

# Rizal's retraction letter

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Scholars are still debating about many historical controversies and issues whether they are true or valid. Including one of the major controversies regarding Rizal, which is about the Retraction Document. This said document is one of the proof that the Friars' claim that Rizal retracted a few days before his execution. Retraction means that he is taking back what he said against the Catholic Church in the Philippines and the Friars. If this were true, it would mean that Rizal went back to become a Catholic again after being a Mason in Europe.

Moreover, like a coin, there were also two sides of the story. The first one is that, Rizal did not withdraw as Mason which the Masonic Rizalists firmly believed. And on the other hand, The Catholic Rizalists, who were convinced Rizal retracted. On May 18, 1935, Rizal's "original" retraction letter was said to be discovered by Father Manuel Garcia, C. M, in Archdiocesan archives after it disappeared for thirty-nine years from the afternoon of the day when Rizal was shot. Later, when it was then discovered, it has become a favorite subject of dispute among academicians and Catholics.

The letter, dated December 29, 1896, was said to have been signed by the National Hero himself. It was stated as follows in English translation: Jefe del Piquete Juan del Fresno Ayudante de Plaza Eloy Moure I declare myself a catholic and in this Religion in which I was born and educated I wish to live and die. I retract with all my heart whatever in my words, writings, publications and conduct has been contrary to my character as son of the Catholic Church. I believe and I confess whatever she teaches and I submit to whatever she demands.

I abominate Masonry, as the enemy which is of the Church, and as a Society prohibited by the Church. The Diocesan Prelate may, as the Superior Ecclesiastical Authority, make public this spontaneous manifestation of mine in order to repair the scandal which my acts may have caused and so that God and people may pardon me. Manila 29 of December of 1896 Jose Rizal

Aside for this “ original” text that was being retrieved by Fr. Garcia, there are also at least three texts of Rizal's retraction have surfaced. The first text was published in La Voz Espanola and Diario de Manila on the very day of Rizal's execution, Dec. 0, 1896.

The second text appeared in Barcelona, Spain, on February 14, 1897, in the fortnightly magazine in La Juventud; it came from an anonymous writer who revealed himself fourteen years later as Fr. Balaguer. And then the third text appeared in El Imparcial on the day after Rizal's execution; it is the short formula of the retraction. Despite the fact that there are several personalities who claims that they are the one who have discovered Rizal's Retraction letter nevertheless, the letters have the same content regardless of how those were written.

Several historians report that Rizal retracted his anti-Catholic ideas through a document which stated: " I retract with all my heart whatever in my words, writings, publications and conduct have been contrary to my character as a son of the Catholic Church. " However, there are doubts of its authenticity given that there is no certificate of Rizal's Catholic marriage to Josephine Bracken. Anti-retractionists also point to " Adios": " I go where... faith does not kill," which they believe refers to the Catholic religion.

Also there is an allegation that the retraction document was a forgery. After analyzing several major documents of Rizal, Ricardo Pascual concluded that the retraction document, said to have been discovered in 1935, was not in Rizal's handwriting. Senator Rafael Palma, a former President of the University of the Philippines and a prominent Mason, argued that a retraction is not in keeping with Rizal's character and mature beliefs. He called the retraction story a "pious fraud."

Others who deny the retraction are Frank Laubach, a Protestant minister; Austin Coates, a British writer; and Ricardo Manapat, director of the National Archives. On the other side are prominent Philippine historians such as Nick Joaquin, Nicolas Zafra of UP, Leon Maria Guerrero III, Gregorio Zaide, Guillermo Gomez Rivera, Ambeth Ocampo, John Schumacher, Antonio Molina, Paul Dumol and Austin Craig. They take the retraction document as authentic, having been judged as such by a foremost expert on the writings of Rizal, Teodoro Kalaw (a 33rd degree

Mason) and "handwriting experts... known and recognized in our courts of justice", H. Otley Beyer and Dr. Jose I. Del Rosario, both of UP. Historians also refer to 11 eyewitnesses when Rizal wrote his retraction, signed a Catholic prayer book, and recited Catholic prayers, and the multitude who saw him kiss the crucifix before his execution. A great-grand-nephew of Rizal, Fr. Marciano Guzman, cites that Rizal's confessions were certified by 5 eyewitnesses, 10 qualified witnesses, 7 newspapers, and 12 historians and writers including Aglipayan bishops, Masons and anti-clericals.

One witness was the head of the Spanish Supreme Court at the time of his notarized declaration and was highly esteemed by Rizal for his integrity.

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Because of what he sees as the strength these direct evidence have in the light of the historical method, in contrast with merely circumstantial evidence, UP professor emeritus of history Nicolas Zafra called the retraction " a plain unadorned fact of history. " Guzman attributes the denial of retraction to " the blatant disbelief and stubbornness" of some Masons. Personally, I believed that Rizal didn't write any Retraction letter before he died.

Maybe those retraction documents that were found are just made by Spaniards or Friars to make the Filipino people believe that their hero is a Christian again, so that Christianity will be accepted by the majority of Filipinos and will be widespread throughout our country. Simply put, Spaniards/Friars are manipulating Filipinos through Rizal. Supporters see in Rizal's Retraction the moral courage to recognize his mistakes, his reversion to the true faith, and thus his unfading glory, and a return to the ideals of his Father which did not diminish his stature as a great patriot; On the contrary, it increased that stature to greatness.

Whether the said controversy is true or false, the important thing is Dr. Jose Rizal has made a large contribution and is considered as a largest factor why we claimed our Independence against Spaniards. Like Senator Jose Diokno stated, " Surely whether Rizal died as a Catholic or an apostate adds or detracts nothing from his greatness as a Filipino... Catholic or Mason, Rizal is still Rizal - the hero who courted death 'to prove to those who deny our patriotism that we know how to die for our duty and our beliefs. "