

New Jersey Masonic Funeral Service

Prior to the service

The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want. He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: he leadeth me beside the still waters.

He restoreth my soul: he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake.

Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me.

Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies: thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over.

Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the house of the LORD for ever.

BRETHERN:

The solemn notes that betoken the dissolution of this earthly tabernacle have again alarmed our outer door, and another spirit has been summoned to the land where our fathers have gone before us.

We are again called upon to consider the uncertainty of human life, the immutable certainty of death, and the vanity of all human pursuits. It is passing strange notwithstanding the daily mementos of mortality that cross our path, notwithstanding the funeral bell so often tolls in our ears and the mournful processions go about our streets, that we do not more seriously consider our approaching fate. We go on from design to design, add hope to hope, and lay out plans for many years, until we are alarmed by the approach of the messenger of death.

What are all the externals of human dignity, the power of wealth, the dreams of ambition, the pride of intellect, or the charms of beauty, when Nature has paid her just debt? Fix your eyes on this scene and view life stripped of its ornaments, and you must be persuaded of the utter emptiness of these delusions. At the grave the scepter of the prince and the staff of the beggar are laid side by side. There all fallacies are detected, all ranks are leveled and all distinctions are done away.

Our present meeting and ceremonies will have been vain and useless if they fail to excite our serious reflection, and to strengthen our resolutions of amendment. Be persuaded, then, my brethern, by the uncertainty of human life, and the unsubstantial nature of all its pursuits, and no longer postpone the all-important concern of preparing for eternity. Let us each improve the present moment, and, while time and opportunity offer, prepare for that great change which we know must come to all.

Let us resolve to maintain with greater assiduity the dignified character of our profession. May our faith be evinced by a correct moral walk and deportment; may our hope be bright as the glorious mysteries that will be revealed hereafter, and our charity boundless as the wants of our fellow creatures. And having faithfully discharged the great duties we owe to God, to our neighbor and to ourselves, when at last it shall please the Grand Master of the universe to summon us into His eternal presence, may the trestle board of our whole lives bear such inspection that it may be given unto each of us, through His grace and mercy, to "eat of the hidden manna," and to receive the "white stone with a new name written," which will insure perpetual and unspeakable happiness at His right hand.

The lambskin apron is an emblem of innocence, and the badge of a Mason. It is more ancient than the Golden Fleece or Roman Eagle, and more honorable than the Star and Garter, when worthily worn.

This emblem I now deposit upon the body of our deceased brother. *(done)* We are here reminded of the universal dominion of Death. The arm of friendship cannot interpose to prevent his coming; the wealth of the world cannot purchase our release; nor will the innocence of youth or the charms of beauty propitiate his purpose.

This evergreen is an emblem of our faith in the immortality of the soul. By it we are reminded that we have an immortal part within us which will survive our earthly dissolution, and which will never, never, never die; and that though, like our brother whose remains lie before us, we shall soon be clothed in the habiliments of death, yet through our belief in the mercy of our Heavenly Father, we may confidently hope that our souls will bloom in eternal spring. This also, I deposit on the body. *(done)*

Brethern, unite with me in giving the Grand Honors. *(done)*

*"We cherish his memory here,
We commit his body to the dust,
And commend his spirit to God
who gave it."*

We have assembled today (this evening) as Masons to offer to the memory of our deceased Brother _____ this last tribute of our affection. Unto the tomb we shall soon consign his body -- earth to earth; ashes to ashes; dust to dust -- there to remain until the trump shall sound on the Resurrection morn. We can trustfully leave him in the hands of Him who doeth all things well, who is "glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders."

The Great Creator having been pleased to remove our brother from the cares and troubles of this transitory existence, thus severing another link from the fraternal chain that binds us together, may he more strongly cement us who survive him in the ties of union and friendship; that, during the short space allotted us here, we may wisely and usefully employ our time, and, in the reciprocal intercourse of kind and friendly acts, promote the welfare and happiness of one another.

We sincerely, deeply and most affectionately sympathize with those of his immediate relatives and friends who are most heartstricken at the loss they have sustained, and remind them that he who "tempers the wind to the shorn lamb" looks down with infinite compassion upon the bereaved in the hour of their desolation and will fold the arms of his love and protection around those who put their trust in him.

Then let us improve this solemn warning, that at last, when the sheeted dead are stirring, when the great white throne is set, we shall receive from the Omniscient Judge the thrilling invitation "Come, ye blessed, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world."



Prayer following the service

Almighty ruler of the Universe, Author of all good, and Giver of all mercies, who hast deigned to acknowledge us as thy children, and graciously permitted us to call thee Father, behold us, we pray thee, with a father's compassion as we now in sorrow lift our hearts unto thee. Thou art our only refuge in the hour of berevement. There is none other from whom we may seek succor but from thee. Thou has taught us in thy holy word that thou dost not willingly afflict or grieve the children of men. We beseech thee, therefore, to bless and to sanctify unto us this present dispensation of thy providence, and to endue our souls with patience and with resignation to thy holy will. Inspire our hearts with true wisdom from on high, that we may glorify thee in all thy ways, however little we may understand thy purposes. May we realize that thy all-seeing eye is always upon us, and by the spirit of truth and love may we be influenced to perfect submission.

Lift up thy countenance upon us, O Lord, and give us peace. Let our fleeting hours be spent in thy service, and when the toils of earth shall have ceased and all our chastening sorrows shall have been done away, do thou in mercy raise us to the enjoyment of fadeless light and immortal life, in that glorious kingdom where faith and hope shall end, and love and joy prevail forever. Amen. *So Mote it Be*