

## OLM FUNERAL GUIDELINES

The rites of the Order of Christian Funerals are rites of the living and the dead. It is how the Church assists those who have passed and walks with those who mourn. The common celebration of the rites surrounding death takes the form of three liturgical celebrations:

- A Vigil
- The Funeral liturgy
- The Rite of Committal

### THE VIGIL

The vigil, which is commonly referred to as a wake or visitation, is often the first time family, friends and members of the parish community gather in remembrance of the deceased, for prayer and support. The vigil may be celebrated in the home of the deceased, in the funeral home, or in the church. This vigil usually takes place the evening before the funeral liturgy at the home or funeral home—or one hour before the funeral liturgy at the church. There are two forms that this vigil may take. A Liturgy of the Word consisting of Scripture and prayers similar to the usual order at Mass. Another option may be to pray the Office of the Dead (Liturgy of the Hours) consisting of the same elements as above but in a different form. The recitation of the Holy Rosary for the deceased is also a preferred practice. Flowers, photographs, and the like are certainly allowed; however, nothing is permitted to obscure the altar.

### THE FUNERAL LITURGY

This liturgy usually is within the celebration of the Mass. In some circumstances, the celebration of the Mass may not be possible, for instance, if only a deacon is available or if it must take place on Sunday. When this is the case, a Liturgy of the Word is celebrated with the appropriate rituals of the funeral. Whatever the circumstances, the rituals celebrated at the funeral consist of receiving the body during which it is sprinkled with holy water and covered with the funeral pall. Following Communion, special prayers are added to the liturgy along with the ritual gesture of incensing the body. If the body is cremated prior to the funeral, see the section on Cremated Remains below.

### THE RITE OF COMMITTAL

The final station of the Order of Christian Funerals is the Rite of Committal which usually takes place at the cemetery or columbarium. Following the funeral liturgy, the body or cremains is taken in procession to the place of interment. Special prayers and readings are celebrated, committing the body to the ground or place of rest.

### THE FUNERAL HOME

Funeral arrangements begin with a meeting with the funeral director. Next the parish is contacted, where a priest will confirm the time for the funeral. Later, the parish will contact the

family to discuss the details of the Mass of Christian Burial. Having a funeral home involved in the preparations and planning for a funeral as well as being present for the services is invaluable. We strongly encourage every family to make contact with a funeral home in preparation for a funeral.

#### TIME OF THE FUNERAL

The parish is available to celebrate funeral services for current or former parishioners and for their relatives. The pastor of the parish will consider and make special arrangements for funerals of individuals with no parish connection. The parish will make every effort to set a funeral time that is convenient for the family. The preferred time for a funeral Mass is in the morning, reflecting the theme of resurrection. Procession to the cemetery or columbarium and burial or interment usually follows the funeral. An evening Mass of Christian Burial is an acceptable option, if more convenient for the family and mourners. In this case, the interment services would be held the following morning. Funeral Masses are not celebrated on Sundays, solemnities of obligation, Tuesday of Holy Week, Holy Thursday, Good Friday, or Holy Saturday. Funerals on Sundays must be outside Mass.

#### THE USE OF MUSIC

Music is an integral part of any liturgical celebration. Music adds to the solemnity of the occasion as well as enhances our participation in the liturgy. Music selected should always be appropriate to the occasion and to the liturgy. Some music is inappropriate for use in the liturgy. Secular music, in particular, is inappropriate within the liturgy because it is not written for that purpose. Such music may hold significant meaning to those who mourn or have been held in particular esteem by the deceased but diverts our attention from the praise of God and the worship we celebrate. Some music may include certain thoughts or statements which are contrary to the beliefs of the worshiping community and its inclusion in the liturgical celebration may offend that community. Selection of music should have as its primary motivation praise of God and secondly the enhancement of the liturgy. The advice of the priest or other minister is invaluable in planning the music to be incorporated in the liturgy.

The music for the celebration of the funeral rites should be chosen with great care. The General Introduction to the Order of Christian Funerals continues: The texts of the songs chosen...should express the paschal mystery of the Lord's suffering, death, and triumph over death. The following are the approved hymns for a funeral Mass. Music not appearing on these lists will be considered on an individual basis. Recorded music is never appropriate for Catholic liturgy.

