

## Bishop Sheridan Interviews John Salza on Freemasonry

“Why Catholics Cannot Be Masons”

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Catholic attorney John Salza once found himself inside a Masonic hall, being asked to take off his wedding ring and crucifix as he swore an oath to be reborn as a Freemason. Although he knew in his heart that something was wrong, he did not leave right away. Over several years, he advanced to the 32nd degree in the Scottish Rite — a level that only a select group of Masons are invited to. While he was told that Masonry was compatible with Catholicism, he eventually could not reconcile the two and left the Masons. In 2008, Salza wrote a basic, short treatise, “Why Catholics Cannot Be Masons,” (TAN Publishing) that addressed the serious conflicts that lay between Catholicism and Freemasonry (including the Shriners).

**Bishop Sheridan: Welcome to all in the Lord Jesus. On our program today we are going to be discussing the topic of Masonry, or the Masons, or sometimes called the Freemasons; an organization that we know is not associated with the Catholic Church but wanted to bring up on this program because it seems, at least in my experience in talking to other priests and bishops, that there are perhaps a good number of Catholic men who become involved with the Masons, very often in very good faith, thinking that they are in a fraternal organization that is not in any way at odds with the Catholic Church. Our guest today, I think, is going to lead us in a very different direction. We are joined by John Salza. Welcome John.**

John Salza: Your Excellency, thank you.

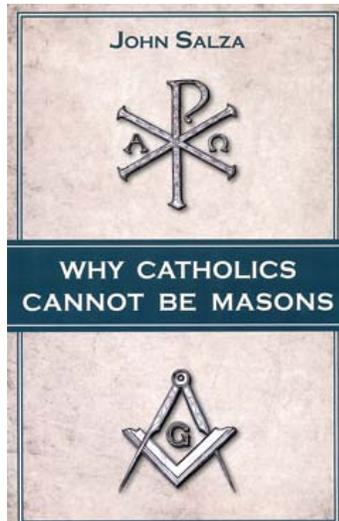
**Bishop Sheridan: You are the author of at least one book that deals with Catholicism and Freemasonry and the idea that these are irreconcilable really in their differences. And the bottom line is, Catholics must keep their distance from the Masons, correct?**

Salza: That is correct Your Excellency. I have written two books. The first was called “Masonry Unmasked: An Insider Reveals the Secrets of the Lodge” that gets into my journey and is a very broadly applied book, not only to Catholics, but to Christians and any men who are trying to do God’s will. The second book I wrote specifically for Catholics and that is why it is called “Why Catholics Cannot Be Masons” and it is a relatively easy book to read. I think this book has a very unique distinction because it was given the *Imprimatur* by (Rockford, Ill.) Bishop Thomas Doran. And it is the only book to my knowledge on Freemasonry that has the *Imprimatur*, hence declaring that what I am presenting here is compatible with the teachings of the Church.

**Bishop Sheridan: John, I had the opportunity to read quickly through the book and you are right, it is concise, it is not even 100 pages long and is a fairly easy read for anyone. You don’t have to be a theologian by any means. But I would like, for a while anyway John, to**

**have you just tell us all a bit about your journey. You were born and raised a Catholic, I understand?**

Salza: That is correct.



**Bishop Sheridan: But you at one point became involved with the Masons — why don't you just take us through that journey.**

Salza: Sure. I was born and raised Catholic and grew up very devoted to Catholicism actually, serving the Mass, daily prayers, I loved Our Lady. I never doubted the truths of the Catholic Church. I really had a fundamental understanding of the faith from a very young child. I had 12 years of Catholic education and so forth, so there was a reversion of sorts that I will get into, but there was never any doctrinal objections to the faith, it was quite the contrary. But as I got into my college years and went on to law school, as happens so many times, I didn't practice the faith like I should have. And when you put yourself in that place, you do become vulnerable, which is what happened to me.

Particularly what happened was, I was recruited to join Freemasonry right after I graduated from law school, believe it or not, from men who claimed to be Catholic men. These were men that I grew up with, they were much older than I was, these were guys that I looked up to and respected. They seemed to be good Catholics, and it was on the basis that Masonry would be a great networking opportunity for me as a young attorney to establish business contacts and to have a social life and so forth.

So that was the pretext under which I joined Freemasonry. The solicitation from men that I trusted on the basis of business contacts and a social life and that was it. That is generally how it happens. I didn't really feel the need to investigate it any further than that.

**Bishop Sheridan: Are you under the impression that the Catholic men who recruited you were being deliberately deceptive, or were they doing this in good faith?**

Salza: I presumed they were doing it in good faith and that they were not being deliberately deceptive at all. In fact, what they said to me was, "You know John, at some point in time the Church has opposed Masonry, but the Church has now changed its position," and that is one of the things that I held on to for a while. But then when I researched it, I realized that wasn't true, and we will talk about where that erroneous idea comes from.

