



The bee-hive is an important symbol in the third degree, and it is extensively mentioned in the lecture where it is depicted as a symbol of industry, hence the work of the Lodge, so that Masons should continue to learn in all stages of life. Bees are able to accomplish large tasks because they cooperate in force, a single bee can do very little. This is in parallel to Masonry, where strength is gained by the active participation of all its members.

The bee is also the emblem of several Greco-Roman and Indian gods, including Cupid and Kama, both gods of love. In Indian culture, a blue bee represents Krishna, a bee on a lotus leaf the God Vishnu, and a bee above a triangle represents Shiva. The Egyptians believed that bees were born from the tears of the Sun-god, Ra. Bees are also depicted on many ancient tombs, as symbols of the afterlife and resurrection. This probably came from the fact that bees do not leave their hive during the three month hibernation period, only to reappear later. Some compared this to Christ's resurrection, whereby his body vanished for three days, only to reappear after the resurrection.

Bees have been linked in many ways to the divine. Originally thought to have lived in Paradise, the the Welsh tradition goes, they came down to earth to produce wax and honey - the wax to make candles for lights used in altars, and honey to sustain man. For this reason bees were considered lucky. If a bee entered a house, it was considered lucky, whereas in Wales a bee flying around a sleeping child was said foretells a happy life.

Furthermore, bees' honey and sting are also associated with Christ and Judgment Day. In Ireland bees were legally protected, for they produce honey which in turn produces mead, the drink of immortality that flows in the Otherworld. In Christian allegory a queen bee sometimes represents the Virgin Mary, the hive symbolizing the Church. The coat of arms of Pope Urban VIII and Napoleon I, for example, depicts several bees.