

Funeral Policies and Procedures at St. Benedict Parish

St. Bridget's Church, Bloomfield

St. Mary's Church, Canandaigua

We are filled with sympathy for you and your family as you endure this difficult time. May God's blessing be with you in your loss. St. Benedict Parish is honored to be walking with you as you plan the funeral liturgy and burial for your loved one.

St. Benedict Parish proudly celebrates very beautiful funeral liturgies. We work very hard to make sure that every aspect of the funeral experience is as simple, powerful and provides as much healing as possible. If we can assist you along these lines, please let us know.

The following guidelines answer some of our most frequently asked questions about funerals and how they are prepared. They are offered here also to avoid miscommunications and the possible hurt feelings that might result from those miscommunications. They also represent some encouragement and direction for those other professionals that may be involved.

The Location of the Funeral

The site of the funeral ought to be a very important consideration of your decision-making process. It is not always easy, but there are some things that should be kept in mind.

- The pastor or his designate makes all decisions regarding funeral liturgies. Any change to the ordinary course of a liturgy in that parish must be approved by him.
- The pastor makes decisions about the presider, time, etc.

Given these above points we should keep in mind that St. Benedict Parish is committed to flexibility. It has been our policy to always work together to meet any special accommodations.

Our funeral times are ordinarily the following: Monday – Friday 11 am; Saturdays 10 or 11 am.

The Celebrant and Homilist at the Funeral

It has already been said that the pastor is the celebrant and homilist at funeral liturgies unless he has delegated that to his parochial vicar. Visiting clergy are welcomed, however, because of a special connection that may exist between the family and the desired priest. The following points must be observed:

- Before inviting visiting clergy to take part in a funeral liturgy, the pastor must be informed or asked. This is preferably done by the family themselves. The visiting priest may not be consulted before attending to this courtesy.

- After gaining permission by the pastor, the visiting priest will then contact the pastor to acknowledge their intention and availability and to request permission to participate.
- The meeting will happen at our parish to prepare the funeral as if the pastor was himself celebrating the Mass. (Truly, if the visiting clergy met a problem and couldn't make it to the funeral, he would have to!)
- The parish will not permit any priest from outside the Diocese of Rochester without a letter of suitability from the congregation or diocese.

These considerations are largely common (or best practices) of most priests and are only rarely problematic. It is, however, necessary to follow them. The worst thing that could happen is to have no presider at a funeral because these were not observed.

The Funeral Liturgy

As it regards the funeral celebration we observe one overarching principle: The Liturgy of the Mass is a celebration of the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. It does not matter whether it is a wedding, Sunday, funeral, etc. A Mass is solely directed to the saving message of victory in Jesus Christ. Therefore:

- The music director of the parish must be consulted about visiting musicians and must approve all musical selections for a funeral liturgy. Ordinarily, parish musicians are to be used.
- Songs, texts, words, actions that obscure or frustrate this are not permitted.
- To this point – There are no eulogies; words of remembrance may be offered that maintain the focus on the Gospel. These words must maintain this because they are offered within a specific context: the Mass itself.
- For the same reason, music selected for Mass must be chosen to maintain the same principle.

We hope this is helpful. For the majority of you, this is not a concern. However, since I am writing this out and posting it, you can correctly assume that it sometimes is a problem. Our hope is focused on the beautiful celebration of the life and birth into the mercy of God for your loved one. Please let us know how we can help and assist. Our answer is almost always yes on most matters. Many thanks and God bless you!