

AMERICAN CANADIAN GRAND LODGE

Lodge of Sorrow or Memorial Service Ritual



This is the short version of the Lodge of Sorrow authorized for use by Lodges.

Ritual for Lodge of Sorrow, or Memorial Service

*(After all have entered and been seated, the **room lights should be preferably be turned off completely.** Before proceeding, the Master should observe an interval long enough to permit the darkness to induce the desired effect of contemplation. When ready to proceed the Master strikes a match)*

These sequences should be followed only after Preparation of the Lodge room for a lodge of sorrow is accomplished.

Lights turned off completely

Music (2 minutes) Sebastian Bach prelude C

WM: Lights candle (1 or 3 candles)

SW: 20 seconds after WM, lights his candle (1 or 3 candles)

JW: 20 seconds after SW, lights his candle ((1 or 3 candles)

CH: Lights his candle (1 or 3 candles) at the same time with JW

WM: Brother Senior Warden, for what purpose are we here assembled?

SW: To honor the memory of those Brethren whom death has taken from us; to contemplate our own approaching dissolution, and, by the remembrance of immortality, to raise our souls above the consideration of this transitory existence.

WM: Brother Junior Warden, what sentiments should inspire the souls of Masons on occasions like the present?

JW: Calm sorrow for the absence of our Brethren who have gone before us; earnest solicitude for our own eternal welfare, and a firm faith and reliance upon the wisdom and goodness of the Great Architect of the Universe.

WM: My Brethren, commending these sentiments to your earnest consideration, and invoking your assistance in the Memorial Service about to take place. I declare this Lodge of Sorrow duly opened.

WM: *** (by holding head of gavel and thumping distinctly against the block)

CH: Great Architect of the Universe, in whose holy sight centuries are but as days, to whose omniscience the past and the future are but as one eternal present, look down upon Thy children, who still wonder among the delusions of time, who still tremble with dread of dissolution and shudder at the mysteries of the future; look down, we beseech Thee, from Thy glorious and eternal day into the dark night of our error and presumption, and suffer a ray of Thy Devine light to penetrate into our hearts, that in them may awaken and bloom the uncertainty of life, reliance upon Thy promises, and assurance of a place at Thy right hand. Amen.

BRETHREN: So mote it be!

WM: * (seating the Lodge)

MUSIC: (2 minutes) *Tears in Heaven by Eric Clapton*

WM: (may rise or sitting down, taking the skull in his hand) Brethren, in the midst of life we are in death and the wisest cannot know what a day may bring forth. We live but to see those we love passing away into the silent land.

(Solemnly uncovers skull) Behold this emblem of mortality, once the abode of a spirit like our own. Beneath this moldering canopy once shone the bright and busy eyes; within this hollow cavern once played the ready, swift, and tuneful tongue, and now, sightless and mute, it is eloquent only in the lessons it teaches us.

Think of those Brethren, who, but a few days since, were among us in all the pride and power of life; bring to your minds the remembrance of their wisdom, their strength, and their beauty, and when reflect that “to this complexion have they come at last.” Think of yourselves; thus will you be when the lamp of your brief existence has burned out. Think how soon death, for you, will be a reality. Man’s life is like a flower, which blooms today, and tomorrow is faded, cast aside, and trodden under foot.

The most of us, my Brethren, are fast approaching, or have already passed the meridian of life; our sun is setting in the West, and oh! How much more swift is the passage of our declining years than when we started upon the journey, and believed, as the young are to apt to believe, that the roseate hues of the rising sun of our existence were always to be continued.

When we look back upon the happy days of our childhood, when the dawning intellect first began to exercise its powers of thought, it seems but as yesterday, and that, by a simple effort of the will, we would put aside our manhood, and seek again the loving caresses of a mother, or be happy in the possession of a bauble. And could we now but realize the idea that our last hour had come, our whole earthly life would appear but as the space of time from yesterday until today.

Centuries upon centuries have rolled away behind us; before us stretches out an eternity of years to come; and on the narrow boundary between the past and the present flickers the puny taper we term our life.

