

“Words of Remembrance” Guidelines St. Peter Catholic Church

Catholics believe that at death "Life is changed, not ended." Death is a passage to a new and fuller life, and ultimately to resurrection and eternal union with God. The Church emphasizes life in the funeral liturgy. The resurrection is the theme and the readings, hymns, and prayers reflect the overall tone of expectant joy. During the Catholic funeral, we gather to pray for the repose of the soul of the one who has died, and to ask that God will strengthen and console family and friends. The priest is the principal presider of this sacred action between God and humanity, as we pray for the beloved departed and for ourselves. The Funeral Mass is offered in intercession for the deceased person because we believe that God hears our prayers for the forgiveness of the sins of our deceased loved ones. We know that we are not alone, but are supported by God's grace, by the community here on earth and by the communion of saints. At the funeral, we derive strength from our Christian faith, which provides the true consolation we find in the resurrection of Jesus, our source of hope in times of sorrow. Our attention is centered on Jesus, who speaks to us through the Scriptures, and who comes to us in the Holy Eucharist in our time of grief.

For some non-Catholics, the funeral can primarily be a time for remembrance and celebration of a person's life. For Catholics, however, the intercession for the dead and the transition to eternal union with God are the central focus of the funeral liturgy. Nonetheless, sometimes people desire to have “Words of Remembrance,” and option which is permitted by the revised *Order of Christian Funerals*. **A eulogy is not allowed at a Catholic Funeral.** “Words of Remembrance” are a short tribute to the faith life of the deceased loved one, offered by a family member or close personal friend, who knows the deceased well. In cases where the family would like to have “Words of Remembrance,” a member of the family should contact the priest to discuss this idea and begin the planning process with him. Here are few guidelines to follow:

- In the *Archdiocese of New Orleans*, it is the preference of the archbishop that “Words of Remembrance” are to be delivered at the Prayer Service (Vigil or Wake Service) at the funeral home on the day or evening before the funeral.
- If “Words of Remembrance” are to be given at the Church (because visitation occurs in the Church) it must take place at the conclusion of the time of visitation and before the beginning of Mass. In either case, the family should indicate to the priest at the time of the funeral planning if they would like someone to deliver “Words of Remembrance.”
- If “Words of Remembrance” are to be given, it must be brief and must be submitted in writing to the priest at least 24 hours in advance of its deliverance. The priest is the guardian of the sacred liturgy, and needs to care

for the integrity of the liturgy and the reputation of the deceased. He has the right to edit or reject suggested “Words of Remembrance.”

- “Words of Remembrance” should be no more than one typed page. It should concentrate upon the faith life of the loved one, highlighting his or her virtues and qualities: “reflecting on manifestations of a loved one’s life of care and nurturing, of prayer and fidelity to the sacraments, of service to Christ’s Church family, and of fidelity to relationships and commitments made in faith.” Good taste and good humor are appropriate.
- Unlike the homily, which is delivered by an ordained priest or deacon at the funeral Mass and pertains particularly to matters of faith and our common hope in the resurrection, “Words of Remembrance” are not a time to quote extensive passages from scripture, to preach, instruct others in Christian living, or even to offer formal prayers. It is not an opportunity for a friend or family member to preach about their particular faith and beliefs, call others to conversion, or evangelize.
- Please review the information available and contact the Rectory so we can answer your questions and assist you in identifying your preferences, thus assuring that the funeral ceremony captures our faith and hope in the resurrection as well as reflects your life or the life of a loved one as a disciple of Christ.