

Communications with the Vatican

EDITORIAL NOTES:

Over the space of about ten years, our Past Grand Master William H. Quasha has been most active in his efforts to bring about a relaxation of the position of the Catholic Church regarding Freemasonry. He has dealt directly with the Vatican, particularly through his friendly relationship with His Eminence Augustin Cardinal Bea, the Chairman of the Committee on Christian Unity. The detailed story of how this effort began and was carried out appears in the March 1963 issue of the *Cabletow*.

Since that date Brother Quasha has continued with the concurrence of our respective incumbent Grand Masters, to communicate with and visit His Eminence, Augustin Cardinal Bea. To update the story appearing in our March 1963 issue of the *Cabletow*, we are publishing two Pro Memoriae and one letter of Brother Quasha.

During the weekly luncheon of the Supreme Council, 33^o and Last Degree of A. & A.S.R. in the Philippines on March 16, 1968, Ill. William H. Quasha, P.G.M., announced he had that morning received a brief note from the Secretary of His Eminence Augustin Cardinal Bea forwarding a photostatic copy of a news item appearing in a semi-official publication entitled *La Croix* announcing that the Vatican has lifted its ban on Masonry indicating it will effect a relaxation over a period of time in the various areas of the world, principally on a basis of how the Church may find Masonry in specific Grand Masonic Jurisdictions.

R.E.W.

— oOo —

Grand Lodge
of
Free and Accepted Masons
of the
Philippines

March 18, 1963.

His Eminence
Augustin Cardinal Bea
Rome

Your Eminence:

This is a *Pro Memoria* covering the subject of our delightful discussion which was attended by His Excellency Benigno Toda y Toledo, Philippine Ambassador to the Holy See, and Fr. Stefano Schmidt, S.J., Your Eminence's Secretary.

The Grand Lodge of Free and Accepted Masons of the Philippines is most desirous of establishing harmonious relations with the Roman Catholic Church and toward this end would appreciate a reexamination of the attitude of the Roman Catholic Church to Masonry in our jurisdiction. We believe that the world urgently requires the cooperative efforts of all people who believe in one God Almighty, Father of all men, Maker of heaven and earth, and that in the furtherance of His will, we must find bases for bridging the hiatus which now exists between the Roman Catholic Church and Freemasonry in our jurisdiction.

I am the Grand Master of the Grand Lodge of Free and Accepted Masons of the Philippines, and as such I am the supreme authority over and speak for all regular Masons in this jurisdiction. Our Grand Lodge was founded in 1912. Our jurisdiction covers the Philippine Archipelago, Okinawa, Guam.

and three Lodges in Japan — 124 Lodges in all. Over 98% of our members are Christians. My term of office will end on April 25, 1963, but I can assure you that my successors are in full accord with the position I have taken.

We are governed by a constitution, a copy of which is enclosed. We are in fraternal relationship with approximately ninety-five Grand Lodges throughout the world, none of which has sovereignty over the other. I have furnished you copies of literature which show a list of regular Masonic Lodges of which the Grand Lodge of the Philippines is one. We do not recognize any group of Masons who do not adhere to the same principles that we do: (1) belief in God; (2) belief in the future existence; (3) the obligation taken by any Mason must be on or in full view of the Holy Bible, to which we refer as the Volume of the Sacred Law; and (4) there shall be no discussion of religion and politics in a Lodge. (Please see our Constitution, pp. 120-121.) These principles have been followed by our Grand Lodge since its establishment.

Our organization is not a secret society. It is a corporation duly organized and registered (with the Securities and Exchange Commission, an agency of the Philippine Government) as a fraternal and charitable corporation in accordance with Philippine laws. Our members are obliged to abide by the laws of the country in which they reside, and our Grand Lodge abides by the laws of the Republic of the Philippines. Our proceedings are printed in the English language; a copy of the 1962 edition is enclosed.

Although Masonry is not a religion, its members are encouraged to follow a religious life. Many of our officers and members are Christian bishops and clergymen. *e.g.*, our Senior Grand Warden is a Minister in the Methodist Church and our Grand Chaplain is a Bishop in the United Church of Christ. Every Mason is urged to attend regularly a church of his own choosing. Last year we inaugurated a program to have all Lodges engage in intercessory prayers. These Lodges are enjoined to ask the members of their families and their friends in the community regardless of their church membership to implore the aid of God to use His healing powers for sick persons who want us to pray for them. We do not enquire, nor are we concerned with a man's religion; we are not a religious organization. In this respect we do not differ from the vast majority of fraternal, professional and civic organizations.

Masonry stands for faith, hope, and charity. It holds that strength is obtained through belief in God and through being in harmonious relationship with fellowmen. It teaches temperance, fortitude, prudence, and justice.

We are engaged in our Grand Lodge in numerous programs of charity and social welfare. For over thirty years we have maintained the Masonic Hospital for Crippled Children in Manila where we admit patients regardless of creed. Approximately 85% of the children admitted come from Roman Catholic families. The only condition of admission is that they cannot afford to go to private hospitals. This charity is entirely supported by Masons. Every Lodge in our jurisdiction is supposed to engage in charitable work in the community and to carry on a program of education and public service. Another one of our programs is to distribute books to the poor children of the Philippines. Over two million books are being collected by the Masons in America for our distribution in the Philippines.

