

THE DIFFERENT MASONIC AND APPENDANT BODIES
FUNERAL CEREMONIES IN LOUISIANA

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August 26, 2000
Baker, LA

There is a Christian saying:
"That not as strangers shall we reach Death's shore,
Friendless an unknown country to explore:
Our elder Brother hath gone on before!"¹

The wages of a Master Mason include the right to have a modest acceptable Masonic Funeral Service. Therefore the purpose of this paper is to present the different Funeral Services that are available to members of the Blue Lodge and appendant bodies of Masonry in the State of Louisiana. The intention of this paper is not to discuss the history of Masonic Funeral Services, yet we should point out that probably the first written Masonic Funeral Service in America can be found in "The Freemason's Monitor or Illustrations of Freemasonry" by Thomas Smith Webb (1797).² Germania, a Scottish Rite lodge in New Orleans, has in its ritual probably the oldest Masonic Funeral Service in Louisiana. It should be understood that the terms funeral service, funeral ceremony, funeral rites, and burial service will be interchangeable.

Different Funeral Services

During the research of Masonic funerals, it was ascertained that in Louisiana, and probably most states, each Masonic body and appendant body have a funeral service. Each body will, upon request of a member in good standing or his family, perform a funeral service.

It is generally accepted that if a Masonic Body other than the Blue Lodge performs the funeral service, it will take the place of the Blue Lodge's Funeral Service. A brother may request an appendant Order to perform the service along with the Blue Lodge, with the understanding that the Blue Lodge service would always come last. As an example a Mason who is a member of the Eastern Star can request an Eastern Star service along with the Blue Lodge Service.

A Mason must be a member of a Blue Lodge to receive any type of Masonic Funeral Service performed by the Blue Lodge. Yet any Mason who also belongs to an appendant Order can, at his choice, request a Funeral Ceremony by that Order. During this research it was discovered that the following Masonic bodies have a Funeral Ceremony and will perform it upon request. Masonic Bodies include Blue Lodge, Scottish Rite, Royal Arch Chapter, Knights Templar, and Shrine.

Appendant Bodies include Order of Eastern Star, Order of the Amaranth, and Order of the White Shrine of Jerusalem.

It should be noted that the DeMolay boys and the Rainbow girls have a Funeral Service for its members.

COMMON ELEMENTS IN ALL FUNERAL SERVICES

- 1) There is always a procession.
- 2) There is a placement of officers around the casket.
- 3) There is most always a tribute to the departed member.
- 4) The ceremony is not sorrowful or one of anguish. Rather it is a beautiful, uplifting, loving and caring service. As taken from the Blue Lodge Service, "Quietly may thy body sleep in this earthly bed, my brother. Bright and glorious be thy rising from it. Fragrant be the acacia sprig that here shall flourish. May the earliest buds of spring unfold their beauties on this, thy body's resting place".
An excerpt from the White Shrine, "His memory like a flower in perpetual bloom, sweetening its environment and winning the thoughts of all those who knew him to be pure and true."
- 5) The principal officers have speaking parts.
- 6) Generally the secretary is responsible for notifying the members to assemble for the Funeral Service of a departed member.
- 7) If the departed member was a present or a Past Grand Officer, it is proper to invite the Grand Officers to participate in the Service.
- 8) The Chaplain or Prelate always offers prayer.
- 9) Generally the 23rd Psalms or the verse, "In my Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have not told you so. I go to prepare a place for you" can be found in the service.
- 10) The ceremony is always closed with a prayer.
- 11) The appendant bodies offer the lessons of their Order.

We will now turn our attention to the different Masonic Bodies and their Funeral Ceremonies. The first and the most important is the Blue Lodge. Here in Louisiana we have a Masonic monitor that gives us a written Masonic Funeral Service. Most Master Masons have attended a Blue Lodge funeral service for a departed brother Mason. In fact it is the duty of a Master Mason to attend the Masonic Funeral service of a departed member of his lodge, and at other times when called upon. Even though our monitor has a formal ceremony in writing, it was found that this ceremony is sometimes deviated by those performing the service. There is a ceremony performed by one Mason, three Masons, even how and who places the evergreen on the casket. Since most of you have attended a Blue Lodge Funeral Service, there is no need at this time to go into details.

This paper is committed to Funeral Services offered in Louisiana. We know our Scottish Rite is in the Southern Jurisdiction, yet this writer was amazed to find that the Northern Jurisdiction offered no formal Funeral Service for its members. It was also found the Northern Jurisdiction of the Scottish Rite does not encourage the use of a Funeral Service, but does not officially prohibit them. However some Funeral Services are being performed in the Northern Jurisdiction.³

In the Southern Jurisdiction of the Scottish Rite it was disclosed there are two different Funeral Services. The first service can be found in Henry C. Clausen's "Practice and Procedure For The Scottish Rite," printed in the year 1981.⁴ There can also be found a separate, different, and more detailed Funeral Service in the book: "Funeral Ceremony and Lodge of Sorrow of the Ancient and Accepted Scottish Rite of Freemasonry."⁵ No author is given to this book, which was reprinted in 1968. It is entirely possible that a committee of

Scottish Rite Masons worked together to write this funeral ritual. This ceremony is prepared for a Chapter of the 18th degree, but may be used by any body of the rite, from the Lodge of Perfection to the Supreme Council inclusive. It may be readily made suitable for either, by such changes as may be made at the moment of the performance.

