

## **GUIDELINES REGARDING CATHOLIC SERVICES FOR A DECEASED MEMBER OF FREEMASONRY**

1. Canon Law explicitly forbids Catholics from joining Freemasonry and similar associations (cf. c. 1374). This prohibition still remains in force. And so, pastors, catechists and Catholic educators should never cease teaching and reminding the parishioners, especially young people, about the dangers and prohibition from joining Freemasonry.
2. Despite queries even hoping for a positive response and relaxed attitude towards freemasonry (based on the fact that in our country many enter freemasonry purportedly for the sake of fraternity and business connections only), the Holy See has consistently reiterated a negative response and the incompatibility between Catholic doctrine and Freemasonry. The CBCP's "pastoral openness" aims at those "who have not formally and knowingly embraced Masonic principles in spite of having been initiated into the masonic association"; but "as a matter of policy it is always safe to heed the position in favor of the law" (CBCP ECDF Position on Freemasonry, 10 March 2024). And so, the best pastoral approach is to persuade members to leave the group or to renounce it entirely. For masons who still avail of the sacrament of confession, the spiritual and pastoral goal is to make them renounce it and totally embrace the teachings of the Church.
3. Unless a member has repented and renounced Freemasonry before he or she dies, he or she is deprived of a Catholic burial (cf. c. 1184 §1). However, for Catholics, pastoral care should be afforded to the grieving family of the deceased. Mass intentions may be offered for the eternal repose of the deceased freemason. A memorial Mass (mass for the dead) may also be celebrated with the family of the deceased but without the presence of the body (*sine corpore*). So, if a prominent Masonic leader died without any evident reconciliation with the Church, a Catholic burial is denied in order to avoid public scandal and imply endorsement of masonic belief.
4. Two cases regarding the death of prominent and high-ranking Freemasons in the Archdiocese of Palo:
  - a. Jose Asturias (d. 2006). The family has been close to the Santo Niño Parish in Tacloban. During the incumbency of Bishop Filomeno Bactol as parish priest, they were active in the parish. Although Mr. Jose Asturias was a high-ranking mason, Bishop Bactol heard his Confession when he was already sick and dying. Bishop Bactol testified that he renounced masonry in his presence. Because of this, he was given a Catholic burial presided by Bishop Bactol. No masses *corpore presente* were offered during the wake.

- b. Salvador Santiago Jr. (d. 2017). He was an officer of the Parish Pastoral Council of St. Joseph Parish, San Jose, Tacloban when the parish was at its nascent stage (during the incumbency of Fr. Moises Apostol). Years later, he rose to become a high-ranking officer of freemasonry. When he died, the family did not expect that he will be given a Catholic burial because of his ties with freemasonry; but they offered masses for him. However, days after his burial, a memorial Mass with his immediate family only was celebrated in the cemetery.
5. An important pastoral approach is to be open and even befriend known masons who are Catholics, especially those who participate in church celebrations. By slowly and steadily reminding them of the stand of the Church on freemasonry, hopefully they will remain inactive in the fraternal organization and eventually abandon it (or renounce it). Most importantly, it is imperative to pray for them and with them.
  6. In summary, the following steps are recommended in case of a death of a known mason who has been baptized in the Catholic Church.
    - a. contact the family in order to make them understand the official position of the Church and to make them aware of the pastoral and spiritual care the Church can offer to the family and for the deceased.
    - b. give utmost respect to the dead as well as to the grieving family (but avoid any semblance of a Catholic rite before the dead body in full public view to avoid public scandal)
    - c. if no formal renunciation took place, no Catholic burial can take place. But it is important to offer masses (mass intentions) for the deceased and even a Memorial Mass (mass for the dead) but not in the presence of the dead body.

*Prepared in consultation with church documents and with the input of some pastors in the Archdiocese of Palo.*

**(Sgd.) Rev. Msgr. Gilbert G. Urbina, VG**

Approved by:

**(Sgd.) Most Rev. JOHN F. DU, DD**  
*Archbishop of Palo*