

The Catholic Catechism on Freemasonry

Lecture Series on Freemasonry Through the Light of Catholicism

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Session Thirteen – The Epoch of Indifferentism

The objective of this thirteenth lecture is to ground the student in what the Church has taught about Freemasonry for the last 100 years has been in continuity with the dogma, despite all the forces that were aligned to make the Masonic principle of indifferentism the new dogma of the Catholic Church.

THE BURKE COMPROMISE

- 1904 - Cardinal Girolamo Maria Gotti, Prefect of the Congregation of the Propaganda, noted that he had received information that Black Catholic priests and laity are being treated unequal to White Catholics and that such actions are “not in conformity with the spirit of Christianity, which proclaims the equality of all men before God.”
- 1907 - US Bishops created ‘Catholic Board of Negro Missions’ with Fr. John E. Burke of NY as the head.
- 1912 - Burke issues report outlining four obstacles of bringing Blacks into the Catholic Church; one of which is too many Blacks belong to forbidden secret societies like the Freemasons.
- Burke recommends permission by Holy See for converts to Catholics from Black America be allowed to retain their membership for the sake of financial benefits. Burke further stated that Black secret societies did not present the same threat to Catholics that the White societies did.

UNE FOIS ENCORE

- While the bishops of the United States were figuring out how to do nothing significant about the condition of the Black Catholics in their country, Pope Pius X was working to strengthen the Catholic Church in France where a new wave of anti-Catholic laws had been put into place and insinuations that the Vatican was attempting to instigate a religious war were being hurled about. In his 1907 *Une Foix Encore* (Once Again), Pius X responded to this false claim by pointing to Freemasonry and other groups as being the true instigators of a war against the Catholic Church.
- As the Catholic Church moved forward into the twentieth century and other threats and dangers began to occupy her time, *Une Foix Encore* would be the final Papal encyclical or apostolic exhortation to mention Freemasonry. From this point forward, the previous prohibitions and penalties would be codified in the Canon Law of the Church.

MAXIMILLIAN KOLBE

- In 1917, while the young Maximillian Kolbe was studying in Rome when he witnessed the Freemasons loudly celebrating their second centenary anniversary by demonstrating in the streets with black banners depicting the Archangel Saint Michael being trodden underfoot by Satan and people flaunting Masonic insignia beneath Vatican windows; some of which carried the words, “Satan will rule on Vatican Hill, and the Pope will serve as his errand boy.” It was on that day that the future saint fulfilled his promise to the Virgin Mary to fight for her – he established the Knights of the Immaculata.

1917 CODE OF CANON LAW #2335

- The 1917 Code of Canon Law was simply a very concise summation of the prohibitions against Freemasonry first promulgated by Pope Clement XII in his 1738 *In Eminenti*.
 - CANON No. 2335: Persons joining associations of the Masonic sect or any others of the same kind which plot against the Church and legitimate civil authorities contract excommunication simply reserved to the Apostolic See.
- The phrase therein contained, “*plot against the Church and legitimate civil authorities . . .*” is explained in paragraph (1) of *In Eminenti* as well as throughout *Etsi Multa*, *Humanum Genus*, *Officio Sanctissimo*, and *Dell’alto dell’Apostolico Seggio*.

PECUILARE, POPE PAUL VI

- In his May 3, 1966, apostolic constitution *Pecuilare*, Pope Paul VI weakened the seriousness and strength of Canon Law No. 2335, which reserved the absolution of Masonic members to the Apostolic see, by extending to local priests, during the Jubilee year, the authority to forgive that named grave sin and three others. Previous Popes also had extended years of mercy and given penitents access to have their grave condition remedied without appeal to the Supreme Pontiff, but the timing of *Pecuilare* gave it the appearance of there being a change in the dogma.

1967 SCANDINAVIAN BISHOP'S CONFERENCE

- In 1967, the Scandinavian Bishop's Conference (consisting of the countries of Sweden, Norway, Finland, Denmark, and Iceland), following a four-year study into Freemasonry in their dioceses, that included meeting with Grand Masters from Scandinavian Grand Lodges, investigating their ceremonies, and reading a letter by the late Lutheran King Gustav V of Sweden (1858 -1950), who was also a Grand Master, in which he explained how Scandinavian Freemasonry is Christian (Protestant-Christian) in character, decided to permit Catholics in their dioceses to retain their Masonic membership, "but only with the specific permission of that person's bishop."
- The Bishop's argument was that Scandinavian Freemasonry was different in character from Anglo and Continental Freemasonry and that it did not 'plot' against the Catholic Church as those other Masonic sects did. Moreover, they believed that their decision to independently interpret Canon Law No. 2335 was guided by Pope Paul VI's 1966 post-Conciliar *De Episcoporum Muneribus*, which, drawing from *Lumen Gentium* (n. 27), decentralized some of the authority and sacred power, previously reserved to the Supreme Pontiff alone, to the bishops. This authority given to bishops to exercise particular care for the flock in their diocese and to dispense with certain laws in individual cases was interpreted by the Scandinavian Bishops to also include their right to dispense with Canon Law No. 2335 in individual cases as well.

