

The Catholic Catechism on Freemasonry

Lecture Series on Freemasonry Through the Light of Catholicism

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The Catholic Catechism on Freemasonry

Session Four – In Eminenti apostolatus specula

The objective of this fourth lecture is to ground the student in the theological and political reasons why Pope Clement XII issues the first prohibition against Freemasonry.

CATHOLIC
CATECHISM ON
FREEMASONRY
LESSON FOUR -
HIGH WARNING

In Eminenti apostolatus specula

Historical Background of Papal Bull

Areas of Major Contribution & Legacy

IN EMINENTI APOSTOLATUS SPECULA - FAST FACTS

- **Author:** Pope Clement XII (1730 – 1740)
- **Promulgated:** at Saint Mary Major 1738 (Bull not Encyclical / 1740 B XIV “Ubi Primum”)
- **Purpose:** This Constitution clearly sets forth the precise reasons for how Freemasonry plots against the Church, why it is a danger to the faith, and why Catholics are forbidden from joining, associating with, or promoting it and any of its appendant bodies.
- Pope Clement XII’s nephew Neri wrote to his uncle to assure him that Freemasonry in England was merely an innocent amusement. Clement XII makes NO distinctions between Anglo and Continental Freemasonry.
- Predates defining of Papal infallibility (7/18/1870)
- Instructor Now Reads Essential text

IN EMINENTI APOSTOLATUS SPECULA - HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Freemasonry as a Borderless Secret Society, teaching things contrary to the Catholic faith, according to public documents

- Anderson's Constitution, A Mason's Examination (1723), The Grand Mystery of Freemasons Discovered (1724), The Secret History of Freemasonry (1724), The Whole Institution of Free-Masons Opened (1725), The Grand Mystery of the Free Ma-sons Discover'd, Wherein are the Several Questions Put to Them at Their Meetings and Installations, also Their Oath, Health, Signs, Points to Know Each Other by, etc. (1725), The Grand Mystery Laid Open, or the Free Ma-sons Signs and Words Discovered (1726), The Mystery of Freemasonry (1730), Masonry Dissected (1730).

IN EMINENTI APOSTOLATUS SPECULA - HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Freemasonry as a Borderless Secret Society of Englishmen and their Allies Exporting the Glorious Revolution of 1688

Three years prior to the Catholic Church issuing this prohibition against Freemasonry, a proclamation was issued at The Hague on December 12, 1735, by the President and Council of Holland, Zeeland, and Friesland stating that “certain persons here at The Hague, under a specious pretense of belonging to a so-called Fraternity of Freemasons, meeting together under a Grand Master,” had formed an illegal association; for “it is in no way to be supposed that the study of architecture is the sole and principal object of their meetings.” The proclamation cited that the real objective behind these secret meetings was faction and debauchery, and, for this reason, they are illegal. The action required by this proclamation called for law enforcement authorities to prevent such meetings from being held, and anyone who allowed a room in their house to be used for a Freemason’s meeting was committing an offense.

- Proclamation of the Council at The Hague, December 12, 1735 (Early Ma-sonic Pamphlets, 333-334). Ridley, Jasper. *The Freemasons: A History of the World’s Most Powerful Secret Society*. Arcade Publishing. New York. 2011. 49.

IN EMINENTI APOSTOLATUS SPECULA - HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Freemasonry as a Borderless Secret Society with its own laws and governance causing discontent throughout Europe.

By 1736 in Paris, France, the number of Freemasons in the city had increased to the point of having nine different lodges. Among those numbers were the Prince of Cinti, all the Dukes of France, and even the Count of Maurepas. By March 29, 1737, the police of Paris had forbidden taverns and meeting houses from hosting Masonic meetings due to a "great Feast" that had caused a very noticeable degree of property damage. In contrast, the Florentine Freemasons were much quieter, but in 1737 had, nonetheless, earned a visit by the Holy Inquisitor who was sent there by Pope Clement XII to prosecute them at the request of the Duke of Tuscany. This persecution went nowhere after Francis Stephen, Duke of Lorraine, succeeded him upon death in that same year. Francis's initiation into Freemasonry at The Hague in 1731 had been widely reported in the press in England.

