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January 31, 2019, Feast of St. John Bosco

Dear Parish family,

On Monday of this week at a funeral, I apologized publicly for a great failure on the part of Church. Many of you heard me say this but were too shocked at what I named as our failure that you didn't hear me say it was our fault. I blamed no one present, least of all the deceased.

What was, and is, our great failure? We have failed to instruct you, the faithful, of the long-standing teaching of the Church that membership in Freemasonry incurs automatic excommunication. Worse than that, we have failed to instruct you as to why that is the case. As a result, many good Catholics have sworn the solemn blood-oaths of Freemasonry with no understanding of how those oaths deny the Blood of Christ as the only remedy for our sins. This is a terrible indictment on us, who should be vigilant shepherds who guard and protect the Flock from danger.

So why did I choose that moment to begin correcting our great error? I was aware that there were other Catholics present who were Freemasons, and I would not know who they were as they came forward to receive the Eucharist. This would be a great sacrilege and endanger their souls. I did my best to give a very brief explanation of why this had to be so, but I had already so angered people that they couldn't really hear what I said. What has been repeated back to me of what they heard I can assure you is not what I said at all.

For those who may ask why I could not have gone ahead and distributed Communion and dealt with this issue privately, I can only say that first of all, I would never have another opportunity to assemble all those present, and secondly, I did meet with the wife and son of the deceased a few days before the funeral, at which time I warned them of the dangers of Freemasonry, saying almost everything I said at the funeral. That was the first time I knew of the deceased's connection with Freemasonry. At that time, I did not use the word excommunication because I thought I had made it very clear.

In the aftermath of the upset and hurt that has been expressed to me, I have become aware of another failure of the Church that we must seek to correct. Again, this is our fault. No one who has talked to me has expressed any concern for the honor and dignity of Christ. No one seemed to understand the obligation I owe to God to warn those whose souls are in danger. Nor did anyone see the offense to Jesus that it would have been for me to knowingly offer His Body and Blood to those who have cursed themselves with the oaths of Freemasonry. Clearly, we have not been teaching faithful Catholics what they need to know.

I have been excoriated for offending the family, which I am sure I did, but not with malice or intent. That unfortunate situation arose because of my concern for a greater offense against Jesus. I have been told it was the wrong time and place to say what I said. This, I am sure, arises from a misunderstanding of what a funeral Mass is. We (our fault) have allowed funerals to become a time when we honor the dead and memorialize them. We have failed to emphasize the solemnity of this liturgy as a time when we pray for the soul of the deceased.

I will do my best to begin correcting these errors on the part of the Church. I begin in this letter by offering some initial information for those who wish to do their own research. The following links can give you a great deal of information about why Freemasonry is not compatible with our Catholic faith.

- <https://www.catholicworldreport.com/2017/02/07/freemasons-and-their-craft-what-catholics-should-know/>
- <https://catholicherald.co.uk/issues/august-11th-2017/the-real-reason-catholics-cant-be-freemasons/>
- <http://www.catholicstand.com/catholicism-freemasonry/>
- <http://www.sensustraditionis.org/Freemasonic.pdf>
- <http://www.emfj.org/oaths.htm>

Twenty-one different papal documents have been issued warning Catholic against the dangers of Freemasonry. See https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Papal_documents_relating_to_Freemasonry. These warnings fall into two main categories: 1) the nature of the oaths taken by a Freemason, and 2) the aims and teaching of Freemasonry.

The Oaths

In order to enter and advance in Freemasonry, a man must make solemn oaths that include the following:

"To all of which I do solemnly and sincerely promise and swear, without any hesitation, mental reservation, or secret evasion of mind in me whatsoever; binding myself under no less a penalty than that of having....

