

**EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW WITH EMERITUS ARCHBISHOP PETER KWASISARPONG ON THE
PROMOTION OF EX PREZKUFUOR TO THE STATUS OF SENIOR GRAND WARDEN OF THE
GRAND LODGE F ENGLAND**

PART ONE

Not long ago, the news of the elevation of the Former President of the Republic of Ghana, His Excellency John Agyekum Kufour, to the status of the Senior Grand Warden of the Grand Lodge of England rocked Ghana. But the Ghanaian Catholic Community was particularly shocked to the bone for the obvious reason that the Ex-President is a known practicing Catholic who is the least expected to have affiliation with Freemason Societies.

As expected, opinions varied according to the understanding of Church Law and doctrines by those who expressed them.

So we visited the Emeritus Archbishop of Kumasi, His Grace Peter Kwasi Sarpong, to obtain his views on such a sensitive matter (Freemasonry) from the perspectives of both Canon Law and Catholic Doctrine.

Here are the excerpts.

GSN: Your Grace Good morning

ABS: Good morning and welcome to my humble abode

GSN: Nana recently we heard of the elevation of former President Kufour to the status of Senior Grand Warden by a freemason society. We would like to know if you are aware, and whether a known practicing catholic can join such society.

ABS: I have heard about it and I am fully aware. He is the only African, in fact, the first person outside England, who has been given that award – Senior Grand Warden of the Grand Lodge of England. So if you ask, I will say I know about it.

GSN: So Your Grace, can a catholic be a freemason at the same time?

ABS: What is wrong with Freemasonry that a Catholic cannot be one? He has been a freemason all his life – whatever the case may be, he became a freemason before he became a Catholic. When did Kufour become a Catholic? Kufour comes from a family of learned people and scholars (the Apagya House – in fact the Apagyahene himself is an architect); there are some lawyers, architects, doctors – and they are

all Anglicans. He was an Anglican. He became a Catholic when after the 1972 coupe he was imprisoned Ussher Fort where he experienced Catholic chaplains who visited the prisons. The way the Catholic chaplains spoke to the prisoners, consoled, encourage, motivated and treated them, he became impressed. The principles of love and humanity that these Catholic Chaplains exhibited were his own principles so they touched him with those principles. So he left the Anglican Church and became a Catholic. His wife is one of the best Catholics you can think of; a member of the Christ the King Catholic Choir in Accra. He has brought up his children as perfect Christians. There is no better Catholic family than the Kufour family. So what do you want?

GNS: We understand Freemasons are against the Catholic Church?

ABS: There was a time when Freemasons were dead against Catholicism.

GNS: There was a time?

ABS: Yes

GNS: And not now?

ABS: No. Nowadays things have become easy

GNS: So the Church allows Catholics to be Freemasons now?

ABS: If there is a society the church condemns and I don't see anything wrong with that society, why can't I join it? What has the church got to do with me? If the society is as anti-catholic as some of you are saying, would they accept a catholic? And if this very good catholic, if he knew the society to be anti-catholic, would he join them? Why are you so worried about something like this? This is a private business. If he has left his own Church to join ours, you think he would join a society that is anti-catholic?

GNS: Couldn't it be that he may not know that the society is against his church?

ABS: So you know? And do you think if the society is anti-catholic, they would accept a Catholic who goes to Mass every Sunday?

GNS: The society may be using that to wean him off his Catholic faith.

ABS: It can also be that he will win them; letting them understand that Catholic Church is not as bad as that. It is both ways. Can't he be there and influence them, and correct them when they say something wrong about the Catholic Church?

GNS: We are talking about their doings

ABS: What do they do? Tell me what do the Freemasons do?

GNS: Nana let us look at it as a matter of principle. Freemason's believe in God is different from the Catholic belief in God.

ABS: How do you know? What I know is that now if you are accepted, the first question they ask is "Do you believe in God?" So how is their belief different?

GNS: We are told their believe in God is like that of deists

ABS: Are you a member – how do you know?

GNS: We have read about them.

ABS: Can't I be a member of a society which beliefs has been dismissed by the Church?

GNS: Nana, Canon 2335 of the 1917 edition of the Canon Law that was replaced by the 1983 Post Vatican II Version, it clearly states that "those who join a Masonic sect or other societies of the same sort, which plot against the church or against legitimate civil authority, incur ipso facto an excommunication simply reserved to the Holy See. After Vatican II and the coming into force of the new code of Canon Law, some scholars raised concerns that church law had toned down its wording concerning freemasonry. The then Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger of the Congregation for the doctrine of faith issued a new declaration to the effect that "the Church's negative judgement on Masonry remains unchanged, because the Masonic principles are irreconcilable with the church's teaching (*earum principia simpliciter iconciliabilia habitant cum Ecclesiae doctrina*). Catholics who join the Masons are in the state of grave sin and may not receive Holy Communion and no local ecclesiastical authority has competence to derogate from these judgments of the Sacred Congregation." So Nana this clearly shows the official church position is against the Masons.

ABS: Cardinal Ratzinger was just a Prefect of the Congregation to the Doctrine of Faith and not a Pope and did not speak from the position of the Pope.

GNS: But Nana he was speaking from the position of the Church's law

ABS: No, what does the law say; let's read Canon 1374: one who joins a society that plots against the church is to be punished with a just penalty, one who promotes or takes office in such an association is to be punished with an interdict. So you must be sure they plot against the Church. Are the freemasons now plotting against the church? The law again says "one who promotes or takes office in such an association" so we ask: what association? An association that plots against the church. So you should be able to establish that the society plots against the church.

GNS: The quote from Cardinal Ratzinger says the principles of the masons are irreconcilable with those of the Church. So automatically, one can infer then that since they are not with the Church, then they are against it.

ABS: That is not what Church law says. It says the punishment is on one who plots against the Church. Prove to me the aspects of Freemasonry that plots against the Church. He has been member long before

joining the Church. So he belonged to the society that plots against the church and now he is a member of the same church he plots against? This doesn't go.

To be continued Next Week

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