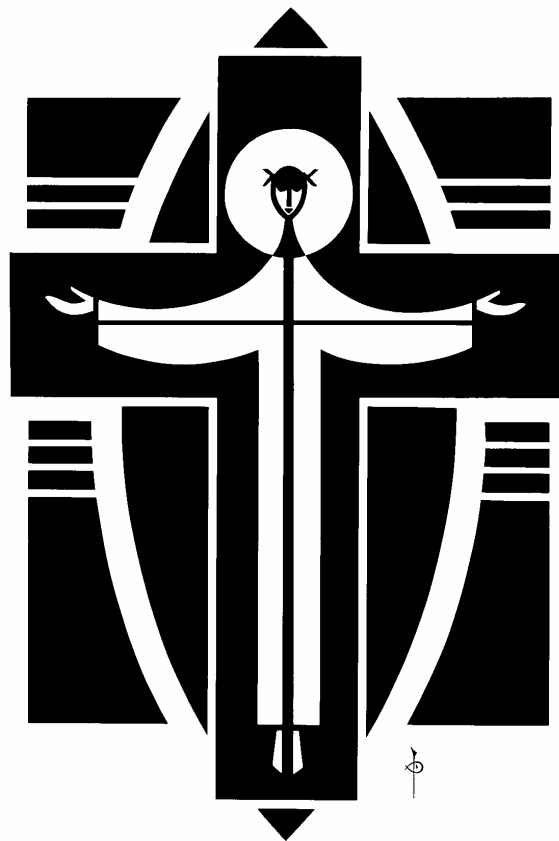


The Order of Christian Funerals

A Resource for Preparation of the Catholic Funeral Rites



“I am the Resurrection and the Life” John 11:25

A Pastoral Message on the Order of Christian Funerals

From the text of Most Reverend Robert J. Banks
Bishop of Green Bay

In today's fast-paced society, there is a tendency to rush even the sacred time that surrounds the death of a loved one. This becomes increasingly easy in a culture that sees death as the final end of everything rather than the beginning of a new stage in our relationship with God and our loved one.

As Christians, we know better, and the Church offers, even insists, that we accept a time of prayer and faith-filled reflection both for our own good and for the spiritual benefit of our beloved one who has gone before us.

The Church's teaching that we continue beyond death to be one community of Christ becomes more real for us when a loved one dies. Just as we often prayed for our loved ones in this life, we now pray that God's love will welcome them to eternal joy in the company of Mary and all the saints.

When a Christian dies, having lived a life begun at the waters of baptism and lived in the light of Christ, the Church intercedes on behalf of the deceased, believing that life has only changed, not ended. While our loved one will be missed, it is in trust and joy that we commend them to the eternal arms of God through the funeral rites. We, as Church, offer worship and thanks to God for the gift of life which has now been returned to God, the creator of all life and the hope of the faithful.

It is in the liturgy of Baptism that the Church welcomes a person to the new life of faith, and it is in the liturgy of our funeral rites that the Church accompanies the faithful on their way to the new life of glory. May God grant us through the more faithful use of these funeral rites a deeper appreciation of Jesus' words to his friend, Martha, as she grieved the loss of her brother, Lazarus.

*I am the resurrection and the life;
Whoever believes in me, even if they die, will live,
And everyone who lives and believes in me will never die.*



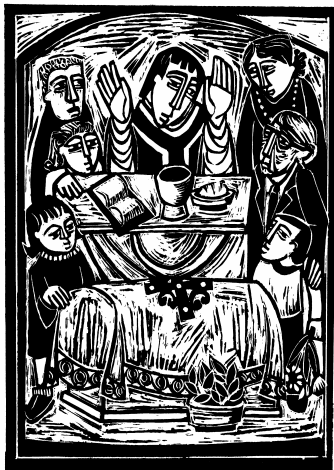
Catholic Prayers and Rites at the Time of Illness and Death

Time of Illness

Holy Communion for the Sick/Homebound
Sacrament of Anointing
Viaticum (*Holy Communion for those near to death*)

Time of Death

Prayers after Death
Prayers at the Gathering in the Presence of the Body
Prayers at the Transfer of the Body to the Church/Place of Committal
Morning Prayer and Evening Prayer for the Dead



: Funeral Rites

**Three Rites connected by
two processions:**

Vigil for the Deceased

Procession to the Church

The Funeral Mass or the

Funeral Liturgy Outside Mass

Procession to the Burial Place

The Rite of Committal

Time after Death

Prayers/Celebrations for the Bereaved
Grief Support Groups

The Order of Christian Funerals

Inspiration

In the face of death, the Church confidently proclaims that God has created each person for eternal life and that Jesus, the Son of God, by his death and resurrection, has broken the chains of sin and death that bound humanity. Christ “achieved his task of redeeming humanity and giving perfect glory to God, principally by the paschal mystery of his blessed passion, resurrection from the dead, and glorious ascension.” CSL #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. OCF #5