Entered Apprentice Degree: *"..my throat cut across, my tongue torn out, and with my body buried in the sands of the sea at low-water mark, where the tide ebbs and flows twice in twenty-four hours, should I ever knowingly or willfully violate this, my solemn Obligation of an Entered Apprentice."*

Fellow Craft Degree: *"..my left breast torn open, my heart and vitals taken thence, and with my body given as a prey to the vultures of the air, should I ever knowingly, or willfully, violate this, my solemn Obligation of a Fellow Craft.";*

Master Mason Degree: *"..my body severed in twain, my bowels taken thence, and with my body burned to ashes, and the ashes thereof scattered to the four winds of Heaven, that there might remain neither track, trace nor remembrance among man or Masons of so vile and perjured a wretch as I should be, should I ever knowingly or willfully violate this, my solemn Obligation of a Master Mason." (<http://www.emfj.org/oaths.htm>)*

As gruesome as these oaths are, it is even worse that they are made in the name of God. Each of the above oaths end with the words *"So help me, God, and make me steadfast to keep and perform the same."* In other words, the one who takes these oaths is asking God to ensure that these penalties are inflicted on him if he violates these oaths.

It should be evident that such oaths violate our Catholic faith. We take no oaths in the Catholic Church. We do not swear to be mutilated. To invoke God in such oaths is to directly violate the second Commandment: *Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain.* To expect to be gruesomely executed for violating a secret is completely contrary to any sane and rational faith. God has never asked for any such oaths; these oaths are intrinsically evil. They are actually curses, and they are Satanic.

We do make vows in our faith, such as at baptism and at weddings. But these vows do not invoke any penalty or punishment, much less death. The vows made at baptism ask for a renunciation:

- Do you reject Satan? **I do.**
- And all his works? **I do.**
- And all his empty promises? **I do.**

To make the oaths of Freemasonry is a repudiation of your baptism. And your baptism is your entrance into the Church. Thus anyone who makes these oaths has lost access to the sacraments of the Church—except for one, the Sacrament of Reconciliation. If someone wants to return to the Church, he must confess his guilt and renounce his affiliation with Freemasonry. God can cancel or annul any curse, for

He is greater than any spirit behind such oaths, and there are specific prayers he can pray to break those curses. It would be best to pray these prayers in the presence of a priest before a Tabernacle. A copy of these prayers is available in the links above.

The Aims and Teaching

Once again, we have to expose another failure in the Church. We have done such a poor job of teaching Catholics their own faith that they cannot discern a grave error when it is presented to them.

Freemasonry seeks a universal brotherhood under a unified religion that is not dogmatic, according to freemason.com:

As a fraternal organization, Freemasonry unites men of good character who, though of different religious, ethnic or social backgrounds, share a belief in the fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of mankind.
(<http://www.freemason.com/how-to-join/what-is-freemasonry/>)

This sounds admirable and seems that it doesn't present any obstacle to participation by a Catholic. But when you consider what Freemasons did in Mexico just a hundred years ago when they took over the government, it becomes very evident that their idea of the "brotherhood of man" did not include Catholics, and their belief in the "fatherhood of God" was not the Father of the Triune God of Catholics. See <http://catholicapologetics.info/catholicteaching/history/cristero.htm>

Upon entry into Freemasonry, you are told that whatever religion you practice is recognized and accepted by them. But this is what is called syncretism, or a blending together of various religious beliefs. While it might seem harmless, our Catholic faith is based on the declaration of Jesus that He alone can bring us salvation: *Jesus said to him, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me."* (John 14:6). Jesus alone is God in human flesh; He alone can speak with authority about the things of heaven. While other religions may contain some truth, Jesus is THE truth. While other religions find their origin in the finite minds of men, Jesus is the God-man. While all other religious founders had no power to cancel their own deaths, Jesus conquered death in a glorious resurrection.

Jesus offers to all mankind the universal brotherhood that Freemasons espouse. The Church follows His command to make disciples of all nations (Matthew 28:18-20). We are the most universal, the most diverse, the largest family of men and women of every race, every language, and every nation the world has ever seen. And we have this done by preaching and persuading, not by binding people with blood oaths.

Mixing the truth of the Gospel with errors dilutes the power of the message to save us from damnation. What emerges in a syncretic mixture of religions is an inadequate formula for salvation: just do good, and you will go to heaven. But the mandates of the Catholic faith rest on two great commandments: to love God supremely, and to love our neighbor sacrificially. (Matthew 22:37-39) Simply doing good to our neighbor is of no value if it is done to try to earn salvation. It is the love of God, the true God who has revealed Himself to us in Christ, that compels us to love our neighbor.