Since, in general, those attending the funeral do not sing, we recommend the cantor to sing the official chants of the Mass, as well as other solos.

#### ENTRANCE HYMNS

- Entrance Chant (English) - recommended
- Entrance Chant (Latin) - recommended
- God Our Help in Ages Past (not during Lent)
- Holy, Holy, Holy Lord of All Hopefulness
- All Creatures of Our God and King
- Love Divine, All Loves Excelling
- Requiem Aeternum Give rest O Lord

#### OFFERTORY HYMNS

- Offertory Chant (English) - recommended
- Offertory Chant (Latin) - recommended
- Lord of All Hopefulness
- The King of Love My Shepherd Is
- Pie Jesu (Cantor solo)
- Be Thou My Vision
- Jerusalem, My Happy Home

#### COMMUNION

- Communion Chant (English) - recommended
- Communion Chant (Latin) - recommended
- Alleluia, Sing to Jesus (not during Lent)
- God With Hidden Majesty
- Jesus, My Lord, My God, My All
- Shepherd of Souls
- Panis Angelicus -recommended
- Soul of My Savior
- Ave Maria (Cantor solo) -recommended

#### SONG OF FAREWELL

- Come to his/her aid, O Saints of God (English)
- Come to his/her aid, O Saints of God (Latin)

#### RECESSIONAL HYMNS

- In Paradisum (Latin) - recommended
- I Know that my Redeemer Lives 45
- Alleluia, Sing to Jesus (not during Lent)
- For All the Saints (not during Lent)
- The Strife is O'er (not during Lent)
- Now Thank We All Our God

- Holy God, We Praise Thy Name

## FLOWERS AND MEMORIALS

We welcome flowers as part of the funeral celebration. Since the sanctuary is a place where sacred actions and rituals are conducted, no liturgical furniture or environment is to be moved. Flowers for funeral Masses will be displayed in the vestibule. The family may select one or two floral arrangements to be placed in the sanctuary. No flowers may be placed in front of the casket. Memorial displays are encouraged as part of the visitation or funeral reception – not as part of the funeral Mass. Flowers are never to block the view of the tabernacle. Personal memorabilia, such as pictures or cards, are often requested to be present during the funeral rites as a reminder of the deceased or as a means to express affection. For liturgies celebrated inside the church building, the proper place for such memorabilia is near the entrance so as not to draw attention away from the primary signs and actions of Catholic liturgical worship such as the paschal candle, altar, the ambo, and the celebration of the Holy Eucharist.

## VISITING CLERGY

Visiting clergy are welcome to preside over funeral rites. If a visiting clergyman intends to be the principal celebrant of the funeral rites, he must make his intention known to the pastor of the parish at the time of the scheduling of the funeral. If the priest or deacon resides outside the Diocese of Charlotte, he must mail his diocesan faculties from his Bishop to Bishop Peter J. Jugis at 1123 South Church Street Charlotte, NC 28203 with a notation of the date and location of the funeral. He may also email his faculties to [Chancery@rcdoc.org](mailto:Chancery@rcdoc.org).

## PALL AND CANDLE

The casket itself, though a center of reverence, is not the focus of attention at the Mass of Christian Burial. Rather, the focus is our hope of sharing eternal life and resurrection, promised at Baptism. During the entrance blessing, the casket is covered with a pall. The Easter Candle, another symbol of Baptism, will stand ahead of the casket. Usually it is the funeral home workers or immediate family members who place the funeral pall on the casket. The American flag, a symbol of military service, never covers the casket in church during the Mass. For Funeral Masses with military honors for United States military personnel, active duty or retired, it is customary that the casket enters and exits the church draped in the flag of the United States. The flag is removed upon entry so that the casket may be sprinkled with holy water and the pall placed for the Funeral Liturgy as a reminder of the baptism of the deceased. At the end of the liturgy recessional, the pall is removed and the flag is once again draped over the casket.

## READINGS

The Mass of Christian Burial includes the following readings:

- Old Testament
- New Testament

- Gospel

The staff planner can assist you in the selection of these readings. If you have no preference for the readings, the officiant can choose them. Normally the parish will supply a lector. If there is a strong preference for the family to provide a lector, please discuss with the staff planner. Lectors must be practicing Catholics who are experienced in lectoring. Also, the officiant of the funeral will choose the Gospel reading.

