Catholic Funeral - A guide to choosing music at a funeral service

The funeral service is foremost the sacrifice of Christ for the repose of the soul of the deceased. At the service it is truly a holy moment, a God moment, when we honor our loved one who has died and returned home to God. Music serves an integral role in that sacred funeral rite.

Liturgical music at Mass is an act of prayerful worship. It is sacred music that comforts mourners while uniting everyone present in faith, hope and love. It expresses Christ's victory over death and our share in that victory. The music should be chosen with care from hymns that are provided by the church. The introduction to the *Order of Christian Funerals* devotes four paragraphs to the question of music in the Funeral Liturgy (numbers 30-34). Number 30 is particularly relevant:
"Music is integral to the funeral rites. It allows the community to express convictions and feelings that word alone may fail to convey. It has the power to console and uplift the mourners and to strengthen the unity of the assembly in faith and love. The texts of the songs chosen for a particular celebration should express the paschal mystery of the Lord's suffering, death, and triumph over death and should be related to the readings from Scripture."

Secular music, though it may be deeply personal and meaningful to the deceased and mourners, is not permitted during the sacred liturgy. Recorded or pre-recorded music is also not permitted during the service. The wake the night before or at a gathering after the Mass are the appropriate times for secular and popular music.

Hymns fall within the Mass at fixed points - Entrance, Responsorial Psalm, Preparation of the Gifts, Communion and Closing. Hymns such as "Amazing Grace," "How Great Thou Art," "Be Not Afraid," and "One Bread One Body" are sacred in nature and complement the solemn liturgy.

Our musicians at St. Brigid Parish have provided an extensive and appropriate list of beautiful liturgical hymns from the *Breaking Bread hymnal*. Liturgical music not appearing on the list will be considered on an individual basis. Choosing hymns is an important part of the funeral planning process and can be overwhelming. When it is time, and a funeral service is scheduled at St. Brigid Parish, a bereavement minister will assist the family with the planning of the liturgy and music.

St. Brigid Bereavement Ministry has compiled a series of bulletin articles covering topics related to a Catholic funeral. Those articles are available on the parish website.