When we come into the world we knew naught of what had been before us, but, as we grew up to manhood, we learned of the past. We saw the flowers bloom as they had bloomed for centuries; we beheld the orbs of day and night pursuing their endless courses among the stars, and we learned what men had thought and said and done, from the beginning of our world to our day. But only through the eye of faith can we behold what is to come hereafter, and only through a firm reliance upon the divine promises can we satisfy the yearnings of an immortal soul.

The cradle speaks to us of remembrance; the coffin, of hope, of a blessed trust in a glorious immortality, and a never ending existence beyond the gloomy portals of the tomb.

Let these reflections convince us how vain are all the wrangling and bitterness’s engendered by the collisions of the world, far what at these will survive us?

Not, let us hope, the petty strife's and bitterness's, the jealousies and heart burnings, the small trials and mean advantages we have gained, but rather the noble thoughts, the words of truth, the works of mercy and justice; those works that ennoble and light up the existence of every honest man, however humble, and become entrenched as a symbol of all that is good forever, when his body, like this remnant of humanity, molders in its parent dust.

Let the proud and the vain among us consider how soon the gaps are filled that are made in society by those who die around them, and how soon time heals the wound that death inflicts upon the loving heart. And from this also, let them learn humility, and realize that we are but drops in the great ocean of humanity.

And when God sends his messenger to us with the scroll of death - the final summons – let us look upon it as an act of mercy, to prevent the many sins and calamities of a longer life, and lay down our heads softly and pass into the sleep that knows no waking, like one “Who wraps the drapery of his couch about him, and lies down to pleasant dreams.”

For this, at least, man learns by death: that his calamities are not immortal. To bear grief honorably and temperately, and to die a nobly, are the duties of a good man and a true mason.

(An interval of profound silence for several seconds)

CH: Sounds low twelve (slowly strikes twelve on gong)

WM: Brothers Senior and Junior Wardens, Join me round these solemn emblems of mortality, and assist me in rendering due and appropriate homage to our departed Brethren.

WM: *** Everyone rises

Music (Pleyel's Hymn) - stop music when all three have reached Altar.

(Wardens with flowers (JR with white flower and SW with red flower) and Master with evergreen, and candles, solemnly approaches altar, each on his side of altar; place candlesticks on altar corners, step back; bow; pause; JW advances ...)

JW: In memory of our departed Brethren, I deposit this pure white rose, emblematic of that pure life to which they have been called, and reminding us that as these children of an hour will droop and fade away, so, too, we shall soon follow those who have gone before us, and inciting us so to fill the brief span of our existence that we may leave to our survivors a sweet savor of remembrance. ***(Deposits the White Rose at the Bible or Apron, bow, and step back).***

SW: As the sun is in the west, to close the day and herald the approach of night, so one by one we lay us down in the darkness of the tomb to wait in its calm repose for the time when the

heavens shall pass away as a scroll, standing in the presence of the Infinite, shall realize the true and of his pilgrimage here below. Let this flower be to us the symbol of remembrance of all the virtues of our Brethren who have preceded us to the Silent Land, and serve as a token of that fraternal alliance which binds us while on earth, which we hope will finally unit us in heaven. ***(Deposits the Red Rose at the Bible or apron, bow, and step back).***

WM: It is appointed unto all men once to die, but after death cometh the resurrection. The dust shall return to the earth, and the spirit unto God who gave it. In the grave all men are equal. The good deeds, the lofty thoughts, and the heroic sacrifices alone survive, and bear fruit in the lives of those who strive to emulate them.

While, therefore, nature will have its way, and our tears will fall upon the graves of our Brethren, let us be reminded by the evergreen, symbol of our faith in immortal life, that the dead are but sleeping, and be comforted by the reflection that their memories will not be forgotten; that they will still be loved by those who are soon to follow them; that in our archives their name are written, and that in our hearts there is still a place for them.

