

## **MASONIC FUNERAL RITES AND WHAT IT MEANS TO US**

The Masonic Funeral Service is as old as the Fraternity itself. In the days of Operative Masonry, Stonemasons buried their own with great solemnity and reverence. The deceased Brother was one they knew and worked with their entire lives. They spoke of the Eternal Life after death and the need to help all humanity throughout the course of their life. We continue this tradition today in Speculative Masonry.

The Masonic funeral is fundamentally for the living, as the beginning of the service states, “The last offices paid to the dead are useful as lessons to the living.” Although Freemasonry is not a religion, it is religious. Freemasonry does not teach salvation, but rather teaches the Brotherhood of Man under the Fatherhood of God. Our participation in a Masonic funeral is an expression of our fraternal affection to the deceased Brother and his family.

Masonic funeral rites are based upon the teachings of the Volume of the Sacred Law, and generally accept the principles of the religion of the departed Brother with the recognition that once you die you must face judgment. The fundamental objective is for the living to be taught the very useful lesson that death is certain, and the time of death is unknown and left in the hands of our God.

The Chaplain’s prayer in the Masonic funeral is wholly and entirely for the living. It relates to the seriousness, importance, and relevance of the funeral service in which those present are engaged, God’s grace for those afflicted, particularly those related to the bereavement, and lessons to all present that they accept the certainty of death and the uncertainty of life. It also tells us to be ever ready to meet our God and give a full account of our lives on Earth, and realize that God’s intention is to have eternal life with Him, through being dedicated to the observance of the divine laws and to both live and die in God’s love.

Always remember that the Masonic Funeral Service is one of the most beautiful pieces of literature ever written. The service is

simple, honest and straightforward and offers each of us an opportunity to reflect upon our own mortality and to reaffirm our individual faith in the Supreme Grand Master of Heaven and Earth. It is the final tribute we can pay to a deceased Brother, and also to thank the Brother's family for allowing him to share his time on Earth with our Fraternity. If he was a member of your Lodge, he deserves your attendance at his funeral service and having been entitled to all the rights and benefits of a Freemason, he also deserves a well attended Masonic funeral service.