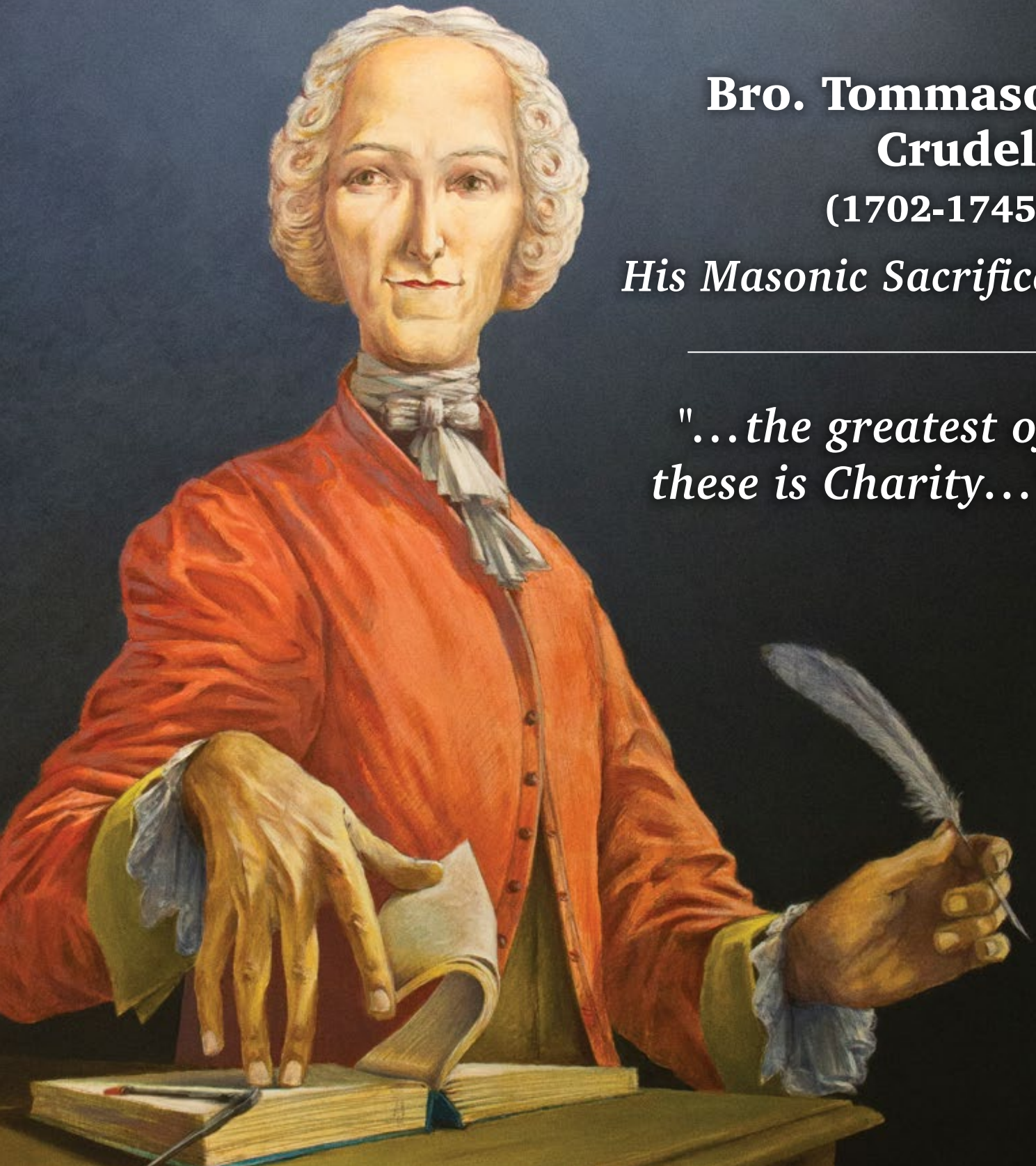


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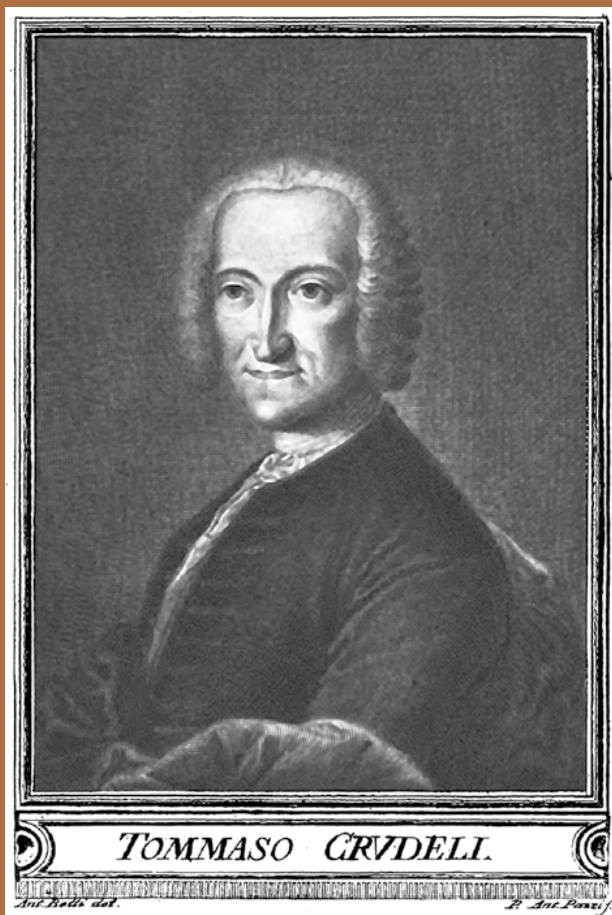
GRAND LODGE OF MASONS IN MASSACHUSETTS WINTER 2015-16



**Bro. Tommaso
Crudeli**
(1702-1745)

His Masonic Sacrifice

*"...the greatest of
these is Charity..."*



Bro. Tommaso Crudeli Martyred for Freedom and Freemasonry: The right to freedom of thought and to change one's personal philosophy

Lecture on the occasion of the presentation to the Grand Lodge of Bro. Tommaso Crudeli's bust, First Martyr of Universal Freemasonry

By Katherine Burton Jones,
Director of the Museum of Tommaso Crudeli (HSTCI),
and Bro. Roger D. Dunn,
Ambassador of North America of HSTCI, Worshipful
Grand Marshal of the Grand Lodge of Maryland

Above: A portrait of Bro. Crudeli by Ant. Betti, R Ant. Pazzis, 1747, made while he was alive, but published after his death.

Color portrait Cover: TOMMASO CRUDELI (1702-1745) . Modern portrait by Clet Abraham, Florence 2003. By courtesy of Historical Studies Institute Tommaso Crudeli, Italy. This is the first public printing of this portrait.

Historical context of the Crudeli Affair

At the dawn of the Enlightenment, Tuscany was still under the influence of the late Renaissance. Many in the region aspired to a cultural and social renewal. Enlightened men of Florence, all belonging to the upper middle or noble class, fought for cultural renewal especially decades of harsh rule by the Medicis. The vanguard of the dissent was extensive and was based at the University of Pisa. The University was under special surveillance since Rome had experienced the first signs of loss of control with the changing society. This was just the beginning of the long conflict against the privileges of the Church, the power of the Inquisition, the abuses of the clergy, and the ecclesiastical feudal privileges of donations and positions inherited through stipulations in wills in favor of the Church.