Theology

When the rites of the *Order of Christian Funerals* are fully celebrated, they ritualize the paschal exodus of one of the Lord’s disciples: the journey from life through death to fullness of Life in God. Therefore the three separate and sequential Principal Rites along with the Related Rites are given to the Church as the most fitting way to celebrate this pilgrimage of the deceased Christian. *OCF 1-4, 43-49*

Importance

The physical movements or two processions, one from the place of Vigil to the Church and another from the Church to the place of burial can add to the sense of journey or pilgrimage. The three liturgical rites contribute to the experience of separation through which mourners must pass before they are able to re-center their lives after the death of a family member or friend. To omit any one of the rites is to deny the deceased and their family and friends the consolation and grace offered by the Church. *OCF 42*

Celebration

Therefore, only for a serious reason would any one of the three Principal Rites be omitted. Of greatest concern would be the omission of the Funeral Mass, particularly when the church was significant part of the life of the deceased. The priest and parish team for funeral ministry need to make known to all members of the parish the honest rituals that preserve Christian and human values. The Catholic Funeral Rites celebrate these values affirmed and proclaimed in the name of Christ to all who come to the Church at the time of death. *OCF 6*

A Guide to Preparing the Funeral Rites

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 Catholic Church has a long tradition of prayer and ritual celebrated in liturgical rites that express the paschal nature of a Christian's death and destiny – passion, death, resurrection.

The Vigil for the Deceased

“Let us keep vigil praying with family and friends to the God of mercy and consolation.”



“The Vigil for the Deceased is the principal rite celebrated by the Christian community in the time following the death and before the funeral liturgy...” (OCF 54) At the vigil the Christian community keeps watch with the family in prayer to the God of mercy and finds strength in Christ's presence... In this time of loss the family and community turn to God's word as the source of faith and hope, as light and life in the face of darkness and death (OCF 56).

The vigil gathering and service is a time for family members and friends to gather, to tell stories, and share the memories that have bonded them, whether for a few years, or for a lifetime. It is a time to laugh, to cry, to sing and to pray.

The vigil service, often known as the wake, may take the form of a liturgy of the Word or evening prayer, and may be simple, or more elaborate. Music and readings appropriate for this service are

found later in this booklet. If family members or friends wish to offer a eulogy, this would be the appropriate time. It would also be the time to play or sing a favorite song and to display meaningful items and photos portraying significant moments of life.

Symbols and Signs at the Vigil:

the body, flowers, memorabilia, sympathy of family and friends, prayers, and tears.

Relationship to the Deceased at the Vigil:

acknowledgement of the physical presence of the deceased during the journey of a lifetime, celebration of the physical relationship to the deceased.

Expressions of care, memories and love:

- The presence of the body
- Flowers and gifts
- Cards and messages
- Photos and meaningful items
- Welcome of friends and family
- Sharing of stories and memories
- Singing of favorite songs
- Playing favorite music
- Display of military tributes
- Opportunity for groups/organizations to pray and give tribute

“I am the light of the world,” says the Lord; “whoever follows me will have the light of life.” John 8:12

The Funeral Mass

Or the Funeral Liturgy Outside Mass

“The mystery of the Lord’s death and resurrection gives power to the Liturgy of Christian burial.” OCF

The funeral liturgy is the central liturgical celebration of the Christian community for the deceased and the mourners. Through the funeral liturgy, the church’s love and care for the deceased, as well as its trust and belief in the resurrection, are acted out. In the presence of believers, the Word of God is broken and shared, and the eucharist is celebrated in our loved one’s memory. Finally, accompanied by the blessing of the church, we bade the deceased farewell.

Whereas the vigil service centers more on the life of the deceased, the funeral liturgy focuses more on the church’s story of the Paschal Mystery of Jesus Christ. The readings, homily, music, indeed the entire liturgy, move us in this direction. An outline for the liturgy, as well as appropriate readings and music, are found later in this booklet.



Symbols and Signs:

the baptismal water, the paschal candle, the cross, the Bible, the white Baptismal pall, the journey down the aisle and the final departure.