It certainly comes from Canon Law. It also comes from a false perception that American Masonry is different than European Freemasonry. That is also not true. But that was some of the things that I was told, (that) "the church has changed its position and, by the way, American Masonry is different from European Freemasonry which has been in opposition to the Church."

So, in any event though, because I still was a Catholic and I had some recollection that maybe

somewhere the Church had opposed this and just to satisfy my conscience, I called my parish priest and asked him, “Can I do this?” And of course he hadn’t studied the question, and so he said, “Yes, John you can as long as you recognize there is a distinction between your faith and the lodge.” And I said, “Of course I recognize that distinction.” So that is all the research I did. It is based upon the trust and the friendships that you have, and that is what lulls you in.

**Bishop Sheridan: As you got involved in Masonry, you said you were a fairly well-formed Catholic. I am sure it was that background that allowed you to make these kinds of distinctions that maybe a number of other good Catholic men without the formation that you had may not be able to do.**

Salza: That could very well be. Obviously a mystery of Grace there. But the stirrings began, Your Excellency, the very night of my initiation and even before that, I can tell you. I will just take us back, as I remember these things in great detail.

The Masons would consistently tell me that you have to believe in God, but religion is never discussed in the lodge room. There was always this disclaimer that religion is not discussed, and I never assumed it was to be discussed because they said that Freemasonry was a fraternity, not a religion. So I first questioned, why that disclaimer? As I will explain, Masons are taught, whether to their knowledge or not, to issue that disclaimer to condition you to believe that when you are ultimately going to hear religious teachings at Freemasonry, you are going to hearken back to those representations and conclude that, well, that it can’t really be religion, otherwise the guys that recruited me are lying to me. So the conditioning process starts even during the solicitation.

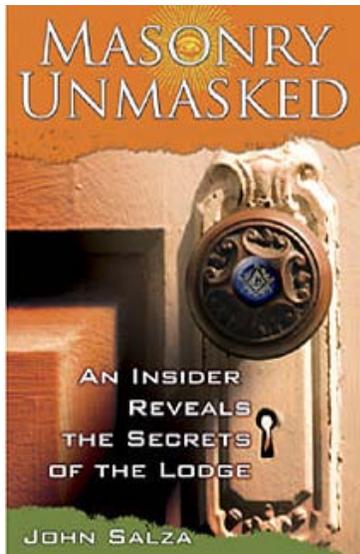
Then, on the night of the initiation, and what I am going to describe describes universal practice — this happens in every lodge throughout the world — the first thing they do is they have you affirm that you are not joining Masonry for “mercenary motives.” And that comes right from the ritual. What does that mean? Well, they have you affirm you are not joining Masonry for a pecuniary advantage or for business reasons. Well, wait a minute, that was the basis upon which I was solicited.

So the first thing they tell you is a contradiction. You are solicited on that basis and now you tell me to affirm that I am not joining it for that reason, so that struck me a little bit. But then it got worse. Because after I was required to make that affirmation, they take you in the back room — it is called the anteroom — and every Mason has gone through this. They require you to strip down and to take off all of your clothing except your underwear.

**Bishop Sheridan: Right, I saw that in your book. How strange.**

Salza: Yes, it is very strange, and it goes beyond that. Not only are you required to strip down, but you are required to remove all sacramentals on your person. I had a crucifix, a scapular . . . even the wedding ring that I was wearing, which of course, I reacted, “No, I can’t do that.” But they said, “No, no, no, don’t worry about it. Everything will be explained to you once you get in the lodge.”

Now recognize what is happening here. You go through many months of solicitation, there is a buildup, this is presented to you as the most ancient and honorable fraternal organization in the world. You are shown the great presidents and congressmen and athletes and actors and all of these esteemed individuals who have been Freemasons and you may also have friends and family waiting in the lodge room for you to come out for your initiation. So what kind of a pressure is a man under when all of a sudden this surprise is given to him — take everything off, including your wedding ring. Most men are not in a position to resist at that moment. They are at a point of no return, and they, like I did, invariably proceed. And that is the problem.



**Bishop Sheridan: So you didn't question that?**

Salza: I did question it externally. I asked them, why do I need to do this? And all they said was it is going to be explained to you inside the lodge room. Your friends and family and all the great Masons have done it, this is just part of the ritual.

Now stripping down was something where I thought, okay, this is a fraternity, maybe that is what fraternities do? So I can kind of maybe look beyond that, maybe there is some strange ritual where they are going to make fun of you, although I didn't get that impression, but maybe. But the wedding ring and the sacramentals certainly disturbed me. They warned me it is going to be explained to you later on (when you get into the lodge room), and it was. The ritual says you are required "not to bring anything offensive or defensive into the lodge." That is what the ritual says. So in other

words, Masonry and its rituals are saying that it doesn't want you to bring anything that would offend the brothers in the lodge — for example my crucifix, my scapular — or defend yourself.