At the same time an English "colony" complete with nobles, princes, ambassadors and even spies (both sides) settled in Florence. This migration was part of a strategic plan of the King of England, George II, to enter the Italian political chessboard in the upcoming post-Medici era. He promoted the candidacy of the Duke of Lorraine (a Mason) in the succession of the Grand Duchy of Tuscany.

This English polarity was a strong center of interest for intellectuals and the upper middle class. Florentines were attracted by the ideas beyond the Alps and the influence of religion reformist and therefore their interactions with the British circles was increasingly important. They were somewhat new to Masonic ideas, with the Grand Lodge of England being founded less than twenty years before (1717). These Englishmen decided to form a Masonic Lodge in Florence (1732) under the auspices of the Grand Lodge of England.

The English and Freemasonry were perceived as a new threat. The Holy See had decided to shut down once and for all any outbreak of unconventionality and renewal in Tuscany, and to:

- restore the "scolastica" doctrine and the "aristotelism" at the University of Pisa;
- disperse Freemasonry, protected by British schismatics considered a center of anti-clergy propaganda; and,
- finally, give a lesson which would serve an example for other small States in the peninsula and Europe as well.

Thus, that is why Rome decided to issue a Papal Bull (April 1738) against Freemasonry in eminent apostolorum specula that excommunicated the Societies or Associations of such Freemasons and their members.

When the Bull was communicated to the Government the Grand Duchy of Tuscany, it, along with France and many other European countries, refused to register it. Freemasonry was considered a topic of secular character and therefore not relevant to the Church. Nevertheless, given the tension that existed in Florence, Florentine Masons prudently decided to dissolve the Lodge.

