

Why a Catholic Funeral?

If there is a word that I think of in relation to the Catholic funeral it is "commend". In the Catholic funeral (from wake to funeral Mass to graveside committal) we commend our loved one into the mercy of God and we also commend ourselves, praying for God's comfort and peace in a time of loss. The options of readings, music choices (i.e. church hymns) and what is appropriate to do within the ritual are there precisely in order to perform this ritual of commending the loved one into God's mercy and eternity. This structure of the ritual is not meant to deny or diminish the loved one or his or her life in any way. A "celebration of life" (a current expression used in the funeral business) is all well and good but such a celebration ends at the grave and can go no further. The Catholic funeral, in its depth of ritual and meaning, reminds us that the grave has been overcome not by our wishing it so but by the death and resurrection of Christ our Lord! The Catholic funeral reminds us and brings us into this greater context and this is extremely important because only the resurrection of Christ conquers the tomb, only the resurrection of Christ says death is not the final word, only the resurrection of Christ gives the true hope that comforts and heals us in our sorrows.