You know, these spiritual sacramentals are conduits of grace that they don't want in the lodge room. And so there was an incompatibility right there from the moment of initiation.

**Bishop Sheridan: And that applied to your wedding ring as well?**

Salza: Yeah, you know I wondered about that . . . is there a theological meaning to that, and I think there is. Just as the wedding ring is a symbol of my union with my wife, it also is a symbol in my view of Christ's one flesh union with his Church. It is a Catholic sacramental. And Masonry fundamentally opposes Christ and opposes His Church. And so even that representation of Christ has to be removed.

**Bishop Sheridan: Okay, so proceed now. You have gotten through this ritual and it has now been explained to you what that was all about.**

Salza: Yes, it has only just begun. Because at this point after you are stripped down and divested — that is what they say — you are divested of all metals and anything else on your person, you are placed with a blindfold. You are given a blindfold and then a noose is placed

around your neck. You are not even in the lodge room yet, this is in preparation for the ritual.

And what does this mean? Well, the noose, as Freemasonry will later teach you, represents your tie to the profane world. Once you swear a covenant oath to Masonry, which we will talk about, that noose is removed from your person. So Masonry is declaring that, until you are initiated into the mysteries of Freemasonry, you are profane; you are not illuminated. Even though you have been baptized into the light of Jesus Christ, Masonry looks at you as someone who is in a state of spiritual and mystical ignorance. That is what the noose represents. That is also what the blindfold represents — you are in a state of spiritual darkness.

Why do I say that? Well, that is because essentially Masonry says the same thing. After you are escorted out of this anteroom, you are called to knock three times on the door asking to be admitted. Your conductor — who is holding on to you since you can't see anything — says, “This is Mr. John Salza who has long been in darkness and now seeks to be brought to life.” That again is verbatim from the ritual.

As I am standing there I am thinking to myself, well, wait a minute, I have only been blindfolded for a couple of minutes, and yet this gentleman has said that I have long been in darkness. What does that mean? That can't refer to this physical aspect of what is happening; it refers to my spiritual condition and the fact that I have long been in darkness. Even though I am Roman Catholic and am a member of the Mystical Body, Masonry says no, you are in darkness until you become a Freemason.

At that point, the lodge opens the door, responds favorably and you are escorted into the lodge. Again, remember this happens to every Freemason who is ever initiated. The first thing that happens now that you are in the lodge room in the presence of the Masons, the brothers, you are received on the point of a sharp instrument piercing your naked left breast. It sets the tone immediately that what you are engaged in is a very serious endeavor and you are told that just as this instrument that is being pressed into you is an instrument of torture to your flesh, so should the recollection of it be to your conscience should you ever presume to reveal the secrets of Freemasonry unlawfully.

I am quoting verbatim from the ritual. In fact, these things are still burned into my mind even though I haven't said them in many years, I remember them. And what is that telling you? Well, it is telling you that this is a secret society and we are going to convey secret mysteries to you that you can't reveal to the profane world. That is how you are received.

And then what happens after that reception — which by the way is quite shocking? Imagine how that would feel being blindfolded and then received like that. It is even painful. What happens then is you are caused to kneel down and the Worshipful Master — that is the title of

the chief presiding officer of the lodge who is primarily responsible for conducting the ritual — he causes you to kneel down and he places his left hand on your head and he says to you, “In whom do you put your trust?”

Now remember, the only requirement to join Freemasonry is to believe in deity. I didn't say believe in the Trinity, I didn't say believe in the God of heaven and earth, or Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, it is to believe in deity — to believe in a supreme being or something beyond you. That is why Masonry uses this term “deity.”

**Bishop Sheridan: Is (freemasonry promoting) what we know sometimes as “Deism”?**

Salza: It is rooted in that. But here is one of the very significant problems — really a slam dunk — and this is what Catholics need to understand. The master is asking you to make a profession of faith but it does not matter what god you are professing your faith in. You can say the Great Thumb, you can say Brahma, Vishnu, Shiva, whatever.

Whatever your profession of faith is, the worshipful master then says, and is required to say, according to Masonic ritual, “your trust being in God, your faith is well founded.” And then he says “arise, follow your conductor and fear no danger.” So Masonry at that point is making a theological statement that, no matter what god you believe in, your trust is in the true God and your faith is well founded.

**Bishop Sheridan: So, no matter who this god is, it is the true god?**

Salza: That is right.

**Bishop Sheridan: So, do we have a little statement of relativism here?**

Salza: Yes, can you see that? That is contrary to all of Catholic tradition, because the Church says there is only one true God and there are many false gods.