Turn to next page

We are not against the Roman Catholic Church or any other church. We do not contradict or deny anything in the Catholic religion. We stand for the principle of the brotherhood of men under the Fatherhood of God.

We have for many years experienced difficulties in our relationship with Roman Catholic priests in the Philippines.

(1) Masons have been refused burial in Catholic cemeteries even where it was the only cemetery in the area.

(2) Families and friends of Masons have been instructed not to attend our public meetings.

(3) Where a Mason is married to a Roman Catholic, various difficulties arise: (a) Wives of Masons have been informed that they could expect no promotion in their work, *e.g.*, school teacher or government employee, unless the husband withdrew from Masonry; (b) Children of Masons going to catechism have been told terrible things about the Masons; (c) Retraction has been forced on Masons, *e.g.*, when a Mason was in a coma, the local priest and the wife placed the Mason's thumb-mark on a retraction form; later on the wife refused to allow his Masonic brethren to see or subsequently to give him a Masonic funeral. (General Emilio Aguinaldo, a great Filipino hero, has been a Mason for over seventy years. Many Roman Catholic priests have pleaded with him to retract. He has repeatedly stated, "There is nothing in Masonry which is against the Roman Catholic Church, therefore, I have nothing to retract." Mrs. Aguinaldo is an ardent Roman Catholic and she has stated that she feels that General Aguinaldo should not retract.)

(4) Masons cannot be sponsors at baptisms or at weddings in a Roman Catholic Church.

(5) Perhaps the sorest point is the fact that priests and parishes publish literature attacking the Masons, accusing them of being in league with the devil, of being anti-Christ, of being atheists, of being agnostics, or of being communists.

These conditions are detrimental to family and national unity. There is no question that energy is being misdirected and dissipated; the same effort could better be employed in positive action for the glory of God.

Ever since 1954, when I became Master of my Lodge, I have been working on this problem, and have asked my brethren to preach and to practice charity. As a result, the Masons in our jurisdiction no longer retaliate when they are tormented, although some of them still voice their objections to the more bitter attacks. It was, therefore, one of the greatest experiences of my life to have an audience with the Holy Father and then to be received so cordially and sympathetically by Your Eminence. When I was with you, I felt that I was talking with a man in whom the spirit of God was overwhelming and I became confident that this case was now in the hands of a man who could deal with it correctly. I shall always love Your Eminence as a brother. God has blessed you, and I pray that through you He will bless my humble efforts.

Faithfully yours,
(Sgd.) WILLIAM H. QUASHA

His Eminence, Agustino Cardinal Bea
Via Aurelia, 527
Rome, Italy

Your Eminence:

This is a *pro memoria* on the interview you so graciously granted me on June 2, 1966 which was attended by His Excellency, Benigno Toda y Toledo and Father S. Schmidt, S.J., your Eminence's secretary.

During our meeting your Eminence referred to a series of articles appearing in an Italian publication entitled *Vita* in which certain persons referring to themselves as Masons indicated a spirit of antagonism toward the Roman Catholic Church. These persons and their organization are not recognized by the Grand Lodge of the Republic of the Philippines as Masons. We have no connection with them, and in fact disown them. Unfortunately, we have no power to take any action against them other than to forbid our own Masons from having any contact with them. If a Mason in our jurisdiction were to violate this injunction, he would be guilty of unnamasonic conduct and would be punishable in accordance with the provisions of our constitution. In our parlance they are spurious, and every Mason in our jurisdiction and in all the jurisdictions with which we have fraternal relations, approximately 90, have the same obligation; this includes all 49 Grand Lodges in the United States.

Your Eminence will recall that after my visit to you on about January 31, 1963 I sent to you from Washington, D.C. two volumes, one of which was entitled *Regular Lodges Masonic* and the other showed the tables of recognition which exist between the various Grand Lodges. Your Eminence will not find the group referred to in *Vita* in either of these volumes.

As I stated in my *pro memoria* dated March 18, 1963, a copy of which is attached for your ready reference, all the Grand Lodges which we recognize must adhere to the following principles:

1. Belief in God (One Almighty God, Father of all Men, Maker of heaven and earth).
2. Belief in the future existence.
3. The obligation taken by any Mason must be on and in full view of the Holy Bible to which we refer as the Volume of the Sacred Law.
4. There shall be no discussion of religion and politics in a lodge.

These principles are set forth in our constitution, a copy of which I gave you. These principles have been adhered to consistently by our Grand Lodge ever since its inception. They are the same principles followed by our Mother Grand Lodge, the Grand Lodge of California, and all the other Grand Lodges in the United States. If at any time we learn that any other Grand Lodge does not adhere to these principles, we withdrew our recognition of them.

