

Masonic Funeral Ritual

Worshipful Master: Let us all unite with our Chaplain in prayer.

PRAYER

Chaplain: Unto Thee, O God, Father of all, do we come in this hour of grief and bereavement. Unto Thee do we send up the cry of our sorrowing hearts. Thou, who dost mark the sparrow's fall, and number even the hairs of our heads, look with infinite compassion on our weakness, and, in this hour of need give the strength which Thou alone can impart. Standing by the open portals of this house appointed for all the living, we pray for light—for light to illuminate the dark path which our brother has trod, for light to drive away all the shadows of mortality and reveal to our anxious souls those serene heights of joy and beauty, whither, we trust, our brother has ascended. As we consign his body to its resting place may we realize how weak and impotent is every human arm, and trust in Thy might alone for deliverance from the dominion of death. Grant Thy sustaining grace to these mourners and bereaved friends. May all find rest and comfort in Thee, and, relying upon Thine infinite love, wait in patient hope for death to be swallowed up in victory. Amen.

RESPONSE (by the brethren): So mote it be.

Worshipful Master: BRETHREN: We mourn today the loss of a brother whose spirit has been summoned to the land where our fathers have gone before us. Again we behold the narrow house appointed for all the living, and our thoughts turn to the silent realm, where, in that peace which the world can neither give nor take away, lie the unnumbered dead. The sunshine and the storm pass over them and they are not disturbed. Stones and lettered monuments symbolize the love of surviving friends and convey the silent admonition, "Seek ye the narrow path and the straight gate that lead unto eternal life." Again we are called upon to consider the uncertainty of human life, the absolute certainty of death, and the vanity of earthly ambition.

Change and decay are written upon every living thing. The cradle and the coffin stand side by side, and it is a melancholy truth that as soon as live begin to live that moment also we begin to die. How often the reminders of mortality cross our path.

The funeral bell tolls in our ears, and the mourners go about the streets; yet how seldom do we seriously consider our approaching end. We go on from design to design, add hope to hope, and layout plans for the employment of many years. The messenger of death

comes when least expected, and at a moment which to us seems the meridian of our existence. What are all the externals of human dignity, the power of wealth, or the charms of beauty when nature has paid her just debt? View life stripped of its ornaments, and exposed in its natural weakness, and we see the vanity of all earthly things save those which go to the growth and perfection of individual character. In the grave all fallacies are detected, all ranks are leveled, all distinctions are done away. Here the scepter of the prince and the of the beggar lie side by side. Happy, indeed, it for us—and blessed the agencies which have made it possible—that while our eyes may be dim with tears as we think of our departed brother, we may in the sincerity of our hearts, accord to his memory the commendation of having lived a useful and exemplary life and as a just and upright Mason.

And now, my brethren, let us see to it, and so regulate our lives by the plumbline of justice, ever squaring our actions by the square of virtue, that when the Grand Warden of Heaven shall call for us we may be found ready. Let us cultivate assiduously the noble tenets of our profession—Brotherly Love, Relief, and Truth. From the square learn morality; from the level, equality; and from the plumb, rectitude of life. With the trowel spread liberally the cement of brotherly love; circumscribed by the compasses, let us ponder well our words and actions, and let all the energies of our minds and the affections of our souls be employed in the attainment of our Supreme Grand Master's approbation. Then, when our dissolution draws nigh, and the cold winds of death come sighing around us—and his chill dews already glisten upon our foreheads—with joy shall we obey the summons of the Grand Warden of Heaven, and go from our labors on earth to eternal refreshment in the paradise of God, where, by the benefit of the pass of a pure and blameless life, and an unshaken confidence in the merits of the Lion of the tribe of Judah, shall we gain ready admission into the celestial lodge where the Supreme Architect of the Universe presides. There, placed at His right hand, He will be pleased to pronounce us just and upright Masons.

The LAMBSKIN,

or white apron, was the first gift of Freemasonry to our departed brother. It is an emblem of innocence and the badge of a Freemason. This I now deposit upon the casket. (*Deposits it upon the casket.*) We are reminded here of the universal dominion of death. The arm of friendship cannot interpose to prevent his coming; the wealth of the world cannot purchase exemption; nor

will the innocence of youth or the charms of beauty change his purpose.

The Master, holding the evergreen in his right hand, continues:

This evergreen is an emblem of an enduring faith in the immortality, of the soul. By it we are reminded that we have a life within us that shall survive the grave, and which can never die. By it we are admonished that we also, like our brother whose remains lie here before us, shall soon be clothed in the habiliments of death. Through our belief in the mercy of God we may confidently hope that our souls will bloom in eternal spring. This, too, I deposit with our deceased brother.

THE FUNERAL HONORS

By direction of the Master, the Secretary will read the Obituary Roll.

The Master continues the ceremony by saying:

Brethren and friends: From time immemorial it has been the custom among the fraternity of Ancient, Free, and Accepted Masons, at the request of a brother, or of his family, to perform the last rites with the usual ceremonies of the craft. Conforming to this usage we have assembled, in the character of Freemasons, to offer to the memory of our brother, this tribute of affection.

The passing of our brother from the cares and troubles of this transitory existence has removed another link from the fraternal chain which binds us together. May we who survive him be more strongly bound in the ties of union and friendship. May we, during the short space allotted to us here, wisely and usefully employ our time, and in the interchange of kind and friendly acts mutually promote the welfare and happiness of each other. Unto the earth we consign the body of our deceased brother. We trustingly leave his spirit in the hands of Him who doeth all things well. With those his immediate relatives and friends, who are most heart-stricken at the loss we have all sustained, we sincerely, deeply, and most affectionately sympathize. He who tempers the wind to the shorn lamb looks with infinite compassion upon the bereaved and sorrowing in the hour of their desolation. Our Heavenly Father will fold the arms of His love and protection around those who put their trust in Him.

The Master, extending his hands toward the casket, continues:

Soft and safe be the earthly bed of our brother; bright and glorious be his rising from it. Fragrant be the acacia sprig which shall flourish there. May the

earliest buds of spring unfold their beauties over his resting place, and, in the bright morning of the world's resurrection, may his soul spring into newness of life and expand into immortal beauty in realms beyond the skies. Until then, dear friend and brother, until then —Farewell!

As appropriate

ODE

may follow, after which the services will conclude with the following

PRAYER

Chaplain: Almighty God, again we implore Thy blessing as we turn from this solemn service to the no less solemn duties of life. We have consigned the body of our brother to its resting place, and with unfaltering trust we commend his spirit to Thy care. If we feel that there is one tie less binding us to the earth, may we also feel that there is another, and a deathless tie, binding us to heaven. And there shall be no night there. O blessed assurance; the last farewell spoken, the last sigh breathed, the last cry of anguish changed into an anthem of immortal joy. In our present grief we cling to Thy promise that Thou wilt at last wipe away all tears.

Gathering here such fresh experiences of Thy love, catching here such glimpses of the exceeding glory that awaits us, may we feel that it is better to go to the house of mourning than to the house of feasting. May we keep the memory of the virtues of our brother green and fragrant forever.

And now, O God, we pray for Thy hand to lead us in all the paths our feet may tread, and when the journey of life is ended may light from our immortal home illuminate the dark valley of the shadow of death, and voices of loved ones, gone before, welcome us home to that house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens, where no discordant voice shall arise, and all the soul shall experience shall be perfect bliss, and all it shall express shall be perfect praise. and love divine ennoble every heart and hosannas exalted employ every tongue. Amen.

RESPONSE (by the brethren): So mote it be.

The procession will reform in the same order as that in which it set out and repair to a convenient place and there be dismissed.