We see this in Scripture. David says in the Psalms that all the gods of the heathens are devils and St. Paul says essentially the same thing in 1 Corinthians 10, where he says unbelievers don't worship God, they don't sacrifice to God, they sacrifice to demons. That is what is objectively true. But Masonry is saying that, no, objectively, your trust, even if it is in a false god, is in the true God and your faith is well founded. And this is where the Church has stepped in.

The Church knows these teachings. She has studied them, and the Church says that this declaration of Freemasonry is not only contrary to revelation, which of course it is, but it is contrary to reason itself. Because if two Masons have different views of God, let's say they have an incompatible view of God, and only one of those views is true, that means the other one must necessarily be false.

**Bishop Sheridan: Correct.**

Salza: And therefore, for Masonry to say that both of them are true is to deny reason and objective truth altogether. And that is one of the differences of theirs and that is really the goal of Freemasonry. Masonry denies objective truth and wants to condition its members to believe that there is no objective truth, that what you believe subjectively is true.

**Bishop Sheridan: John, what do you understand as the end game here? Granted we are talking about something that, while not professing to be a religion, certainly has all the trappings of a religion, and that alone would make it incompatible with Catholicism. You can't profess Catholicism and another religion at the same time. What did you come to see as the purpose of all of this? What do you believe that Masonry is all about in the end?**

Salza: Well, fundamentally, it is to oppose the salvation of souls. It is to draw men away from Christ and into the work of the devil. If you wanted to ask me fundamentally what is the end game, that must be it. Christ came to save us, He is our only Savior. And for an institution to say that Christ is not the way, the truth and the life, but one can come to the Father another way, even though Christ said that He is the only way, the truth and the life and no one comes to the father but by Him means that Masonry is fighting against the Church and Christ's will to save souls.

**Bishop Sheridan: John, let me just pose a question that certainly some of our listeners may pose to themselves or to others. So I am playing devil's advocate just a little bit here. For instance, Judaism would not profess faith in Jesus Christ as the one and only savior of the world, but we wouldn't necessarily claim that they were out to lead people away from salvation. We are talking about a different faith through the one true God, Christians and Jews would worship the one true God, but how do you see that as different from just another non-Christian religion? I think you are really putting this in anti-Christian and anti-Catholic terms.**

Salza: Well, it is, and I am speaking as to what is objectively true. If Christ and the Church are objectively the only means of salvation, what Masonry is saying is objectively false. That is what we have to conclude.

You know, whether the men who are doing these rituals intend to lead somebody away from salvation, that is not my claim. In fact, I am not able to judge the subjective dispositions of the members or even the men who wrote the rituals. All I can do is judge the rituals, and as a Catholic I have the right and the duty to judge the rituals in light of the teaching of the Church. And my conclusion is that, because they oppose the truths of the church, their ultimate end is to oppose Christ's plan of salvation.

**Bishop Sheridan: Thanks for that clarification. That is very good. You are saying objectively, this is what is going on. You are not trying to read into the heart of any Mason.**

Salza: That is correct.

**Bishop Sheridan: That is a helpful distinction John. How long were you associated with Masonry before you left?**

Salza: Well, three long years, believe it or not. Even though I had all these stirrings inside me, I continued, and not only did I continue, Your Excellency, but I actually became proficient in the rituals. And I would like to reflect on why I did that.

I think I was trying to justify to myself why I continued, that I wanted to learn this inside out, but maybe also it was the grace of the Holy Spirit moving me to understand why in order to thoroughly comprehend these errors. I needed to justify doctrinally why I had all these internal misgivings, and I think that was providential because now I am able to, having learned the rituals inside and out, and knowing about Masonry more than most Masons do, because I was a Proficiency Man.

What that means is I was credentialed by my Grand Lodge to teach and instruct in Masonic ritual. I was declared to be an expert in Masonic ritual. And so I was instructing in these things, and I think it was in God's providence that I personally needed to know the rituals inside and out so that I could make a final informed decision of why they were incompatible with my faith.

**Bishop Sheridan: John, other than these initiation-type rituals, when you met with the other Masons in your lodge, what — I guess I am asking you to reveal what is not supposed to be revealed, but — what went on at those meetings? Were they are all of a kind of quasi-religious nature, or what?**

Salza: No, outside of the ritual, not at all. Because remember, religion is not to be discussed and politics are not to be discussed. Those are the two unwritten rules of the lodge.

So, while the lodge is primarily focused on making Masons, and the only way to make Masons is to conduct the rituals and have them swear the oaths, outside of that activity, which is really the main objective of the lodge, the meeting is regarding, you know, how are we going to raise money for a scholarship or for a certain charity, or how are we going to pay the utility bills and cut the grass type of thing. And what kind of social events are we going to have. All of that is normal, you know. But that is outside the ritual, and that is not the primary purpose of the lodge. The primary purpose of the lodge is to make Masons.