And so, trusting in the infinite love and tender mercy of Him without whose knowledge not even a sparrow falls, let us prepare to meet them where there is no parting, and where with them we shall enjoy eternal rest. ***(Deposit Evergreen over roses or apron, step back; all three then bows)***

(Master and Wardens together render the funeral Grand Honors, which are given three times)

Funeral Grand Honors

Movement 1: Extend arms toward the catafalque, with the palms turned up.

Movement 2: Cross arms over the breast, left arm over the right, gingers touching the shoulders.

Movement 3: Raise arms above head, looking upward.

WM/Wardens (in unison): The will of God is accomplished. So mote it be! AMEN.

(WM, SW and JW takes candle, makes about-faces, and solemnly returns to his station; when all are in place they simultaneously place candles on stations)

WM: *Seats everyone

(Light in the room are now raised to desired level)

(Master proceeds to explain that at this point in the service, an appointed Orator may deliver the eulogy for all departed Brethren, or for a particular Brother. If there is more than one eulogy, a short interlude of music should be interspersed. Normally, when the Memorial Service is exemplified during a Grand Lodge Communication, the names of those Brethren deceased since the previous Grand Lodge Communication are read by the Chaplain.)

Chaplain: At this point an Orator may deliver the eulogy, for all departed Brethren or for a particular Brother. (A simple recitation of the names and Lodges of deceased Brethren would suffice).

WM: Re-drapes the skull

Music (*Amazing Grace by Gebroeders Brouwer*)

WM: Brother Senior Warden, our recollections of our departed Brothers has been refreshed and we may now ask ourselves were they just and perfect Masons, worthy men, unwearied toilers in the vineyard; possessed of so many virtues as to overcome their faults and shortcomings? Answer these questions as Masons should answer.

SW: Worshipful Master, man judged not of man. He, whose infinite and tender mercy passeth all comprehension, whose goodness endured forever, has called our Brethren hence. Let Him judge.

Masonry has no tribunal to sit in judgment upon her dead; with her the good which her sons have done lives after them, and the evil is interred with their bones. She does require, however, that whatever is said concerning them shall be the truth; and should it ever pass that nothing good can truthfully be said of a Mason who dies, she will mournfully and pityingly bury him out of her sight, in tears, and silence.

WM: *** (raise lodge) Brother Chaplain, please lead us in a closing benediction.

CH: Our Father, who art in heaven, it hath pleased Thee to take from among us those who were our Brethren. Let time, as it heals the wounds thus inflicted upon our hearts and upon the hearts of those who were near and dear to them, not erase the salutary lesson engraved there; but let those lessons, always continuing distinct and legible, make us and them wiser and better. And whatever distress and trouble may thereafter come upon us, may we ever be consoled by the reflection that Thy wisdom and Thy love are equally infinite, and that our sorrows are not the visitations of Thy wrath, but the result of the great law of harmony by which everything is being conducted to a good and perfect issue in the fullness of Thy time. Let the loss of our Brethren increase our affection for those who are yet spared to us, and make us more punctual in the performance of those duties that Friendship, Love and Honor demand. And when it comes time for us to die, may a firm and abiding trust in Thy mercy dispel the gloom and dread of dissolution. Be with us now, that we may serve Thee in spirit and understanding, and to Thy name shall be ascribed the praise forever. AMEN. (Response) So mote it be!

(Chaplain extinguishes his candle)

WM: Brethren (Ladies and guests), let us profit by the admonitions of this solemn occasion; lay to heart the truths to which we have listened. And let us, Brethren, resolve so to walk that when we lay us down to the last sleep, it may be the privilege of the Brethren to strew white flowers upon our graves, and keep our memories as a fond and pleasant remembrance.

WM: * This formally concludes our Memorial Service.

- (1) **Brother Senior and Junior Warden let us extinguish the lights.** (Master first, then SW, then JW. The room lights are then slowly raised to full brilliancy, and the officiating Master – if not then Master of the Lodge – returns the gavel to the Master with appropriate remarks.)

Or

- (2) **... Join me now in retiring from this place.** (The Wardens take their candles and advance west of the Alter, where the Master joins them. Facing the East, all three solemnly bow, and then retire in single file from the Lodge room (JW, SW and Master).