Prayer and Rituals with the Assembly:

- Processions with the Body
- Introductory Rites: Renewal of Baptism
- Liturgy of the Word
- Liturgy of the Eucharist
- Concluding prayer/song of farewell

Expressions of Faith:

- Blessing with water from the font
- Covering the coffin with a white Funeral pall
- Placing of symbols of cross and Bible
- Hearing the Word
- Sharing in the Eucharist
- Prayers and songs of farewell
- Music expressing faith
- Homily directing all to the paschal mystery of passion, death, resurrection

“If then, we have died with Christ, we believe we shall also live with him.” Romans 6:8

Relationship to the Deceased:

presenting the body to the Lord with the hope of resurrection and new life, detachment from physical relationship, commending the deceased to the Lord, moving toward a spiritual relationship with the deceased.

The Rite of Committal

“Let us begin a new relationship to the deceased based on prayerful remembrance, gratitude and the hope of resurrection and reunion.” OCF 213

The rite of committal is the community’s final ritual farewell to the deceased, and it is celebrated wherever and whenever the final disposition of the deceased occurs. This may be at the cemetery, mausoleum, or crematorium. The *Order of Christian Funerals* views the actual committal of the remains as the real climax of the rite. “Through this act the community of faith proclaims that the grave, or place of interment, once a sign of futility and despair, has been transformed by means of Christ’s own death and resurrection into a sign of hope and promise” (OCF 209). This final rite gives the bereaved a sense of finality and conclusion.



Symbols and Signs:

the earth, the grave, the coffin, water, the act of committal, the journey to the cemetery or mausoleum, flowers.

Relationship to the Deceased:

realization that a relationship to the body is now ended; symbolized by the committal to the earth/mausoleum, carry the deceased forward in a spiritual relationship, the dead live on in us in memory and imitation.

Prayers and Rituals:

- Blessing of gravesite (if not already blessed)
- Scripture
- Intercessions
- Prayers of Committal
- Songs of Farewell

Expressions of Farewell:

- Gathering at the gravesite
- Sprinkling of the grave/coffin with holy water
- Receiving a flower as a remembrance
- Adding ground over the coffin
- Touching the coffin
- Moments of silence
- Military rites
- Gun Salute
- Memorial rites/prayers

“May the angels lead you into paradise; may the martyrs come to welcome you, and take you to the holy city, the new and eternal Jerusalem. May you have eternal rest.”



Scripture Readings for the Funeral Rites

Old Testament Readings

Job 19:1, 23-27
Wisdom 3:1-9 or 3:1-6, 9
Wisdom 4:7-15
Isaiah 25:6a, 7-9
Lamentations 3:17-26
Daniel 12:1-3
2 Maccabees 12:43-46

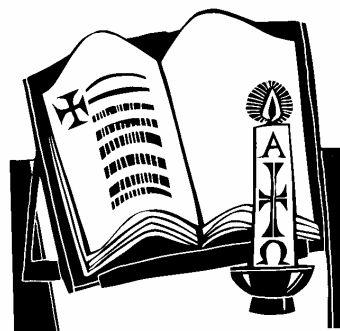
Responsorial Psalms (*Settings of these psalms should be sung if possible*)

Psalm 23
Psalm 25
Psalm 27
Psalm 42 and 43
Psalm 63
Psalm 103
Psalm 116
Psalm 122
Psalm 130
Psalm 143

New Testament Readings

Acts 10:34-43 or 10:34-36, 42-43
Romans 5:5-11
Romans 5:17-21
Romans 6:3-9 or 6:3-4, 8-9
Romans 8:14-23
Romans 8:31b-35, 37-39
Romans 14:7-9, 10b-12
1 Corinthians 15:20-23, 24b-28 or 15:20-23
1 Corinthians 15:51-57
2 Corinthians 4:14-5:1
2 Corinthians 5:1, 6-10
Philippians 3:20-21
1 Thessalonians 4:13-18
2 Timothy 2:8-13
1 John 3:1-2
1 John 3:14-16
Revelation 14:13
Revelation 20:11-21:1

Revelation 21:1-5a, 6b-7



Gospel Readings

Matthew 5:1-12a
Matthew 11:25-30
Matthew 25:1-13
Matthew 25:31-46
Mark 15:33-39; 16:1-6 or 15:33-39
Luke 7:11-17
Luke 12:35-40
Luke 23:33, 39-43
Luke 23:44-46, 50, 52-53; 24:1-6a
or 23:44-46, 50, 52-53
Luke 24:13-35 or 24:13-16, 28-35
John 5:24-29
John 6:37-40
John 6:51-58
John 11:17-27 or 11:21-27
John 11:32-45
John 12:23-28 or 12:23-26
John 14:1-6
John 17:24-26
John 19:17-18, 25-30

Music for the Funeral Rites

The music in these sections is published in most hymnals from GIA, OCP and World Library Publications. There are also other appropriate selections in these hymnals. Please consult your Pastor, Parish Director or Pastoral Musician for additional selections.

