

In the Fellowcraft degree, we learn that the wages of a Fellowcraft are Corn, Wine, and Oil, which are emblematical of Plenty, Health, and Peace. When I first heard that, it struck me as odd; the first two made sense to me, but Oil being emblematical of Peace did not.

Corn has been a staple of our diet for centuries, and practically every modern image of the Cornucopia includes that golden vegetable. From simple corn on the cob to cereals and all kinds of other foods, those bountiful crops have filled our bellies in countless ways. The corn in Masonic rituals is also synonym of grain or wheat. In ancient rituals it was used as an emblem of the Greek goddess Demeter, or of the Roman Cybelis. Both female figures were conceived as appearances of the Mother Earth. During festivities in honour of Demeter, the priests and the faithful were crowned with ears of wheat. This symbolized the fertility of the earth, which with the grain gives bread to mankind. Thus was corn or grain according to this symbolism the personification of the idea of plenty, abundance, and due to the divine intervention, promised fertility.

And Wine. We've all heard the phrase, "I'll drink to his health", and modern studies have shown that a glass of wine daily improves one's cognitive functions, staves off heart disease, strengthens the immune system, and even improves liver function! In more ancient times, wine was seen as a symbol of joy, exaltation, and as a means of achieving enlightenment through emotion and intuition, rather than through logic, contributing to our mental and spiritual health.

But what about Peace? It's a lofty ideal. And, in modern times, not generally what one thinks of when Oil is mentioned. In these turbulent times, we're more likely to think of Oil as inextricably linked with war. But, in remembering that these symbols come from ancient times, we must hearken back through the ages to find the answer. The Oil was, as an extract of the olive fruit, a reward of the Greek goddess of knowledge Athena, who had as an emblem, among other things, the olive tree. Plants of the olive tree were given as rewards to the winners of the Olympic games, during which no war can be waged. And indeed, in the Presidential Seal of the United States of America, the eagle can be seen gazing in the direction of the olive branch to symbolize that nations should strive for peace over war. But beyond that, one of the principal uses of Oil was to bring light into the home, thus it was seen in its more esoteric significance as a symbol of the eternal lantern of divine knowledge. Although it is said that ignorance is bliss, in truth men fear what they do not understand, and thus in the same meaning was Oil a symbol of peace through Enlightenment.

Our newest Fellowcraft are charged with the duty of seeking knowledge, and I encourage them to ever strive for that internal peace which such Enlightenment can bring.