**Bishop Sheridan: You obtained the 32nd degree, or level?**

Salza: Yes, that is correct, and I can briefly explain how it works.

There are three principal degrees in Freemasonry. This is universal throughout the world. The first three degrees are to enter the Entered Apprentice degree, the Fellow Craft degree and the Master Mason degree.

Now Masons say that the Master Mason degree, the third degree, is the highest degree of Freemasonry. Even though it is not numerically the highest degree, it is considered the highest

because that is where you are given — we will talk about this too — that is where you are given the Mason's most sublime teachings, their belief in this resurrection and immortality by being a good Mason. All of these other degrees that come after that are optional and they amplify what has been taught in the first three degrees. They are just supplemental; in fact, the two bodies that one can ascend to after becoming a third degree Mason are called auxiliary bodies. One is the York Rite and the other is the Scottish Rite. You don't have to go to them, but you can; it is an option.

And after I received the third degree I chose to go to the Scottish Rite, where I received the 4th through the 32nd degree. And then from there commonly men will go to the next level which is the Shriners. And most people are familiar with the Shriners. They are the gentlemen who wear the red fezzes and they drive the motor cars and they have the circus parades and so forth. What people must realize is that all Shriners are Masons. They are required to be Masons and generally high-ranking Masons. Not all Masons are Shriners, but all Shriners are Masons. And that was the level to which I ascended.

### **Bishop Sheridan: Is the oath that you take part of your initiation?**

Salza: Yes, and in fact an oath is required to be sworn in every degree of Masonry. And the ritual actually says that it is the oath that makes the man a Mason. So what happens after this profession of faith where the Master declares to the man that no matter what God or deity he professes his faith is well founded and his trust is in God, he is escorted about the lodge — still blindfolded and still with the noose around the neck — and he is escorted about the lodge and stops at each of the three principal officer's stations in the lodge. They are seated.

The officers ask him repeatedly whether what he is doing is of his own "free will and accord." They say, "Is this of your own free will and accord?" And you are required to say "yes." "Is this of your own free will and accord?" Again, (they are) conditioning you to believe that what is happening to you is what you are asking for.

So there are a lot of psychological tactics that are used to condition a man to proceed — to move and to proceed. And ultimately after those interrogations happen he is escorted to an altar. And in every Masonic lodge there is an altar in the middle of the room. This is a fraternity, and yet the focus of the lodge is an altar, an altar of sacrifice by the way because it is at this altar that the man is going to be asked to sacrifice his former religious life for the religion of Freemasonry. And that is done by swearing an oath.

He kneels at the altar — and again, this is where it becomes deceptive. There are some Christian elements in Masonry, as there are Jewish elements and Islamic elements, really something for all, which is again part of this conditioning process. When a man gets to the altar, if he is a Christian, and that is verified during his solicitation process, if he is a Christian there is going to be the Holy Bible on the altar, usually a Protestant Bible missing some books, but nevertheless a Holy Bible. And he is asked to put his hands on the Bible in a certain position and then repeat after the Worshipful Master.

He is not given the oath in advance, for example, like the promise which is given in the Knights

of Columbus, where they say this is what we are going to ask you to promise. This is actually an oath which one swears to God in advance, and not read to you in advance — you're simply required to repeat after the Worshipful Master. And the substance of the oath is essentially that you are going to vow to adhere to all the teachings and principals of Freemasonry and never reveal them to anyone else.

And coupled with that oath is a self curse, and this happens again in all the degrees of Freemasonry whereby the man swears that he will be worthy of self-mutilation and death effectively if he ever violates that oath.

**Bishop Sheridan: Please continue about the oath you take during the initiation.**

Salza: Now, the penalties of the oaths — while they are symbolic — they are meant to impress upon the man that he is subject to a curse from God if he ever violates Freemasonry.

For example, the curse, the self-curse that he swears in the Entered Apprentice degree, is that he be worthy to have his throat slit across and his tongue torn out by its roots and buried in the rough sands of the sea at low water mark. In the Fellow Craft degree, he swears that he be worthy of having his chest torn open and his heart plucked out and placed on the highest pinnacle of the temple. And in the Master Mason degree, he is sworn that his curse upon himself, should he ever violate his oath, is that his body would be severed in twain and his bowels taken thence and burned to ashes and the ashes scattered to the four winds of heaven and so forth.

More gruesome oaths are required in the other degrees of Freemasonry. But these, Your Excellency, as you know, these self-curses are an abomination before God. You are swearing that you would be worthy to be subject to a gruesome death if you ever violate the principles of Freemasonry.

And in my research and in my reflection, I have written in my book that I believe these are covenant oaths. Because what is happening here, as Catholics know from Scripture, from Tradition, a covenant is sealed with blood. This has happened in the Old Testament and now of course in the New Testament with Christ, the New Covenant is offered in the blood of Christ and sealed by the shed blood of Christ. So what is happening at the Masonic altar is that the Mason is symbolically offering his blood at an altar through the self-curse to symbolize his covenant communion with Freemasonry. Well, you can't be in communion with Christ and Freemasonry because there is only one covenant that God is going to respect.