The Edict of Cardinal Firrao, in January 1739, reinforced the severity of the recent Bull with the provisions of the death penalty for the Freemasons, felling the houses of Masonic meetings, and the seizure of land on which they stood. Yet

further, the Church needed to demonstrate its power over Freemasonry and choose the Florentine lawyer and poet, Bro. Tommaso Crudeli, as its scapegoat.

Imprisonment and torture

On May 9, 1739, Bro. Tommaso Crudeli came home alone late at night after spending a long evening with friends. He was surrounded by two teams of the constabulary and taken to the prison of the Bargello in Florence without being given any reasons. Two days later he was transferred in a cramped cell of the Inquisition. The cell was in an attic, six paces long and three wide, so that Tommaso, over six feet tall, could not walk or even stand up. The garret had no windows and light, there was only straw on the ground and no bucket. He was held in such atrociously inhuman conditions for three weeks and then was transferred to a cell with slightly better conditions (he could stand up but there was no light and no fresh air).

After three months of such torture, Bro. Crudeli, who had no contact with anyone other than his jailors and did not know the charge of arrest, was subjected to the first interrogatory. The Inquisitor Ambrogio hoped for a physical collapse that would unnerve even the morale of the prisoner, in order to force him to invoke pity and to admit that horrors and abominations were being committed in the secrecy of the Masonic lodge.

It was necessary that these revelations come from a spontaneous confession. He was accused as a heretic because they could not condemn him as a Freemason: the Papal Bull of 1738, not being registered, had no validity in the Grand Duchy. Inquisitors kept him sitting on a stool for two days while they questioned him about Freemasonry and especially the names of the members of the Florence Lodge. Bro. Crudeli would not comply and was returned to his cell.

After 90 days of total darkness, another interrogation was made in a bright room with windows with a view of the lawn of the courtyard: he could gaze at the beauty of the light, the greenery outside, the birds singing, and hear the sound of the human conversation. At this point the Inquisitor was kind to him trying to sway him into signing the false confession. Instead Tommaso held out for two days of tormenting interrogation with explicit threats. The Martyr instead did not sign the minutes submitted to him and did not reveal the names of the brethren of the Lodge,

even though he was the secretary because he knew English. The Inquisitor found in front of him a resolute man with a psyche not affected by the harsh treatment. He sent Bro. Crudeli to jail for another four months, in the same conditions as before. All of Florence was stunned and the Brethren were in turmoil. The affair became international and the Grand Lodge of England sent funds to the Lodge in Florence to try to facilitate the release of Bro. Crudeli.

With a ploy, the prisoner managed to drop summaries of the ordeal through a small crack to a Brother who presented them to the Minister of Justice Rucellai, a Mason. This information was then submitted to the Governor Richecourt, also a Mason. The Grand Duke of Lorraine, residing in Vienna,

was informed of the Crudeli Affair. The Regency of the Grand Duchy (in Florence) developed an escape plan to get Bro. Crudeli to Genoa and then to Switzerland, but at the last minute it could not be implemented.

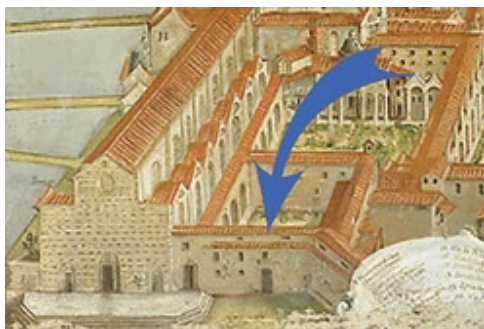
Tommaso's father begged the religious authorities to secure the release of his son; however this was in vain and due to his deep regret and sadness over the treatment of his son, he died of a broken heart.

Bro. Crudeli was subjected to another interrogation, lasting two more days, with the same questions asked hundreds of times, with the same continuous denial of the prisoner, who now was vomiting blood, the same refusal to sign the confession already prepared and in which appeared names of brother Freemasons.

Near Christmas (1739), Tommaso's brother, Antonio, who was impulsive and reckless, tried to help him flee. The plan failed and the discovery of tools for the escape following the searches of the cell, worsened the position of the Martyr: to the Inquisitor this was an admission of guilt.

After another four months of imprisonment with the previous harsh interrogation, Tommaso was brought in, almost dying, to a new confrontation with two Inquisitors who soon abandoned the attempt as Tommaso did not even respond, though this time the questions focused only on religious matters. The Inquisition had failed in its objective to get him to give details of Freemasonry, and, instead, tried to convict him on charges exclusively religious before he died in prison.