A false concept of God, even with a desire to do good to our neighbor, ultimately leads to confusion over what is good. When God is merely an idea that embraces all the conflicting ideas espoused by various religions, morality cannot be defined or upheld. Pope St. Leo XIII at the end of the 19th century noted with great alarm what this weakened concept of God was doing in his day, and is only more visible today.

The sect of the Freemasons . . . may profess the existence of God, [but] they themselves are witnesses that they do not all maintain this truth with the full assent of the mind or with a firm conviction . . . and those who

obstinately contend that there is no God are as easily initiated as those who contend that God exists, though, like the pantheists, they have false notions concerning Him. . . . When this greatest fundamental truth has been overturned or weakened. . . . it is easy to see what will become of both public and private morality. We say nothing of those more heavenly virtues, which no one can exercise or even acquire without a special gift and grace of God. . . . If these be taken away, as the naturalists and Freemasons desire, there will immediately be no knowledge as to what constitutes justice and injustice, or upon what principle morality is founded. And. . . . they contend that youth should be instructed, [in] that which they call "civil," and "independent," and "free," namely, that which does not contain any religious belief. But, how insufficient such teaching is, how wanting in soundness, and how easily moved by every impulse of passion, is sufficiently proved by its sad fruits, which have already begun to appear. For, wherever, by removing Christian education, this teaching has begun more completely to rule, there goodness and integrity of morals have begun quickly to perish, monstrous and shameful opinions have grown up, and the audacity of evil deeds has risen to a high degree. (Humanum Genus, 17-19)

Jesus made it clear we cannot earn our salvation. It is a gift we must receive. A lifetime of good works is not sufficient to pay for our sins, for our sins offend an infinite God. But God offers us, through Christ, grace to cover all our offenses and make us whole. We do not neglect our duty to love our neighbor, but we do it out of gratitude for the grace of salvation we have been offered in Christ. We do not wish to show how good we are, but rather to show how good God is.

As a Freemason advances through the ranks, or degrees, of this "fraternal" order, he may rise to the level of learning that the god they revere is Baphomet, a grotesque manifestation of Satan. At that point, he is bound by the oaths he has made as he discovers that all his good deeds are useless, for this god is a defeated foe, conquered by the Cross of Christ.

I urge all who are caught in this evil and deceptive web, to renounce your association with any form or vestige of Freemasonry. Your soul is in danger. Begin with an honest and sincere confession. And if your priest tells you there is nothing wrong with being a Freemason, go to another priest who understands that you need not only the absolution and grace of Reconciliation, but you must break the occult ties you have forged by the oaths you have taken. In fact, if any family member, living or deceased, has taken any of the oaths of this dangerous sect, the curses of those oaths can be visited upon you. This not to be taken lightly.

In light of all this, I hope you can understand why I was compelled to issue the warning I did at the funeral last Monday. Please consider the words of our Lord, Jesus Christ in closing:

Not everyone who says to me, "Lord, Lord," will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only the one who does the will of my Father in heaven. Many will say to me on that day, "Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name? Did we not drive out demons in your name? Did we not do mighty deeds in your name?" Then I will declare to them solemnly, "I never knew you. Depart from me, you evildoers."

Everyone who listens to these words of mine and acts on them will be like a wise man who built his house on rock. The rain fell, the floods came, and the winds blew and buffeted the house. But it did not collapse; it had been set solidly on rock. And everyone who listens to these words of mine but does not act on them will be like a fool who built his house on sand. The rain fell, the floods came, and the winds blew and buffeted the house. And it collapsed and was completely ruined." (Matthew 7:21-27)

Most Sacred Heart of Jesus, have mercy on us! Immaculate Heart of Mary, pray for us! St. Joseph, Terror of Demons, pray for us! St. Mary Magdalen, pray for us!

In the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit,

Fr. Thomas Hickey