us by will of the Spanish Empire". With this, the course of history of South America was to be forever changed.

Bolivar's work in Masonry did not stop there. He is credited with founding the Proctectora de las Vertudes, Lodge #1 in Venezuela. He also founded and served as Worshipful Master of the Order and Liberty, Lodge #2 in Peru. Finally, in 1823, in recognition of his activities and efforts in Freemasonry, he had coroneted upon him the 33rd Degree of Scottish Rite Freemasonry by the Illustrious Joseph Cerneau, High Dignitary of the Supreme Council of the 33rd Degree for The United States.

What does Simon Bolivar's Masonic life teach us? It teaches us that Freemasonry, as a corporate body, does not expect that its brother members all distinguish themselves as did Brother Bolivar. Instead, it does expect that its brother members recognize Masonic ideals and actions serve as shining examples to influence and encourage fellow brothers in accomplishing both great and small things in their own lives.

January 28, 2010 2nd degree

February 4, 2010 Business Meeting