

FUNERALS AT THE CATHEDRAL OF THE EPIPHANY

The death of a loved one is a time of sorrow and profound grief. It is also a time when our Christian faith in the Resurrection of Christ can offer great comfort and allow us to experience grace in the midst of sadness. The prayerful rituals of the Catholic Church at the time of death are meant to bring hope and consolation to family members and friends even as they commend the soul of the deceased person to the loving mercy of God.

The Cathedral of the Epiphany parish offers the following list of questions and answers in the hope that it will help family members better understand the way the Cathedral celebrates funerals and assist them as they prepare to celebrate the funeral of their loved one in the most fitting way possible.

What is a Catholic funeral Mass?

The funeral Mass is the normal way the Catholic Church commemorates a person's death. At the funeral Mass, family, friends, and parishioners gather to pray for the deceased and for the deceased person's family and friends using scripture readings, prayers, and special rites. Because the Eucharist is the memorial of Christ's own saving death and resurrection, it is the most appropriate way to celebrate at the time of death.

Are Catholic funerals always celebrated at Mass?

No. In some instances it can be quite appropriate to celebrate a funeral outside the Mass. This is commonly done, for example, when all or most of the family members of the deceased are not Catholic. Another example would be the funeral of a non-Catholic person who was married to a Catholic and had no other church affiliation. In both cases, a Liturgy of the Word without the celebration of the Eucharist is appropriate.

Who presides at funeral celebrations?

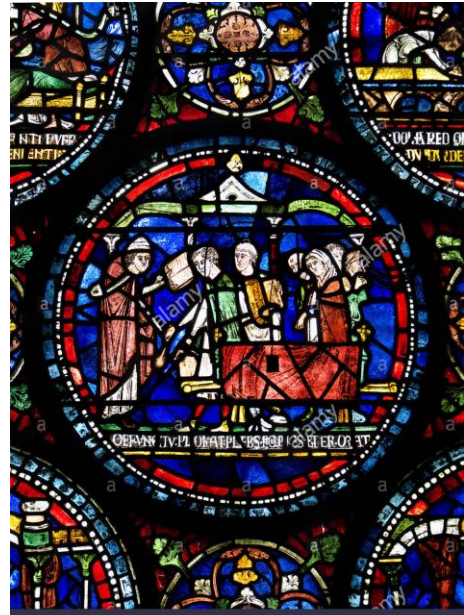
Normally, one of the priests of the Cathedral presides at the funeral Mass. There are exceptions, however; for instance, if the family of the deceased has a priest who is a relative or a very close friend, he might be asked to preside. Also, a deacon may preside at a funeral outside of the Mass.

Does the casket need to be present at the funeral?

If at all possible, the remains of the deceased should be present during the funeral Mass in order for the Church's full rites for the dead to be celebrated.

Does the Church permit cremation?

The Church does permit cremation although it does not accord it the same value as burial of the body. And even in the case when cremation is going to take place, the Church has a strong and clear preference for bringing the body of the deceased to the Church for the funeral and delaying the cremation until afterwards. The reason for this is set forth in the Church's Order for Christian



Funerals: "The Christian faithful are unequivocally confronted by the mystery of life and death when they are faced with the presence of the body of one who has died... The body was once washed in the waters of baptism, anointed with the oil of salvation, and fed with the Bread of life. The presence of the body brings forcefully to mind the Church's conviction that the human body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, destined for future glory at the resurrection of the dead."

If cremation takes place, are the cremated remains brought to the Church?

Yes, the cremated remains, enclosed in a worthy container or urn, are brought to the Church for the funeral. After the funeral, they are buried in the ground or entombed in a mausoleum or columbarium. The Church does not allow the practice of scattering cremated remains on the sea, from the air, or on the ground, or of keeping cremated remains in the home of a relative or friend of the deceased. Such practices do not properly honor the dignity of the human body.

What is a "memorial Mass"?

A "memorial Mass" is a funeral celebrated in those exceptional cases when it is not possible for the remains of the deceased, whether in a casket or an urn, to be present.

When may funerals take place at the Cathedral?

Most often, funerals take place on weekdays, usually in mid-morning or in early afternoon. They may also be celebrated on a Saturday morning if no wedding is scheduled. Funeral Masses may not be celebrated on Sunday.

How are funerals at the Cathedral scheduled?

Funerals are scheduled in consultation with the Pastor. As far as possible, the needs and wishes of the family are given first consideration, although the availability of the pastor and of the Cathedral must also be taken into account.

Does the family of the deceased participate in the funeral?

Members of the family are encouraged to participate actively in the funeral. There are a number of ways for them to be involved. Some family members usually meet with the one of the Cathedral priests to plan the funeral. Then, prior to the service, family members are present in the church to welcome friends to the celebration. They can also choose the pallbearers or even serve as pallbearers. They almost always place the funeral pall (a reminder of the white garment received at baptism) over the casket at the beginning of the liturgy. Family members can also proclaim the readings from the scriptures and present the gifts of bread and wine for the celebration of the Eucharist. In the case of a funeral when the cremated remains are present, a family member usually carries the urn in the procession.

Are funerals celebrated for people who are not Cathedral parishioners?

The long custom of the Catholic Church is for the deceased to be buried from his or her own parish church. Because of this, as a general rule, people whose funerals are celebrated at the Cathedral are parishioners or people who have had a long relationship with the Cathedral parish. Even if not officially registered, the person should have been involved in some way with the Cathedral community.

Are there policies regarding music for the funeral?

Yes. The music for the funeral is provided by Cathedral musicians. Music is chosen in consultation with one of the Cathedral priests (a list of appropriate music is provided).

Are eulogies ever permitted at funerals?

The priest or deacon who presides at the funeral will give a homily during the service. And while the homily differs from a eulogy, most homilists make the effort to speak in a personal way about the deceased and to relate the scripture readings to the life of the deceased. For this reason, and because many eulogies tend to be highly personal in nature and not in keeping with the prayerful nature of the funeral liturgy, the Church discourages the traditional funeral eulogy or suggests that, if one is to take place, it be given at the reception or even at the cemetery.

When does the burial take place?

When the body has been brought to the church, the burial usually takes place immediately after the funeral or, sometimes, after the reception. If cremation is to follow the funeral, the burial of the remains takes place some time later. The priest who presided at the funeral leads the graveside service with family members and friends in attendance.

What is the Cathedral's practice with regard to Vigil celebrations and Rosaries?

In some cases, families choose to have a vigil for the deceased during the time following death and before the funeral liturgy. The vigil may be celebrated in the home of the deceased or in the funeral home. It may also be celebrated in the church, although scheduling problems in the Cathedral frequently make this difficult if not impossible. Some families, because of the deceased member's devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary, choose to recite the rosary at this time. Usually one of the Cathedral deacons is present for the vigil service.

Does the Cathedral have space for a reception?

Yes. Reception space is usually available at the Cathedral in the Cathedral Hall (which accommodates about 300).