The mourning color of the Supreme Council is violet; that of all other bodies of the rite use black. There is a ceremony at the Church or Chapter, the second at the grave. Again it should be understood that this ceremony is in lieu of the Blue Lodge service, not supplementary. It is also noted the casket containing the body is placed so that its head is to the West. The Knights are all dressed in black, with black kid gloves, the black side of the cordon and apron outward. Each also wears, if it can be had, a red rose in full bloom, in a buttonhole on the left side of the coat.

Clasen's Scottish Rite Funeral Service was written for the Rose Croix and the Lodge of Sorrow. It is a public service made available, at the request of the decedent or his survivors, for the funeral of a Scottish Rite Mason of any degree. It is also in lieu of The Blue Lodge service, not supplementary. The Officiate should be a capable Brother able to perform the service with the dignity required for such a ceremony. The Wise Master or his replacement should wear the jewel of the Wise Master. Cap and apron are not used. The valley should see that a floral Rosy Cross is provided and placed in view. A fresh rose is placed on the casket by the Wise Master or his replacement and say, "Brother _____ may peace of the Master and the love of God the Father abide with thee always."

The Royal Arch Funeral Service is in two parts. The first may be given at the place of the body or given with the second part at the grave. This Funeral Service can only be performed for Royal Arch Masons. As in the other bodies, this service is not intended to supersede or interfere with that of the Blue Lodge. The Royal Arch Funeral ceremony was prepared for use in case a companion should specially request burial by the Chapter. The procession is parallel to the Blue Lodge, except of course, the officers' names are different. The High Priest pays tribute to the departed, then places a white apron or lambskin and a sprig of evergreen on the casket. The Companions move around the casket for the depositing of the evergreen.⁶

The common thread again appears in the Knights Templar Burial Service meaning only Knight Templars are entitled to the honors of Knightly burial. A Commandery can not appear in public at the funeral of any other than a Templar, without the permission of the Grand Commander. A Commandery may perform escort duty at the burial of a Knight by his lodge. Sir Knights on such occasions will attend in full uniform, their sword and the banner of the Commandery being suitably dressed in mourning. The Eminent Commander will preside during the service, assisted by the Prelate. The Knightly pall-bearers, will wear boutonnieres of evergreen and pure white flowers, tied with a black and white ribbon and fastened to the left breast. Excerpt from the Templar service, the Prelate says, "We spend our days as a tale that is told. The days of our years three-score and ten; yet there is strength, labor, and sorrow. So teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom."

At the grave site the Knights will form a triangle around the grave, the base of the triangle at the foot, the Eminent Commander and Prelate being at the head, and the mourners at the foot. A sword is placed on the coffin and at the end of the service it is removed. A second excerpt from this service is now given, the Prelate says, "The memory of his virtues lingers in our memory, and reflects its shining lustre beyond the portals of the tomb. The earthen vase which has contained precious orders none of its fragrance, though the clay be broken and shattered. So let it be with our brother's memory."⁷

It was thought the Shrine had no written Funeral Service. In discussion with William J. Mollere, P.P. it was pointed out to this writer that a Memorial Service was written by Illustrious Mollere for use by the Acacia Temple, located in Baton Rouge, Louisiana. With his permission an excerpt is here presented. This given at the High Priest and Prophet's normal report. "Illustrious Sir, Illustrious Sirs, members of the Divan, Nobles all; the Black Camel has again visited our Temple and taken from us several Nobles who will be greatly missed. Let us remember their wives, their children, their entire family, and all their friends by continuing their work." A white rose is then placed on Alter.

Since the Memorial service of ACACIA Temple was written the Shrine Ritual has a Memorial Service for a departed Noble.

In conclusion it is readily seen that most Masonic Bodies and their Appendant Bodies in the State of Louisiana have a prepared Funeral Service or Memorial Service for a departed member. It should also be apparent to any Mason that the Blue Lodge is always considered first.

In conclusion I quote, "They spend their days in wealth and in a moment go down to the grave."⁸

REFERENCES:

- 1) Light from the East, Rev. Henry R. Coleman, 1882
- 2) The Freemason's Monitor or Illustrations of Masonry, Thomas Smith Webb, 1779.
Published by Spencer and Webb, Albany, N. Y.
- 3) Interview and Correspondence, Sidney R. Baxter, Assistant to the Grand Commander Robert O. Ralston, Grand Commander of Scottish Rite Masons, Northern Jurisdiction.
- 4) Practice and Procedures For The Scottish Rite, by Henry C. Clausen, 33.
- 5) Funeral Ceremony and Officers of a Lodge of Sorrow of the Ancient and Accepted Scottish Rite of Freemasonry, Southern Jurisdiction of the United States of America, reprinted 1968, Charleston.
- 6) The Royal Arch Companion, 1865, published by the Grand Chapter of Royal Arch Masons of the state of Massachusetts.
- 7) Christmas, Easter, Ascension and Burial Service for Knights Templar, Robert Macoy, 1897, published by Macoy Publishing and Masonic Supply Co., Richmond, Virginia.
- 8) KJV of Bible, Job 21: 13,14.