- Read, Will. The Church of Rome and Freemasonry. *Ars Quator Cornoa-torum* Transactions. Vol 104. (1991).

IN EMINENTI APOSTOLATUS SPECULA - AREAS OF CONCERN

The Two Religious Objections

Pope Clement XII's first two motives behind *In Eminenti apostolatus specula* clearly concerns the threat that Freemasonry poses to the worldview of Catholicism through its promotion of indifferentism, secularism, and relativism. The Catholic Church firmly holds that she alone was established by Christ Jesus, through His Apostles, to be the center of union of all people and that there is no salvation outside of His One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church. Juxtaposed to this orthodoxy of the faith is the teaching of Freemasonry that it is a 'universal religion' and the "Center of Union, and the Means of conciliating true Friendship among Persons that must have remain'd at a perpetual Distance." Both of these concepts cannot be true, and there is not enough space in God's creation for them to mutually coexist.

1. Freemasonry is an error, vice, danger, and a disturbance in the Catholic Church; being such, the Orthodox Religion needs to be kept free from it; lest it (Freemasonry) breaks into the household of God like thieves, and like foxes seeking to destroy the vineyard.
2. Freemasonry caters towards/relies on/was established on the appearance of natural virtue (i.e., indifferentism) and its own law. It obligates men by an oath on the Bible and by a host of grievous punishments and silence about what they do in secret together.

IN EMINENTI APOSTOLATUS SPECULA - AREAS OF CONCERN

The Two Political Objections

Aside from Pope Clement XII's two religious' objections, there are two others that concern the threat that Freemasonry, as a parliamentary ruled-English export, poses to the temporal state.

3. Being that the meetings of Freemasonry take place in secrecy, the lack of transparency, and cause rumors. Due to this, the faithful have great suspicious about it.
4. Societies like these disturb the peace of the temporal state and the well-being of souls.

IN EMINENTI APOSTOLATUS SPECULA - CONTRIBUTION & LEGACY

- The first magisterial teaching against Freemasonry
- Cited directly by future prohibitions
- No future prohibition contradicted it
- Promulgated just twenty-one years after the founding of the Mother Grand Lodge of England
- By virtue of this teaching being consistently and explicitly repeated by seven different Popes after it was first promulgated by Pope Clement XII (including in two Canon Laws) over the span of nearly two and a half centuries, is not arguable that In Eminentissimi apostolatus specula's prohibitions against Freemasonry rightly belongs in the body of dogmatic teachings of the Catholic Church. Yet, as to whether this Apostolic Constitution was another pre-Vatican I exercise of Papal infallibility is arguable. Clement XII does meet most of the criteria that the First Vatican Council set forth, such as: In Eminentissimi does define what Freemasonry is, it does remind us of Pope Pius XII's 1950 encyclical Munificentissimus Deus (dogma of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary) in regard to how other bishops were consulted on the matter prior to its promulgation and how there is an appeal to the sense of the faithful, it does make a clear statement on Apostolic authority, and it does argue through defining terms that this prohibition against Freemasonry is a matter of faith and morals. The only criteria that it is missing, in comparison to how it was exercised by Blessed Pope Pius IX (Ineffabilis Deus – 1854) and Pope Pius XII, is that was not issued from the literal throne of Saint Peter (ex-cathedra) at Peter's Basilica; rather, it was promulgated from the throne of Saint Mary Mayor. In 1826 Quo Graviora fits all future criteria of an infallible teaching, AND it includes the text of In Eminentissimi.

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Session Five – *Providas Romanorum*

The objective of this fifth lecture is to ground the student in the focus of Pope Benedict XIV's *Providas Romanorum*, which was to reiterate *In Eminenti* to countries that had ignored it.