"A HANDFUL OF STARS"

The theme of this presentation is based upon Untermeyer's well-known words of Caliban, "O God, if you wish for our love, fling us a handful of Stars." The theme is developed by showing how important the stars were to the women of the Order. It concludes with a nice little analogy showing how a handful of "Stars" can be meaningful in our own times.

This is a general address-ceremony and may be used at any meeting throughout the year. It may also be used to honor the Handful of Stars, known as the Past Officers.

When used as a ceremony one or more people may participate simply by dividing the paragraphs or verses. In this manner the Worthy Matron, or another selected person, may present the complete ceremony, or two people may alternate the paragraphs, or as many people take part as there are paragraphs or verses.

DEDICATION TO PAST PRESIDING OFFICERS (*Optional)

Tonight, before we begin our presentation entitled, "A Handful of Stars," I wish to dedicate this ceremony to our Past Presiding Officers. Through the years this handful of Stars has been of utmost importance to our Chapter. Like their celestial counterparts they have been consistently in their places. Like those shining "flowers in the meadows of heaven" they have served as a source of inspiration and pleasure to all.

Past Presiding Officers, your fellow members join with me in recognizing you and your support as truly bright lights on our fraternal horizon. * Optional

THE STARS, PERMANENT, UNECHANGING, and full of the promise of things only hoped for, have intrigued men throughout all of time. Before men mastered the art of language, the stars in their mute, but penetrating way must have inspired the darkened minds of our early ancestors. Before the Word of God was spread throughout the civilized world and before the time of Christ, men gazed at the stars thinking that in some way the stars might give them answers to troublesome problems.

The stars seem to transcend all time. There is something mysterious and wonderful about realizing that the very stars which studded the heavens with their twinkling beauty when Christ walked among men are still there for us to admire. When we think of the stars and how long they have endured in the heavens we can touch upon the fringes of timelessness.

Stars Re-affirmed Adah's Confidence in God

I think so often of how Adah must have looked up at the stars during those long months in the mountains. As far as we know, Adah and her young friends spent three months in the mountains without shelter of any kind. They must have taken refuge under the trees or in caves and at night, stared up at the starry heavens. In Adah's preparation for death, those stars, silent in the splendor of heaven, must have given her great confidence in the Goodness of the God who watched over mankind.
The same stars that charmed the innocent eyes of Adah shone down on the stalwart Ruth as she trudged courageously along beside the faltering Naomi. Anxious to get out of the wilderness and the unfamiliar territory, the pair of women must have walked along far into the night. Then, with a prayer on their lips, they must have curled up under the blanket of stars, confident that God who had created the splendor of the heavens would guard them while they slept.

Esther, in the faraway land of Persia, was often alone and troubled during the years she spent in the palace. As she looked out from the great stone windows of her room, she could see the starry heavens above. As she looked up at the stars, she must have wondered whether the palace seers and wisemen who claimed they could "read" the stars were really able to learn anything at all.

Esther could learn something from the stars. She learned to keep alive the hope that one day the glimmering stars would shine down on a freed and happy Hebrew nation. For Esther, the stars were not the means by which one solved his every day problems. Rather, they were constant reminders of the power and majesty of God, the God of the Hebrew people. From them she bolstered her courage and strengthened the faith that had carried her from a hapless, orphaned waif to the Queenship of All Persia.

Stars Symbol of Eternal Life to Martha

Years and years later, the unhappy Martha, stood grief-stricken and weary beneath the same brilliant stars. The hope and promise of eternal life had been given, and Martha must have wondered whether, indeed, the stars were the symbol of the Kingdom of Heaven. Nearby, the same stars which shone over the sorrowing Martha, shone down on Jesus as He studied and prayed with his band of followers.

Not too many years after the death of Christ, Electa gazed up at the stars from the narrow slit in her prison cell. Christ had been resurrected from the dead and all those who were willing to learn and believe knew that life, for them, need never be over. Because of Christ, men might look beyond the confines of prison or mortal existence towards the stars that gave silent testimony to the power of God. The same God who had placed the stars in their appointed places could guide the souls of men through all eternity. To Electa, mistreated, imprisoned and close upon the threshold of martyrdom, the stars were quiet reassurance of the beauty and splendor of the world to come.

Stars Are Reminders of Our Destiny

A handful of stars can shape the destiny of men. And, in times like these, I think this handful of Stars can play a distinctive role in the affairs of this world. There is a crying need for those whose faith is as constant and radiant as the stars above. There is a need for those who would recognize and exemplify a faith in a life as beautiful, as tuneless and as enduring as the stars that shine above. To all of you who are human Stars, the stars in the heaven are a sure and certain reminder of the destiny of humankind.

I think so often of the lovely poem about a coal miner whose life seemed so black and hopeless as he worked in the mines far below the earth's surface. Untermeyer, who created this lovely piece penned Caliban's plea to God. "Oh God, if you wish for our love, fling us a handful of stars."
And, who knows, maybe this handful of stars can be as important and as uplifting in a world that lives under a shadow of a mushroom cloud as the stars were to the heroines of our Order and to the man who worked far from the vision of the heavens above.

A HANDFUL OF STARS

ADAH
Adah climbed the mountain's highest peak
And surveyed the magnificence of God's universe
She sought the peace and quiet of pure nature
For she needed to meet God and with Him converse.

RUTH
Ruth lay in the fields by the side of good Boaz,
And watched the blanket of Stars away overhead,
Found comfort and solace in their rays of hope,
And slept untroubled with only ground for a bed.

ESTHER
Esther gazed up at the Stars from palace door
And wondered if she, like the seers, could foretell,
The course of action she must take, and then
She slowly realized that God would help her do well.

MARTHA
From beside the grave of Lazarus, Martha stared
In shocked disbelief until far into the deepening night,
She felt the return of calm and sure confidence
That Christ's Love shone on as clear as starry light.

ELECTA
From lonely cell the imprisoned Electa gazed,
To the heavenly symbols of Eternal life yet to come
She gained new strength and new courage,
And vowed again that she would never succumb.