#### HOMILY/EULOGY

The homily is the sermon by the priest or deacon after the Gospel. It is meant to be a reflection on Christian life, death, and resurrection. While elements of the deceased's life may be incorporated into the homily, this is principally not the time for a eulogy. Only an ordained priest or deacon is allowed to preach the homily at the funeral liturgy.

Other persons are welcome to provide a brief eulogy at the wake service, after the rite of committal, or at the reception. The focus of a Christian funeral is the paschal mystery: the suffering, death, and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ. The funeral rites are not so much a celebration of the life of the deceased, but a prayer that the life and death of the deceased may be joined to Christ in heaven.

#### THE RITE OF COMMITTAL

The Rite of Committal is the final act of the community of faith in caring for the body of its deceased member. The rite is celebrated at the grave, tomb or columbarium and may be used for burial at sea. The rite is an expression of the communion that exists between the Church on earth and the Church in heaven and purgatory: the deceased passes with the farewell prayers of the community of believers. The committal must always be celebrated immediately following the funeral, unless a good pastoral reason dictates otherwise, such as travel to a distant cemetery.

#### CREMATION NORMS

Catholic teaching stresses the preference for burial of the body of the deceased. Likewise, the Church clearly prefers and urges that the body of the deceased be present for its funeral rites, since the presence of the human body better expresses the values which the Church affirms in its rites. Ideally, if a family chooses cremation, the cremation would take place at some time after the funeral Mass, so that there can be an opportunity for the vigil for the deceased in the presence of the body. This allows for the appropriate reverence for the sacredness of the body at the funeral Mass: sprinkling with holy water, the placing of the pall, and honoring it with incense. The Rite of Committal then takes place after cremation.

While the Church recommends that the pious custom of burying the bodies of the dead be observed, cremation is permitted as long as it has not been chosen for reasons contrary to

Catholic teaching (Canon 1176.3; Catechism of the Catholic Church, #2301). The significance of having the body of the deceased present for the funeral liturgy is indicated throughout the Mass texts and ritual actions. Therefore, when arrangements involving cremation are being made, the parish priest is to recommend that:

- Following a wake, or a time of visitation, the funeral liturgy be celebrated in the presence of the body of the deceased person, and that following the funeral liturgy, the body of the deceased be cremated.
- At an appropriate time, usually some days later, the family gathers at the cemetery for the burial of the cremated remains. The Rite of Committal takes place at this time with the inclusion of the proper prayers for the committal of ashes.

When cremation takes place before the funeral Mass, the cremated remains of a body should be treated with the same respect given to the human body from which they come. This includes the use of a worthy vessel to contain the ashes, the manner in which they are carried, and the care and attention to appropriate placement and transport, and the final place of rest. A small table or stand is to be prepared for the cremated remains at the place normally occupied by the coffin. The funeral urn or ossuary is carried to its place in the entrance procession.

The cremated remains should be buried in a grave or entombed in a mausoleum or columbarium. The practice of scattering cremated remains on the sea, from the air, or on the ground, or keeping cremated remains in the home of a relative or friend of the deceased are not the reverent places of rest that the Church requires. The instructions also state that, if at all possible, the place of entombment should be marked with a plaque or stone memorializing the deceased. **It is required that the family or funeral home provide a written letter outlining the date, time, and location of the interment of the cremains.** The letter should also state the priest or deacon who will preside at the interment.

## CEMETERIES

Since the body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, the Catholic Church has always set aside ground that is blessed and consecrated by God for the specific purpose of providing Christians with a dignified and holy resting place. The sacred nature of cemeteries is directly related to the Church's belief in the resurrection of the body and the final consummation of the world. Baptized Catholics may be buried in a Catholic cemetery or non-Catholic cemetery. Non-practicing Catholics or Catholics who may have joined another Christian denomination also deserve the prayers of the Church. Likewise, non-Catholic spouses and other family members of Catholics may be buried in a Catholic cemetery. Many Catholic cemeteries have a reserved area for the burial of unborn children.

## CHURCH STIPENDS

Normally, stipends for the liturgical musicians should be discussed with the staff planner. While there is no charge for a funeral, families often like to make a small donation to the parish. The amount of that donation is left up to the family. Donations to the priest and/or deacon officiating at the funeral is often customary and can be made directly to the parish.