The Vigil for the Deceased

*Any music that is appropriate for the funeral mass is also appropriate for the funeral vigil. Below are some that are particularly appropriate. This would also be the time to incorporate a song that was significant to your loved one.

Amazing Grace
I Know That My Redeemer Lives
Jesus Remember Me
Keep In Mind
O God Our Help in Ages Past
We Walk By Faith

The Funeral Mass (or Liturgy Outside Mass)

Gathering/Preparation/Concluding Songs

Alleluia! Sing To Jesus
Amazing Grace
Be Not Afraid
Come To Me
Eye Has Not Seen
For All the Saints
Holy God, We Praise Thy Name
How Great Thou Art
I Know That My Redeemer Lives
Jerusalem, My Happy Home
Jesus Christ Is Risen Today
Lift High the Cross
On Eagle's Wings
Soon and Very Soon
The King of Love My Shepherd Is
We Walk By Faith
We Will Rise Again
You Are Mine
You Are Near

Responsorial Psalms

Psalm 19: Lord, You Have the Words
Psalm 23: The Lord Is My Shepherd
Psalm 23: Shepherd Me, O God
Psalm 25: To You, O Lord I Lift My Soul
Psalm 27: The Lord Is My Light
Psalm 63: My Soul Is Thirsting
Psalm 84: How Lovely Is Your Dwelling
Psalm 84: Happy Are They
Psalm 103: The Lord Is Kind and Merciful
Psalm 116: I Will Walk in the Presence of God
Psalm 130: With the Lord There Is Mercy

Gospel Acclamation and Eucharistic Acclamations

*Music chosen for the gospel acclamation and the eucharistic acclamations should be taken from the parish repertoire. The Pastor, Parish Director or Pastoral Musician can assist with these selections.

Communion Songs/Processionals

At the Lamb's High Feast We Sing
Eat This Bread
Gift of Finest Wheat
Here I Am, Lord
I Am the Bread of Life
In the Breaking of the Bread
Keep In Mind
Now We Remain
One Bread, One Body
We Have Been Told

Song of Farwell

*Music at this time should be taken from the text in the Funeral Rite, "The Song of Farwell." It may not be a psalm or other song that does not have the text from the "Song of Farwell."

Saints of God
Come to His/Her Aid
May the Angels Lead You Into Paradise

The Rite of Committal

Often, there is little or no music at the graveside or committal service. There may be a short, familiar refrain sung during the procession, or at the beginning or conclusion of the service.

Diocesan Directives for Funerals

Place: The funeral Mass is celebrated in a church. The Bishop does not allow a Funeral Mass in a funeral home or a Mausoleum. Sometimes Bishop permits a service (not a Mass) in the funeral home. (Exceptions are nursing homes with chapels where Funeral Masses are permitted). Memorial Masses are celebrated in Mausoleum chapels, and services other than Mass are permitted.

Time: Funeral Masses may not be celebrated on holy days of obligation, during Easter Triduum (Holy Thursday through Easter Sunday), Sundays of Advent, Lent, and Easter season. In this diocese, the Bishop does not permit weddings or funerals on any Sunday. (If serious reason exists, call the Chancery).

Cremation: Cremation is permitted as long as it is not chosen out of contempt for church teachings on the resurrection. In this diocese, the cremated remains may not be scattered but should be buried or handled with reverence. See the Diocesan Guidelines in the Appendix for the cremated remains.

Non-Catholics: Under certain conditions, baptized non-Catholics can be given Catholic burial rites if this would not be against their wishes, and if they cannot have their own minister. Contact the Chancery for each case.

Denial of Catholic Burial:

There is almost never a denial of a Catholic Burial. Rites are denied only to unrepentant and notorious apostates, heretics, and schismatics. Catholic burial is provided for the divorced and remarried, victims of suicide and non-practicing Catholics.

THE ORDER OF CHRISTIAN FUNERALS
Planning Sheet for the Vigil of the Deceased and the Funeral Mass

Full Name _____ Date of Birth/Death _____

Funeral Home _____

Time of Vigil Service _____ Place _____

Presider _____

Music/Musicians _____

Special Instructions _____

Time of Funeral _____ Presider _____

Musicians _____

Lectors _____

Eucharistic Ministers _____

Servers _____

Pall Bearers _____

Gift Bearers _____

Liturgy

Gathering Song: _____

1st Reading: _____

Responsorial Psalm: _____

2nd Reading: _____

Gospel Acclamation: _____

Gospel: _____

Preparation of Gifts Song: _____

Eucharistic Acclamations: _____

Communion Song: _____

Song of Farewell: _____

Closing Song: _____

** Other Notes _____

