

PREPARING FOR A FUNERAL MASS

Our hearts go out to you ...

There are few moments more difficult in life than preparing to bury someone whom you have loved.

That is why we want you to know that you are in our prayers, and we will do everything we possibly can to help you in these difficult days ahead.

As your priest, I look forward to meeting with you in the coming days. But first, we know you probably have some questions about the Funeral Mass we will be celebrating together.

What is a Catholic Funeral Mass?

A Catholic Funeral is a special Mass at which we pray that God will receive the person who has died with mercy and lead them home to heaven. While remembrance of your deceased loved one is an essential part of the Catholic Funeral Mass, our most important task is to pray that God will forgive them whatever sins they may have committed and give them eternal rest in his presence.

What is a Funeral like?

You have probably been to other Funerals, perhaps even of someone whom you were very close to you. If you have, you know that the Funeral is basically like every other Mass. The first half consists of readings from the Bible, so that we might understand what God teaches us about the meaning of life and death. The second half is the Liturgy of the Eucharist, including Holy Communion.

The Funeral Mass differs from the Sunday Mass at the beginning and the end.

At the beginning of the Funeral the priest will bless the body of your deceased loved one with holy water, recalling their Baptism. Then your family will cover the coffin with a "funeral pall," a large quilt-like cloth that recalls the white garment with which they were clothed when they were baptized.

At the end of the Funeral Mass, the priest will invite everyone to sing a song of farewell as the body of your loved one is incensed and then an ancient prayer commending your loved one to God is prayed before we take their body to the cemetery.

At the cemetery we pray brief prayers committing the body to the earth in anticipation of the last day when Christ will raise our mortal bodies from the dead.

What if I haven't been to Mass in a long time?

If you have not been to Mass in a long time, we want to make your return to be as easy as possible. If you would like to go to confession sometime in the next few days and then return to receiving Holy Communion, the priest would be happy to help you.

How do we prepare for the Funeral?

You are probably overwhelmed by all the preparations you have had to make in the past few days. We want to support you and make this as easy for you as we can, as we prepare to pray for and remember your deceased loved one.

The most important thing you can do is to share with the priest some of the stories of the life of the deceased and your family. Likewise, you might have some suggestions about particular Bible passages that mean a lot to you or Church music that was significant to the deceased or to your family. The attached planning sheet will help you to begin this process, which the priest will help you to complete.

What if I have questions?

Between now and when you meet with the priest, feel free to call us if you have any questions.

In the meantime, please know of our prayers, that the Lord will look with mercy in your loved one and comfort you with assurances of faith.



NOTES FOR PREPARING FOR A FUNERAL

NAME OF THE DECEASED: _____

YOUR NAME: _____

- Are there any special passages from the Bible that meant something to you or to the deceased which you want us to keep in mind? A list of sample readings for a Catholic Funeral Mass are found at the end of this form. If you have no preferences, however, the priest will be happy to choose the readings.

Are there any members of the family who you would like to do the two readings? If not, we have trained readers who would be happy to read.

FIRST READING: _____

SECOND READING: _____

- Is there any special Church music that meant something to you or to the deceased which you want us to keep in mind?

- Sometimes the members of the family will bring forward the gifts of bread and wine during the Offertory Procession at the Funeral Mass?

If this something you would like to do? If yes, what are the name of the three people who will bring up the gifts at the Offertory Procession?

- Sometimes a member of the family asks to read "Words of Remembrance," sometimes called a "Eulogy" -- **this to take place at the wake or if you are having a gathering after the committal.**

- Sometimes families invite people to a luncheon after the Funeral. If you would like the priest to announce this near the end of the Funeral, please tell us here:

- Are there any other suggestions or requests you might have?

Funerals –What we believe and what we celebrate

Today many in the culture are turning a funeral into a “celebration of life” of the deceased. It is the ultimate “selfie” – all about you. However, for the Christian **we celebrate our faith in Jesus Christ and have the hope of Resurrection** and new life. The funeral gives those who mourn **comfort, but it is also a time to pray** for the mercy of God in judging the deceased – it is the last act of love we can do for those who have died that cannot be repaid.

From the Ritual of Christian Funerals --

5 Christians celebrate the funeral rites to offer worship, praise, and thanksgiving to God for the gift of a life which has now been returned to God, the author of life and the hope of the just.

The Mass, the memorial of Christ’s death and resurrection, is the principal celebration of the Christian funeral.

6 The church through its funeral rites **commends the dead to God’s merciful love and pleads for the forgiveness of their sins.**

At the funeral rites, especially at the celebration of the Eucharistic sacrifice, the Christian community affirms and expresses the union of the Church on earth with the Church in heaven in the one great **communion of saints.**

Though separated from the living, the dead are still at one with the community of believers on the earth and benefit from their prayers and intercession.

At the rite of commendation and farewell, the community acknowledges the reality of separation and **commends the deceased to God.**

In this way it recognizes the **spiritual bond that still exists** between the living and the dead and proclaims its belief that all the faithful will be raised up and reunited in the new heavens and a new earth, where death will be no more.

7 The celebration of the Christian funeral **brings hope and consolation to the living.**

While proclaiming the Gospel of Jesus Christ and witnessing to Christian hope in the resurrection, the **funeral rites also recall to all who take part in them God’s mercy and judgment and meet the human need to turn always to God in times of crisis.**