

GUIDELINES FOR THE FUNERAL LITURGY ASCENSION OF OUR LORD CATHOLIC CHURCH, LAPLACE

"The Resurrection of Jesus is the cornerstone of the Christian faith. Because of the hope of our resurrection, the Christian's experience of death and burial does not linger in sorrow and grief, but looks toward the bright promise of immortality." This quotation from the Archdiocesan Synod states the purpose of a Catholic funeral.

The Rite of Funerals provides a collection of prayers and rituals which help the bereaved focus on the hopeful nature of dying as the means of rising to new life.

VIGIL (WAKE) SERVICE

The vigil service consists of a Word service conducted by a priest or deacon or, if necessary, a lay person. On occasion the bereaved family asks that we recite a rosary. Since the vigil service often lasts several hours we suggest that a family member or friend recite the rosary at another time during the evening. This will enable mourners to participate in at least one of these moments of prayer.

FUNERAL LITURGY WITH MASS

The Funeral Mass or Mass of Christian Burial should take place in the church parish of the deceased. *"It was for this church edifice, a symbol of living stones, a sign of Christians' unity in Christ, that the departed have sacrificed to construct and labored to adorn befitting the Divine Presence: where they have worshipped their Lord in private and in community; have received the saving waters of Baptism, matured by the gift of the Spirit, heard proclaimed the 'Good News' of salvation, pledged themselves in the sight of God and the community to one another in married life, received healing through the words of forgiveness and the oil of Holy Anointing; and, finally though most importantly, as the ritual itself reminds the faithful, where they have been often fed at the table of the Lord with the bread of life. Should not such a sacred time as death call Christians again, for the last time on earth, into God's holy reunion on earth."* (Guidelines for Christian Burial).

We encourage parishioners to celebrate the funeral Mass at the church. We suggest that the body be brought to church for viewing (usually 9-11am) followed by the Mass at 11am. This will allow ample time for family and friends to come for a final viewing. After the viewing we will prepare the body for the funeral Mass. This procedure allows everyone to gather at one place for the entire service.

FUNERAL LITURGY WITHOUT MASS

For various reasons the family does not wish a Funeral Mass or they prefer a service in the funeral home. At Ascension of Our Lord we will accommodate these wishes. The Catholic Church provides only ONE Funeral Liturgy. However, this liturgy is celebrated either with or without a Mass. The family can arrange a Funeral Mass or have Mass said for the deceased at another time.

GRAVESIDE CEREMONY

Following the Mass or service the family will proceed to the burial site. The grave or tomb is blessed (if not already blessed) and the body is placed in the grave or tomb. Final prayers are offered for the deceased.

MAKING FUNERAL ARRANGEMENTS

The death of a loved one can cause tremendous emotional stress. At such a time some people find that they have trouble coping with arranging a funeral. We suggest that you follow these guidelines.

Contact the parish priest as soon as possible. He will help you during this trying time. He will work with the funeral home regarding dates and times for the services. Many people will start with the funeral home. Remember that while the funeral home can accommodate your wishes as to the dates and times for services, the priest may face a conflict with other funerals.

CREMATION

The Church permits cremation. However, the *cremains* (ashes) must be treated as we would a body. Cremains cannot be scattered, kept on a mantle or stored away. Rather the cremains should be interred in a dignified burial site.

FUNERAL COSTS

The funeral director will work with you regarding the costs of the funeral. Most funeral homes charge the same amount for the use of their chapel as they do for going to the church.

As far as the use of Ascension of Our Lord Church building we do not ask for or charge any amount of money. Most people will make a free will donation at the end of the service. This money goes to the support of the parish. The family does cover the cost of musicians. We ask that that give the two altar servers a small stipend.

PRE-PAID FUNERALS

Don't be confused about the costs of coming to church. Most pre-arranged funerals allow for the funeral to take place at the church without any additional cost.