1968 THE TABLET

- On March 16, 1968, The Tablet reported in their 'The Church in the World' news and noted section:

“Go-ahead for Catholic Masons Vatican sources have recently been quoted as saying that Catholics are now free to join the Masons in the United States, Britain and most other countries of the world. However, the European Grand Orient Lodge of Masons, established primarily in Italy and France, is still considered anti-Catholic or, at least, atheistic.

Pope Clement XII condemned the order in 1738 as atheistic, and his action has been affirmed by seven other popes in sixteen different pronouncements. The Eastern Orthodox Church and some Protestant bodies have also opposed Freemasonry. However, a move to re-evaluate the Catholic Church's position on Masonry began during Vatican II.

1968 THE TABLET

Vatican sources said there had been no official revocation of the excommunication law, but the Vatican's Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith "has let it be known that Catholics joining the Freemasons are no longer automatically excommunicated . . . the Church's new attitude has been in effect for more than a year." The Church's Code of Canon Law drawn up in 1918 and shortly to be reformed, provided for automatic excommunication of Catholics "who enroll in the Masonic sect or in secret societies conspiring against the Church or the legitimate authorities." Vatican sources added that this wording would be changed to modify the Church's position when the new Code of Canon Law was completed.

One of the churchmen who urged a new outlook on Masonry during the Vatican Council was Mgr. Mark Hurley, then chancellor of the diocese of Stockton, California. He urged the fathers of the Church to "make a radical distinction between European Masonry of the Grand Lodge variety and American and British Masonry."

In December of 1965, Pope Paul VI took a first step towards changing Church rules on Masonry by giving confessors the right to lift excommunication from Catholics who joined the Masons and later withdrew. Until then, only the Vatican could lift such excommunications."

1974 CARDINAL FRANJO SEPER, CDF

Even more indifferentism was welcomed into the Church on July 19, 1974, when Cardinal Franjo Seper, Prefect of the Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, wrote a letter, which was supposedly intended to be private correspondence, to Cardinal John Krol, the Archbishop of Philadelphia at the time, supporting the Scandinavian interpretation of *De Episcoporum Muneribus* concerning Canon Law No. 2335:

- *“Many Bishops have asked this Sacred Congregation about the extent and interpretation of Canon 2335 of the Code of Canon Law which prohibits Catholics, under pain of excommunication, to join masonic associations, or similar associations... Taking particular cases into consideration, it is essential to remember that the penal law has to be interpreted in a restrictive sense. For this reason, one can certainly point out, and follow, the opinion of those writers who maintain that Canon 2335 affects only those Catholics who are members of associations which indeed conspire against the Church.”*

1980 GERMAN BISHOPS CONFERENCE

- In 1980, the German Bishop's Conference concluded their research into the rituals of Freemasonry and their general practices and issued twelve points that are in continuity with what every Pope, since Clement XII's *In Eminenti apostolatus specula*, had stated about the principles of Freemasonry:

“1. The Masonic World View. The Masons promote a freedom from dogmatic adherence to any one set of revealed truths. Such a subjective relativism is in direct conflict with the revealed truths of Christianity.

2. The Masonic Notion of Truth. The Masons deny the possibility of an objective truth, placing every truth instead in a relative context.

3. The Masonic Notion of Religion. Again, the Masonic teaching holds a relative notion of religions as all concurrently seeking the truth of the Absolute.

4. The Masonic Notion of God. The Masons hold a deistic notion of God which excludes any personal knowledge of the deity.

1980 GERMAN BISHOPS CONFERENCE

5. The Masonic Notion of God and Revelation. The deistic notion of God precludes the possibility of God's self-revelation to humankind.

6. Masonic Toleration. The Masons promote a principle of toleration regarding ideas. That is, their relativism teaches them to be tolerant of ideas divergent or contrary to their own. Such a principle not only threatens the Catholic position of objective truth, but it also threatens the respect due to the Church's teaching office.

7. The Masonic Rituals. The rituals of the first three Masonic grades have a clear sacramental character about them, indicating that an actual transformation of some sort is undergone by those who participate in them.

8. The Perfection of Humankind. The Masonic rituals have as an end the perfection of mankind. But Masonry provides all that is necessary to achieve this perfection. Thus, the justification of a person through the work of Christ is not an essential or even necessary aspect of the struggle for perfection

1980 GERMAN BISHOPS CONFERENCE

9. The Spirituality of the Masons. The Masonic Order makes a total claim on the life of the member. True adherence to the Christian faith is thereby jeopardized by the primary loyalty due the Masonic Order.

10. The Diverse Divisions within the Masons. The Masons are comprised of lodges with varying degrees of adherence to Christian teaching. Atheistic lodges are clearly incompatible with Catholicism. But even those lodges comprised of Christian members seek merely to adapt Christianity to the overall Masonic world-view. This is unacceptable.