After being imprisoned for fourteen months, the Martyr was transferred to a fortress in Florence and in August 1740 the Inquisition tried to again to get him to recant. Tommaso,



Location of the Tribunal of the Inquisition, the Cloister at the side of the Basilica of Santa Croce (about XVII), Florence, Italy where Bro. Crudeli was imprisoned.



Palazzo Crudeli (XV), Poppi (Florence), where Tommaso Crudeli died in 1745 after five years of illness for the after-effects of torture and imprisonment in the Tribunal of the Inquisition of Florence. This site is a regularly visited by Freemasons. (by courtesy of Historical Studies Institute Tommaso Crudeli, Italy).



'Excerpt from the Minute book of the Moderns' Grand Lodge, 1739. Copyright, and reproduced by permission, of the Library and Museum of Freemasonry, London, UK'.

squatting on a bench, did not speak. His gasping, with a mouth full of blood, was interpreted by Inquisitor as assent to the accusations. He was sentenced to death, but immediately graced and commuted into perpetual residence in his palazzo in Poppi (a small village in Tuscany), where he remained confined to bed until his death (1745). This confinement lasted almost five years and was exacerbated by the fact that, twice a day, some monks came to pray in his room to seek his repentance and his return to the sacraments of salvation.

The Grand Duke of Lorraine asked Bro. Crudeli for a detailed report while he was under house arrest. He was able to dictate to a faithful brother Mason and based on what emerged the Grand Duke closed the Tribunal of the Inquisition in 1742 (the first case ever in the world) while Tommaso was still alive: his Martyrdom was not in vain.

Subsequently the Grand Duke, who was truly enlightened, physically demolished the Inquisitor Tribunal and turned toward the cancellation of the death penalty, also the first in the world.

Considerations on inhumanity and antihumanity perpetuated to Bro. Tommaso Crudeli

L'affaire Crudeli is the first specific aggressive act towards a vision of tolerance of a multicultural, multiethnic and multireligious society that is the cornerstone of Freemasonry. The affair is not tied to schismatic mysticism or magic metaphysical visions, but the fear that self-discipline of moral and social virtues such as Freemasonry could undermine the supremacy of religious mono-thought.

It is important to remember the courageous spirit and mental determination of Bro. Crudeli as an singular example of this lengthy challenge that has faced Freemasonry. Through

his imprisonment and torture Bro. Crudeli was denied human rights covered in several articles of



The bust of Bro. Tommaso Crudeli in the East of Grand Lodge after being presented to M. Wor. Harvey J. Waugh prior to the installation of Grand Lodge.

the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, proclaimed by the UN in 1948, primarily articles 3, 5, 9, 18, 19 and 20. Special emphasis is put in particular on Article 18; the principle of differentiation of thought and interpersonal communication, that is the basis of our coexistence democratic, multi-cultural respect and mutual tolerance. Exactly what Freemasonry advocated for almost three centuries.

The imprisonment of Bro. Crudeli because he was Freemason, despite the severe health conditions, was an attempt to forcefully change him towards a belief discarded, though previously held since birth. This constant physical and psychological coercion was intended to reduce or annihilate his desire for the "freedom of thought" and conscience (precisely what is noted in article 18) and for him to abandon his principles.

He is the first link in the long struggle by Freemasonry in time and, unfortunately, it has not yet ended as we have seen in Paris in January 2015 where three Freemasons in the office of Charlie Hebdo were killed.

Conclusions to date

Despite many severe cases of fundamentalism in the world, the results of tolerant coexistence and respect are growing and an important step for all mankind is the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948 that, although some States have not even signed the basic ones of 30 articles, is the only "milestone" on which to base our human relations in the context of individual Liberty and collective Liberties. A possible interpretation of this "milestone" is also, if not above, that Freemasonry has been strong component for achieving what we eventually can trust as "peaceful coexistence between peoples beyond every creed, culture and color" that the Brotherhood was the predecessor in saying and supporting it.

The work the Institute of Historical Studies of Tommaso Crudeli (HSTCI)

Our work is to identify the martyrdom of Bro. Tommaso Crudeli. In this long campaign (over 25 years) that the Institute has undertaken rediscovering relevant facts and correspondence of the affair. We are convinced that the First Martyr of Universal Freemasonry is a candidate to become the champion of Article 18 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights which stabilizes freedom of thought, conscience, religion - in perfect harmony with Article 1 which states that " All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood." These three liberties of integral human are interdependent and indivisible and, compared to other Human Rights, have an inherent power of resistance; they are stronger than death.

Look for a nomination of Bro. Tommaso Crudeli as the champion of article 18 and the First Martyr of Universal Freemasonry. The question before us is: "After three centuries, can we say to his butcher 'Where is your victory?'" ■