Guide to Catholic Funeral Preparation

Navigating arrangements within our local parish community

The Church encourages Catholics to have a funeral Mass. The Holy Mass is the greatest prayer we can offer for the departed. The Catechism asserts: “From the beginning the Church has honored the memory of the dead and offered prayers in suffrage for them, above all the Eucharistic Sacrifice, so that, thus purified, they may attain the beatific vision of God” (#1032). This document is designed to provide basic information and guidance to help you and your loved ones.

The Importance of Pre-Planning

> In an ideal world, everyone would plan their funeral Mass and make necessary arrangements before their passing. Pre-planning is a tremendous gift to your family, sparing them from having to make sensitive and difficult decisions during a time of grief. We strongly encourage you to be proactive:
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> - **Cemetery plot:** Consider purchasing a cemetery plot early.
> - **Express wishes:** Make your end-of-life and liturgical preferences clearly known to your family.
> - **Clergy consultation:** Speak with a parish priest or deacon to plan your funeral liturgy in advance.

Working with a Licensed Funeral Home

While utilizing a funeral home incurs a financial cost, their professional services are invaluable. Funeral homes manage the complex logistical tasks involved in a funeral celebration. When a family chooses not to use a funeral home, these heavy coordination responsibilities fall entirely on church staff, priests, and parish volunteers. For this reason, our parish highly recommends working with a licensed funeral home to ensure a smooth, dignified, and well-coordinated process.

Casket Burial vs. Cremation

The Church’s reverence for the body stems from our belief that the human body — once washed in baptism, anointed, and fed with the Eucharist — is inextricably associated with the person.

While the Church strongly prefers and urges traditional corporeal (casket) burial, cremation is fully permitted. The Order of Christian Funerals states that ideally, the body of the deceased should be present for the funeral Mass before cremation takes place. If cremation is chosen, Catholic teaching requires that the remains be treated with the same solemn reverence given to a corporeal body:

- **Timely Burial:** Burial or inurnment should take place as soon as possible after death.
- **Sacred Ground:** Cremated remains must be laid to rest in a sacred place, such as a church-owned cemetery.
- **Prohibited practices:** Ashes may not be kept in a loved one’s home, divided among family members, or scattered over land or water.

Local Catholic Cemeteries & Burial Requirements

Our local Catholic community maintains eight cemeteries (six active and two inactive). If you wish to be buried in one of our active cemeteries, you must contact the respective sexton (caretaker) to secure a plot and coordinate grave preparation with the local grave-digging company.

Vault Requirement: A vault or grave liner is required for all burials, including cremations. These are typically purchased through the vault and grave-digging company.

Active Cemetery	Sexton (Caretaker)	Contact Number
St. Lawrence Cemetery	Richard Guck	(218) 346-7729
Sacred Heart Cemetery	John Kratzke / Tim Stoll	(218) 758-2275 / (218) 841-4251
St. Joseph Cemetery	Mark Riestenberg	(218) 731-2867
St. Stanislaus Cemetery	Mike Johnson	(218) 849-0501
St. Henry Cemetery	Ron Berns	(218) 298-0545
Holy Cross Cemetery	Edgar Hendrickx	(218) 298-2434 or (218) 385-3850

Liturgical and Practical Guidelines

- **Vigil / Parish Prayers:** We encourage the Vigil (parish prayers) to take place at the funeral home rather than inside the church building, due to liability issues associated with hosting the body in the church overnight.
- **Eulogies and Personal Remembrances:** Because the Funeral Mass is sacred liturgy focused strictly on the Paschal Mystery and God's saving grace, eulogies are not permitted during the funeral Mass itself. Personal eulogies, stories, and remembrances are highly encouraged during the Visitation or at the funeral luncheon.
- **Funeral Luncheon:** Our parishes are happy to host a funeral luncheon. The only fee associated with the luncheon is the direct reimbursement to the church for the cost of the food.

Financial Considerations and Legacy Giving

- **Clergy and Musician Stipends:** It is customary to offer a stipend or honorarium to the presiding clergy, musicians, and altar servers in gratitude for their ministry, time and guidance during the funeral liturgy. Your funeral director can assist you with standard customary amounts in our local area.
- **Remembering the Parish in Your Will:** As you prayerfully consider your end-of-life stewardship, we invite you to remember our parish in your Last Will and Testament. A legacy gift—no matter the size—is a beautiful expression of lifelong faith, helping ensure the continued spiritual ministry and physical care of our church community for future generations.

Parish Contact & Pastoral Support

If you have further questions or would like pastoral guidance regarding funeral planning, please do not hesitate to contact our parish priest or parish office directly.