It must have established to your Eminence's satisfaction that we are not a secret society; that our Grand Lodge is a corporation duly organized and registered with the Philippine government as a fraternal and charitable corporation in accordance with Philippine law; that our members are obligated to abide by the laws of the country in which they reside; and that our Grand Lodge abides by the laws of the Republic of the Philippines.

Turn to next page

Our procedures, as I said before, are printed in the English language (I sent you a copy of our 1962 annual proceedings to establish this point). Our membership list is public information. Our organization and our members support a Masonic hospital for crippled children as a regular institutional project. (Approximately 85% of the children who are cared for in our hospital are Roman Catholics. All these children are treated free of charge.)

Between the time I first visited the Vatican in 1959 and my second visit in 1963, the tensions between the Roman Catholic Church and our Fraternity noticeably diminished, and in many instances we were able to establish cordial relationships between Roman Catholic clergy and laymen and our constituent lodges. Since 1963 these relations have improved to even a greater extent. We are pleased to say that several Roman Catholic priests have attended some of our public affairs, including annual installation ceremonies of our constituent lodges. Many prominent Catholic laymen in high government positions and in the business community have addressed our weekly Saturday luncheons which are open to Masons and their guests. I am very pleased to say that approximately a year and a half ago I was a sponsor at a wedding of two very prominent Filipinos at the Malate Catholic Church. One of my fellow sponsors was the wife of the then President of the Philippines and another was the Speaker of the House of Representatives of the Philippines; still another was a member of the Senate of the Republic of the Philippines, the latter being one of the leading Catholic laymen in the country, Hon. Raul Manglapus. This recent experience in this respect can be duplicated by many other Masons in our jurisdiction.

After I saw you last June, I met the Grand Master of the Grand Lodge of Connecticut who informed me that he had recently had an audience with His Holiness, Pope Paul VI and that His Holiness had complimented him on his efforts to improve relations between his Grand Lodge and the Roman Catholics in his area. Insofar as I know, I was the first Grand Master in office to have an audience with the Holy Father, and the efforts of the Grand Master of Connecticut is evidence that our Grand Lodge is not alone in its desire to bridge the hiatus which now exists. I learned recently that the Grand Secretary of the Grand Lodge of California who is a Past Grand Master of that Grand Lodge is planning to be in Europe next June and would like to have an audience with the Holy Father. I have informed him that I felt he should endeavor to seek an audience with you first.

It continues to be the hope of our Grand Lodge that the present situation be altered in the spirit of ecumenicity.

I enclose a copy of the *Cabletow* for the month of December, 1966 in which you will note that the editor took occasion to compliment me for my efforts in this matter. It also reprinted articles which I wrote in June, 1955 and in April, 1962 for the *Cabletow*. I presume the reason that the editor did not print my *pro memoria* of March 18, 1963 was because it was not available to him. Up to this point I have kept your message in mind, that we ought not to give any publicity to my activity so as to avoid unnecessary antagonisms. I am wondering, however, whether at this point it would not be a good idea for us to publish my previous *pro memoria* as well as this one in our *Cabletow*. It would be heartening to our members and I believe would also encourage warmer relationships between the Roman Catholic Church and the members of our Grand Lodge.

Concurrently in our joint efforts to bring together under the panopy of God all those who profess a belief in Him; there are counterforces at work which are attempting to destroy all institutions which stand for God. We feel, and I am sure your Eminence does, too, that we ought to find a *modus vivendi* which will give us more strength to do God's work and to forestall the efforts of those who seek to destroy us both. Only a few hundred miles away from here, in Mainland China, priests and nuns have been killed, tortured and driven from their places of abode and of worship and forced to leave the land which they came to save. In this connection it is interesting to note our constituent lodges in mainland China were likewise driven out and forced to reestablish themselves in Taiwan.

In these circumstances we urge that efforts be intensified to bring this case to the attention of His Holiness, Pope Paul VI, so that the Grand Lodge of the Republic of the Philippines will not be covered by previously published Encyclicals and Bulls against Masonry.

I take this occasion to wish Your Eminence my sincere wishes for continued health and happiness during Christmas and the New Year.

Faithfully yours,
(Sgd.) WILLIAM H. QUASHA, PGM

————— oOo —————

February 8, 1967

His Eminence, Agustino Cardinal Bea
Chairman, Committee on Christian Unity
The Vatican, Italy

Your Eminence:

According to newspaper accounts there have been some important changes in the Vatican. I am very hopeful that you will be able to continue your position of influence in the matter of Christian unity.

Next May I plan to go to the United States via Europe and would be very happy to include Rome in my itinerary if it will be possible for me, in some way, to contribute further to the presentation I made in 1963 and on my subsequent visit in 1966.

Certainly the spirit of ecumenism becomes increasingly pervasive. In my own church we had a special service during the week devoted to Christian unity. I continue to be strong in my belief that if favorable consideration is given to the matter which I put forward, a tremendous amount of impetus will be given to the growth of the unity which the world so urgently and fervently needs and prays for.

Please accept my best wishes for your continued good health.

Faithfully yours,
(Sgd.) WILLIAM H. QUASHA
Past Grand Master