



Letter of the Nordic Bishops' Conference to Parish Priests
ON FREEMASONRY

29th June 2026 –
Solemnity of Saints Peter and Paul.

Dear brothers in the priesthood and in the care of souls,

Saint Paul provides valuable instruction to all those who shepherd the People of God when he writes: “proclaim the message; be persistent whether the time is favourable or unfavourable; convince, rebuke, and encourage, with the utmost patience in teaching” (2 Tim 4.2).

For us bishops, this instruction is further affirmed by the teaching of the Church, which calls us as shepherds to “bring forth from the treasury of Revelation new things and old, making it bear fruit and vigilantly warding off any errors that threaten their flock” (Lumen Gentium, 25). In fact, we are “bound to propose and explain to the faithful the truths of the faith which are to be believed and applied to morals” (CIC can. 386, §1).

We write to you at this time as shepherds to clarify a matter that for many years, if not decades, has generated uncertainty, speculation and diverging opinions in our countries: the question of whether or not Catholic faithful in the Nordic countries may be freemasons or belong to a masonic lodge.

In the light of differences sometimes perceived to exist between the various strands of freemasonry, an opinion took hold in our countries supposing that freemasons in the Nordic countries are distinct in such a way that membership might be permitted for the Catholic faithful in Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden.

This supposition has given rise to many questions of a pastoral and sacramental nature.

It has caused disquiet, indeed a degree of uproar in our local churches, where many of our faithful come from countries where the Church’s teaching on freemasonry is well established.

To clarify the matter, the Nordic Conference of Bishops held a meeting with superiors and officials of the Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith during a plenary assembly held in Rome from 1 to 5 September 2025.

The response of the dicastery was crystal clear.

Based on that response, and to share with all the faithful, and you as their parish priests, this clarity, we the bishops of the Nordic Bishops' Conference state and affirm together:

1. There exists no exception, no particular norm or rule, and in consequence no dispensation in the Church that distinguishes adherence to freemasonry in the Nordic countries from the provisions of the universal law of the Church.
2. Therefore, the provisions of universal law and the specific norms and guidance issued by the Apostolic See on the question of freemasonry apply in full and without exception in the territory of the Nordic Bishops' Conference. The most recent such guidance was offered by the Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith in the Note for the Audience with the Holy Father of 13 November 2023, reaffirming the validity of the Declaration on Masonic Associations of 26 November 1983, issued by the then Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith.

We wish to stress that Catholic Church's firmness on the question of adherence to freemasonry is not a negative judgement on the good will or good works of individuals. The Church's position springs from awareness that the theological and philosophical principles of freemasonry are incompatible with confession of the Catholic faith.

With this in mind, the following pastoral and sacramental provisions are to be followed:

- a) A Catholic, who is at the same time a freemason or a member of a masonic lodge is to be encouraged to relinquish this membership.
- b) A Catholic, who is at the same time a freemason or a member of a masonic lodge is to abstain from receiving Holy Communion and is prohibited from receiving other sacraments.
- c) A freemason or a member of a masonic lodge who seeks baptism in the Catholic Church, or who seeks to enter full communion with the Catholic Church as a validly baptised Christian, is to terminate this membership prior to baptism or reception into full communion.
- d) No parish, no institute of consecrated life or society of apostolic life, no Catholic organisation or institution in our local churches is to enter into agreements of collaboration with freemasons or masonic lodges or make use of properties belonging to masonic lodges.

The implementation of these provisions will require patience, pastoral care and kind attention. We invite you to study the official documents that account for the Church's position in order to expound them carefully and correctly.

We have confidence in your gifts and experience, knowing that you will be able wisely to accompany, with clarity of mind and a pastoral heart, those among the faithful who find themselves needing to terminate their bonds with freemasonry and masonic lodges.

The call of our Lord Jesus Christ, "Come, follow me" (Matt 4.19), presupposes readiness to leave behind other attachments that stand in the way of wholehearted discipleship. This

has always been, and will always remain, a criterion of Christian authenticity. Let us help each other by word and example to live up to it, trusting in God's grace.

With the assurances of our prayers for your ministry and for the faithful entrusted to your priestly care, we remain,

Yours in Christ,

+Erik Varden OCSO, President of the Nordic Bishops' Conference
Territorial Prelate of Trondheim
Apostolic Administrator of Tromsø

+Raimo Goyarrola, Vice President of the Nordic Bishop's Conference
Bishop of Helsinki

+David Tencer OFM Cap
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+Anders Cardinal Arborelius OCD
Bishop of Stockholm

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