And this is affirmed by the ritual itself, because after the Mason swears the oath and the self-curse, after he has symbolically offered this blood, this covenant blood at the altar — remember the noose that was around the neck — the Master then says to his conductor, "Remove the noose, remove the cable tow from around our brother because he is now bound to us by a stronger tie."

So after the covenant oath is sworn, the profane is called a “brother” for the first time, he is now in covenant communion with Freemasonry, and that tie to the profane world that was symbolized by the noose is removed because he is no longer tied to the profane world or tied to his former religion. He is now in covenant communion with the religion of Freemasonry.

**Bishop Sheridan: These gruesome activities, or consequences that you spoke of . . . (they are) consequences of revealing the principles of Freemasonry?**

Salza: Yes, the teachings. So you could never . . . you are bound not to reveal the rituals.

**Bishop Sheridan: So it’s those rituals. I was just wondering, is there a list of principles? Could we really summarize, other than what you have already said, the teachings of Freemasonry?**

Salza: Yes, and you know there is something called “Landmarks,” which we would refer to as the oral tradition of Freemasonry. The requirement to believe in deity; the requirement to believe in a life everlasting; the requirement to believe that one pleases God through his works and not by grace . . . the notion that these working tools that are present in the rituals symbolize truths, moral and spiritual truths.

There are many things that we can point to that would be considered principles of Freemasonry. But essentially what it means is, “I shouldn’t be revealing what I am telling you because I swore not to.” Now, of course, in moral theology a false oath doesn’t bind, so I don’t have any restriction on what I am saying. But Masonry wants to keep what is going on secret because that is how it continues to perpetuate its activity. If men were free to talk about what actually goes on in the lodge room, then people would be on to it and there would probably be more opposition to it.

**Bishop Sheridan: One of the many things that amazes me, and I am learning a lot from our conversation today, is the fact that more Catholic men, or for that matter, perhaps even men of other Christian denominations (and the) Jewish religion, don’t see through this for what it is as you did. You said it took you three years to emerge from Masonry. Was there anything that really precipitated your definitive departure from Masonry?**

Salza: Yes, it was a doctrinal issue. Everything I described was problematic, but the final nail in the coffin, if you will, happened in the third degree which I reflected upon. And we didn’t talk about specifically what it is, but essentially the third degree teaches Masonry’s faith in the resurrection of the body and the immortality of the soul, and it is done, Your Excellency, by a drama that the candidate is required to participate in to his surprise.

He plays a character called Hiram Abif. He is said to be the builder of King Solomon's temple — which we actually see in Scripture — but the drama that unfolds is completely, as admitted by Masons, a Masonic creation to teach a truth in their belief in resurrection.

Long story short is, the candidate is symbolically killed in the lodge, he is knocked down off of his feet, he is caught in a sack by the brothers, there are prayers offered for him and he is raised up. And that raising is said, from the ritual again, to testify to Freemasonry's faith in the resurrection of the body and the immortality of the soul.

That is where I finally said I can no longer go on because that is incompatible with the faith. If Christ is the resurrection and the life, but you do not have to believe in Jesus Christ to be a Mason, then this teaching on the resurrection is heretical. It is completely opposed to Christianity, and I can't continue.

**Bishop Sheridan: But are you saying that they do in fact profess faith in the immortality of the soul and the resurrection of the body, (but) they just don't connect it to Jesus Christ?**

Salza: That is right. And in my study, I believe not only do they not connect it to Christ, it is a mockery of Christ. Because in the ritual it is done in a setting where Hiram Abif is murdered outside the gates of the city, just as our Lord was killed outside the gates of the city; Hiram Abif is said to be buried on a hill, the brow of the hill west of Mount Mariah; which is a mockery of Calvary.

And finally, before the candidate is raised, the Masons gather around him and they make this strange expression, "Oh Lord, my God, is there no help for the widow's son?" That is what is said in what is called the Grand Hailing Sign of Distress. And again, after years of study and reflection, I have concluded that what they are saying is, who is the widow? It is Our Lady. Who is the son? Our Lord, Jesus Christ. Masonry is saying, "Is there no help for the widow's son?"

So, it is not only not connected to Christ, but it is a mockery of Christ. Masonry does not believe that Jesus Christ is the way and the truth and the life. So this resurrection ceremony that Masonry portrays is a mockery of our faith as Catholics in our resurrection through faith in Jesus Christ.

