

Why Attend a Masonic Funeral?



There are few occasions when Freemasons get the opportunity to perform their public ceremonies; a cornerstone laying, open installation of officers, and a periodic public educational program, and so on. By far, the most common is our Masonic Funeral Service. This is a time when most non-Masons are introduced to Freemasonry, and perhaps a time when many of those present will form an opinion and perception of our Fraternity. Not being members of our Ancient Craft, and often knowing very little about Freemasonry, they are often very curious as to who we are, what we stand for, and what is it that we believe in as an organization.

Conducting Masonic Funeral Services is as old as our Fraternity itself. In the days of Operative Masonry, stonemasons buried their own with great solemnity and reverence. The deceased Brother was a man they had worked with side-by-side for years – perhaps a lifetime. They extolled his virtues and the contributions he had made to the work of the Craft. The entire guild turned out in force to mourn their Brother's passing, and to express their sympathies to the Brother's family. This tradition has been carried forward for centuries to our present day Speculative Masonry.

Besides noticing our aprons and the jewels we wear, the first thing any non-Mason will observe is the size of the turnout. If it is small, they could conclude that his Lodge did not hold the deceased Brother in very high esteem. Or, even worse, that Freemasons are much too busy with their own private lives and interests to practice the tenets of Charity and Brotherly Love of which we so loudly boast. In other words, they might conclude that we don't practice what we preach. If the turnout is large, the non-Mason is likely to come away with a very different impression of both the Fraternity and the deceased Brother.

Always remember that a Masonic Funeral Service is the last tribute we can pay to our fallen Brother. That's the appropriate time to thank the Brother's family for allowing him to share his time on Earth with our Fraternity. No, you might not have known the Brother personally, but if he was a member of your Lodge, he certainly deserves your presence at his funeral service. Even if not a member of your Lodge, he was a Brother and is entitled to all of the "lights, rights and benefits" of being a Freemason -- and that certainly includes a well-attended Masonic Funeral. Attending these services are, in many ways, just as important as attending Lodge meetings -- perhaps, even more so, because it offers each of us an opportunity to reflect upon our own mortality, and to reaffirm our individual faith in the Supreme Architect.



One day, and we know not when, each one of us will be that Brother who has passed from sight. One day, each one of us will have ended our journey on this mortal coil. As you are then returned to the dust whence you came, you of course would want your Masonic Brethren to be present to mourn you, and to offer comfort and consolation to your family. We should demonstrate, by our physical presence, that our promises to be true to them are not just hollow or empty words. We owe our Brother something, and this may be the very last opportunity we will ever have to repay that debt.

Brethren, when you receive word from your Lodge of a Masonic funeral, take the time out of your busy lives to make this final act of respect and tribute. No, you may not have personally known the Brother, but he *was your Brother*, and that alone is enough to justify making the effort to attend and to demonstrate to the world that we Freemasons do, in fact, sincerely care about each other -- both in life and in death.

One day, each of us will be escorted across the threshold of death, as the last grains of sand fall to the bottom of our hourglass. After spending years in the Masonic Fraternity, how would you feel if most of your Lodge Brothers were too occupied with their own self-interests to attend your Masonic Funeral Service? How will your loved ones feel about the organization you belonged to that cannot muster more than a handful of members to stand around your casket?

This is one obligation and commitment that each of us should earnestly strive to fulfill even if we can't always attend Lodge meetings. Let's demonstrate to the world that we are indeed men who practice Brotherly Love - all the way to the edge of the grave.



... The 5 Minute Mason: #88 in a series of nuggets from the Quarry of Freemasonry.SM

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