11. The Masons and the Catholic Church. Even those Catholic-friendly lodges that would welcome the Church's members as its own are not compatible with Catholic teaching, and so closed to Catholic members.

12. The Masons and the Protestant Church. While a 1973 meeting of Protestant Churches determined that individual Protestants could decide whether to be members of both the Christian Church and the Freemasons, it included in its decision the caveat that those Christians must always take care not to lessen the necessity of grace in the justification of the person."

1981 CARDINAL FRANJO SEPER, CDF

Following the German Bishop's condemnation of Freemasonry, on February 17, 1981, Cardinal Seper, who was well known during the Second Vatican Council for his advocating for religious liberty and for the liturgy be prayed in the vernacular, issued what he called a 'clarification' to his, now public, letter to Kroll:

1981 CARDINAL FRANJO SEPER, CDF

CLARIFICATION CONCERNING STATUS OF CATHOLICS BECOMING FREEMASONS Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith

On 19 July 1974, this Congregation wrote to some Episcopal Conferences a private letter concerning the interpretation of can 2335 of the Code of Canon Law which forbids Catholics, under the penalty of excommunication, to enroll in Masonic or other similar associations. Since the said letter has become public and has given rise to erroneous and tendentious interpretations, this Congregation, without prejudice to the eventual norms of the new Code, issues the following confirmation and clarification:

- 1) the present canonical discipline remains in full force and has not been modified in any way;
- 2) consequently, neither the excommunication nor the other penalties envisaged have been abrogated;
- 3) what was said in the aforesaid letter as regards the interpretation to be given to the canon in question should be understood—as the Congregation intended—merely as a reminder of the general principles of interpretation of penal laws for the solution of the cases of individual persons which may be submitted to the judgment of ordinaries. It was not, however, the intention of the Congregation to permit Episcopal Conferences to issue public pronouncements by way of a judgment of a general character on the nature of Masonic associations, which would imply a derogation from the aforesaid norms.

1983 CODE OF CANON LAW #1374 / 1990 CCEO #1448

- (1917) *CANON No. 2335*: Persons joining associations of the Masonic sect or any others of the same kind which plot against the Church and legitimate civil authorities contract excommunication simply reserved to the Apostolic See.
- (1983) *CANON No. 1374*: A person who joins an association which plots against the Church is to be punished with a just penalty; however, a person who promotes or directs an association of this kind is to be punished with an interdict.
- (1990) CCEO *CANON No. 1448*: 1. One who uses a public performance or talk or publicly disseminated writing, or other media of communication, to blaspheme, seriously harm good morals, injure religion or the Church, or incite hatred or contempt for religion or the Church, is to be punished with an appropriate penalty. 2. One who joins an organization which plots against the Church, is to be punished with an appropriate penalty.

1983 - QUAESTIUM EST, RATZINGER, CDF

- On November 26, 1983, just one day before the new Code of Canon Law was scheduled to take effect on the First Sunday of Advent, the Congregation of the Doctrine of Faith, under the leadership Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger, published a *Declaration on Masonic Associations*, which was approved by Pope John Paul II.

1983 - QUAESTIUM EST, RATZINGER, CDF

Quaestium Est (Query) Congregation of the Doctrine of the Faith - 1983

Declaration on Masonic Associations:

It has been asked whether there has been any change in the Church's decision in regard to Masonic associations since the new Code of Canon Law does not mention them expressly, unlike the previous Code.

This Sacred Congregation is in a position to reply that this circumstance is due to an editorial criterion which was followed also in the case of other associations likewise unmentioned inasmuch as they are contained in wider categories.

Therefore, the Church's negative judgment in regard to Masonic association remains unchanged since their principles have always been considered irreconcilable with the doctrine of the Church and therefore membership in them remains forbidden. The faithful who enroll in Masonic associations are in a state of grave sin and may not receive Holy Communion.

1983 - QUAESTIUM EST, RATZINGER, CDF

It is not within the competence of local ecclesiastical authorities to give a judgment on the nature of Masonic associations which would imply a derogation from what has been decided above, and this in line with the Declaration of this Sacred Congregation issued on 17 February 1981 (cf. AAS 73 1981 pp. 240-241; English language edition of L'Osservatore Romano, 9 March 1981).

In an audience granted to the undersigned Cardinal Prefect, the Holy Pontiff John Paul II approved and ordered the publication of this Declaration which had been decided in an ordinary meeting of this Sacred Congregation.

Rome, from the Office of the Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, 26 November 1983.

Joseph Card. RATZINGER
Prefect

THE HISTORY OF THE GREAT RESETS

33 AD – Resolution to the Primordial Existential Questions – Salvation through Christ and His Church

1517 – Salvation outside of Christ and His Church

1717 – Salvation through Man

1917 – Salvation through State

Today – Salvation through Tech Globalism

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The End

Thank for your taking this Master Class. Please join me again for future courses on Catholic liturgy, theology, and history.