**Bishop Sheridan: You got the distinct sense, as you said earlier John, that as part of the initiation into Masonry you really were, at least symbolically, renouncing your faith by being called to set aside any of those external symbols that were expressions of your faith. So it seems clear that even though from the beginning you are a Catholic, that is a part of your life that was to be set aside.**

Salza: That is right. And swearing an oath to Freemasonry, really objectively now, not just subjectively, but objectively is an act of apostasy. Because you are swearing to renounce what you came into the lodge with, and you symbolized this by divesting yourself of it — your crucifix, your scapular and your wedding ring — and swearing to adhere to the principals of Freemasonry, the teachings of Freemasonry, which are contrary to the Church, and under a self-curse. So that is exactly correct.

**Bishop Sheridan: I have to admit John that, until very recently, I wasn't even sure of the origins of Masonry because we think of Masons as people who work with stone. Maybe for just a couple of minutes you could tell our listeners what are the origins of Freemasonry?**

Salza: Well, Masons claim that the origins go back to the Middle Ages, where you had operative stone masons who built the great cathedrals throughout Europe. And because they were highly skilled craftsmen they were independent contractors and hence, not indentured servants so they were called “free” masons. And according to the Masonic tradition, they had trade secrets — incredible secrets that allowed them to build these fantastic structures.

But eventually over time, they began to invite non-operative men into the craft, such as bankers, lawyers, accountants, doctors, philosophers and so forth, and there was gradually a transition from operative masonry, that is those men who build the physical structure, to speculative Freemasonry — those men who build the spiritual structure, the soul.

And Masonry does this today by using the old implements of the operative masons. They will use, for example, the square, the level, the plumb, the trowel. They use these old tools to communicate spiritual truths. This is what is used in the Masonic lodge of today. And they think that the formal transition occurred back on June 24, 1717, during the heart of the Enlightenment period, where four lodges from England formed the Grand Lodge of England. And again, this was a period of time during which there was a movement to reject ecclesiastical authority and divine revelation and only search for truths based on nature, based on reason. And that is infused throughout Masonic ritual. So this transition which was formalized during the Enlightenment period certainly bears witness to this Masonic philosophy that one can find the truth of God and save himself through reason alone.

**Bishop Sheridan: Several of our American founding fathers were Masons, right...deists and Masons?**

Salza: Yes, that is true. There are pictures of the first president, George Washington, dressed in his Masonic attire. Other presidents and congressmen were Masons, so yes, that is historically accurate.

**Bishop Sheridan: Well, and of course that was still the time of the Enlightenment, the French Revolution, so those influences were here also. It would be intriguing to know for some of those men what exactly their purpose was in being Masons. I don't want to cast any aspersions on the founding fathers. I think it is important, John, to be very clear about the fact that the Church, and for some time certainly in the former Code of Canon Law which was done in 1917 and that was a codification of prior laws, explicitly said Catholics may not, must not, belong to the Masons or be Masons. Now in 1983, when the Code of Canon Law was revised, there is no mention of Masonry, only a general reference to societies that are inimical to the Catholic faith or the Catholic Church. But there was a clarification to that, I believe from the Doctrine of the Faith, that said there really was no change.**

Salza: That is correct. The (Masonic) excuse is that Canon Law changed because the new code does not mention Masons, nor does it mention excommunication. But the fact of the matter is, the law changed not to eliminate Masonry from the prohibition, but actually to broaden the law. That was the reason why the Canon Law changed, because there are many other organizations, not just Freemasons, that plot against the church.

And so the purpose of the canon was to broaden the application of the law to cover any associations which plot against the church. That is why I think, on the eve of the effective date of Canon Law, that the CDF (Vatican's Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith) authored by then-Cardinal Ratzinger, now our current Pope, Holy Father Benedict XVI . . . he said that, because of the potential erroneous interpretations of this new code, we are going to reaffirm the Church's teaching. That this was an editorial criterion, which is what I was referring to, to broaden the law, but the church's opposition, with regard to Masons and Masonic associations, remains unchanged.

Then the CDF went on to say that those who are enrolled in a Masonic association are in a state of grave sin and may not receive Holy Communion. And it is rare for the Congregation of the Doctrine of the Faith to go that far, to state that objectively speaking, those who are Masons are in a state of mortal sin. It is mortal because they are barred from Holy Communion and one is only barred from Holy Communion if you are in a state of mortal sin. So that is the current teaching of the Church, and that teaching has always been the teaching of the Church and

continues to be.

**Bishop Sheridan: I am guessing John that in your experience and in your travels and in your speaking, you have encountered a number of Catholic men who belong to the Masons. Do they try to argue in some way that, no, it is not incompatible with Catholicism?**

Salza: Yes, but the only argument that they tender is that, “We are not a religion, and therefore all of your arguments on religion are irrelevant.” That is really the only argument they offer. But, my rebuttal is, it doesn’t matter what label you put on it, if you want to have the debate and call it a fraternity I am more than willing to do that. Let’s call it a fraternity and not a religion, even though I can show that it is as it has all the markings of a religion. Call it a fraternity — the fact is, Masonry makes a theological statement to a man by saying that his trust is in God, even if he doesn’t believe in the Blessed Trinity. That is just a fact.

