



AUSTRALIAN CATHOLIC BISHOPS CONFERENCE

General Secretariat

11th July 2017

Most Worshipful Brother Stephen Michalak
Grand Master, SA/NT
Masonic Centre
PO Box 19
Rundle Mall
ADELAIDE SA 5000

Dear Mr Michalak,

I refer to your letter of 29 July 2016, concerning the Catholic Church and Freemasonry.

To respond to the matters you raised in that letter, I sought the advice of the Bishops Commission for Canon Law and the Bishops Commission for Doctrine and Morals, reviewed our records of earlier considerations of the participation of Catholics in Freemasonry, and consulted my peers at other episcopal conferences. It has taken time for the Bishops Commissions and, more recently, for the Bishops Conference, to address these matters.

In respect of your three stated objectives in writing to me, I believe that a meaningful and trusting dialogue between the Catholic Church in Australia and Freemasonry is possible so long as the particular branch of Freemasons is not hostile to the Church and Catholic Faith. As to who might participate in such dialogue, I suggest this would be determined by the matters under consideration.

As regards the Catholic Church in Australia and the various Masonic Jurisdictions working together in a spirit of harmony, I expect that this would be informed by circumstance, need and opportunity. Your letter notes instances where such opportunity has already arisen and the cooperation has been beneficial for those in need.

Perhaps most importantly for Catholic members of Freemasonry, I can reiterate a directive first made by the Bishops Conference in 1984 and affirmed this year. No penalty attaches to Catholic membership of the Masonic Order. The involvement of Catholics in Freemasonry is foremost a moral matter which should normally be dealt with personally and pastorally in the local parish. I suggest that where a local pastoral response is not consistent with this expectation and liturgical-sacramental participation is made difficult or refused, that this might be referred to the local vicar general or to me.

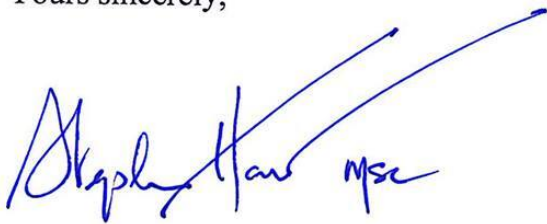


The more positive disposition of Freemasonry to the Catholic Church in Australia that you have outlined in your letter is, regrettably, not the case in some other countries, where Freemasonry can be antithetical to Catholic faith. Because of this divergence in the disposition of different branches of the Masonic Order towards the Catholic Church, the Bishops Conference has prudently opted not to issue a directive on Catholic involvement in Freemasonry. Rather, such involvement is in each instance best addressed personally with the local parish priest.

I will raise issue of Catholics and Freemasonry during the annual meeting of Archdiocesan Vicars General, next due to be held in May 2018, to ensure that they are familiar with the preferred approach of the Bishops Conference.

With every best wish,

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Stephen Hackett MSC". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long, sweeping flourish that extends upwards and to the right.

Rev Stephen Hackett MSC
General Secretary