

Did Jose Rizal a Catholic? Revisiting Rizal's last 24 hours using spy reports

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Abstrak

here is one issue in Jose Rizal's life that historians have debated on several occasions but remains unsettled. That issue is whether Rizal, on the eve of his death, re-embraced the Catholic faith and disassociated himself from Masonry. The matter is controversial because parties on both sides are affiliated with an organization that promotes moral values and the pursuit of truth. The pro-retraction camp is represented by the Jesuits, the archbishop of Manila, and a few other members of the Catholic hierarchy. Since they are all ordained priests, they are assumed to be truthful in their pronouncements. Their opponents are the members of Masonry, an organization that promotes brotherhood, integrity, decency, and professionalism.

This paper resurrects the retraction controversy in the light of the emergence of another primary source that speaks about what happened to Rizal on the eve of his death. This document was never considered in the history of the retraction controversy because it was made available to researchers only in the past decade. The author of the report is a credible eyewitness because he was physically present in the vicinity of where Rizal was detained. His narrative is lucid and contains details that cast doubt on the credibility and reliability of earlier primary sources on which previous narratives were based. This document needs serious consideration and should be included in the discourse on Rizal's retraction.