Masonry states that there is resurrection of the body and immortality of the soul without faith in Christ. Those are statements, so whether it is religion or a fraternity or a corporation it doesn’t matter. The bottom line is Masonry is opposing the truths of the Church and the truths that Christ has revealed.

**Bishop Sheridan: And when you confront them with the explicit response of the (CDF), does that seem to make any difference with the men that you have met?**

Salza: Well, it has with some. I have been fortunate enough to say that all of the men that I brought into Masonry have left. But it is also sad to say that all of the men who solicited me are still in it. That is a mystery of grace, and we continue to pray for whoever is involved.

And that is why I think doing shows like this, your Excellency, are so important, because there has to be an education about what Masonry teaches objectively. There are a lot of emotions that go on, a lot of misunderstandings, but if we can break it down to what the lodge teaches and compare that to what the Church teaches, one will be able to see that the incompatibility is undeniable.

**Bishop Sheridan: John I am guessing, and again you may know far more about this, but I am guessing there might be even concerned family members or friends of Catholic men who are Masons about the fact that their friend or their relative or spouse belongs to the Masons. Do you have any pastoral advice or pastoral plan on how these men might be brought to their senses about this?**

Salza: Sure, I think again it starts with education. I can tell you a wonderful story about how successful we can be in educating.

I just recently did a talk in a certain state for an hour and a half on Freemasonry. A gentleman who was a 25-year Mason came to that talk. He was a very educated man, was a long-time Mason, was a Vietnam veteran, and he was a prominent man in the business community. He told me that he came that night to debate the issue.

After I explained, not my own opinions, but what the lodge teaches and what the Church teaches...after I did that for an hour and a half, this gentleman stood up in tears and said, "I am renouncing Freemasonry." And he did it publically in front of everybody, which he didn't have to do. That tells me that it was the education process that I gave, and that others can give, that will enlighten those who are disposed to the truth and who really want to know the truth.

It can convict the heart. It is very simple. When I told him that Freemasonry tells a man that his trust is in God even if he rejects Christ, that is objectively true, that is something that a man can relate to. Only then can God take over and by His grace convert the heart. But it has to start with the intellect. If we can educate the intellect, God is going to work on the will by His grace. But we have to start with the education and we have to teach people what Masonry is teaching in the Lodge room, that is the key.

**Bishop Sheridan: John, are you the lone prophet out there? I have not heard of anyone like yourself who is out there who is spreading this word. Are you it?**

Salza: I think I am the only Catholic who ever became a Mason and left the lodge and is speaking about it. I don't know that for sure. You know, there are a lot of Protestants out there. Even though they hold errors against the Faith, there are Protestant ministries out there which were even helpful to me when I struggled with this, that are doing very good work on this issue. But as far as the Faith is concerned I believe I am the only one.

**Bishop Sheridan: And besides the books that you have written and your website, you have been on EWTN, right?**

Salza: Yes I have, a number of times to talk both about Freemasonry as well as other apologetics issues. In fact, the first show that I did on Freemasonry was so well received that they even did a second show on it. And that is because of the education process that I talked about. People called in and wrote in. They were stunned to hear what I said Masonry is teaching. I brought the ritual book right on the set and I said, "Here it is." And we couldn't even cover enough in an hour, so we did another hour show about it. Of course the truth is going to speak for itself, we just need to get the truth out there.

**Bishop Sheridan: I am stunned also. I appreciate the time that you have given us to get the word out about Freemasonry. As we come to the end now and with your emphasis on the**

**educational component of all of this, let's once again mention your two books on Masonry as well as your website.**

Salza: Sure. The books on Masonry are "Why Catholics Cannot Be Masons" and "Masonry Unmasked: An Insider Reveals the Secrets of the Lodge." Those can be found at my website, [www.scripturecatholic.com](http://www.scripturecatholic.com). I would also like to mention, if I could, my latest book is called "The Biblical Basis for Tradition – Why Catholics Don't Rely on Scripture Alone." That can also be purchased from the American Catholic Lawyers Association. They helped me publish that book. It is a fine organization that provides civil defense to Catholics. For more information you can always go to my website at [www.scripturecatholic.com](http://www.scripturecatholic.com).

**Bishop Sheridan: Very good. John, anything that you want to mention in just the few seconds that we have left that you feel as though you didn't have the opportunity to do?**

Salza: Well, of course, prayer. You know we have to deal with the educational process, but we have to bolster our efforts with prayer. Our Lady said that the Rosary can accomplish anything according to God's will. So I think if we really redouble our efforts with prayer and education we can win the battle for Our Lord.