

Helpful Planning Information

The Vigil

The Vigil for the deceased is the principal rite celebrated by the Christian community in the time following death and before the funeral liturgy. The Vigil may be celebrated in the funeral home or in the church, depending on the number of friends and family in attendance. At the Vigil, the Christian community keeps watch with the family in prayer to the God of mercy and finds strength in His presence. In this time of loss, the family and the community turn to God's Word as the source of faith and hope, as light and life in the face of darkness and death. Consisting primarily of a reading from the Old Testament, a responsorial psalm, a reading from the Gospel, and a short homily by the priest, the Vigil is a wonderful time for friends and family to gather together to pray for their loved one. In addition to the Vigil service the five decade rosary or part of the rosary may also be included in this rite. The Vigil is the appropriate time for family and friends to offer words of remembrance, poems or eulogies in memory of the deceased since it allows for more time and, in general, it is a more relaxed atmosphere than the funeral Mass.

The Funeral Mass

When one of its members dies, the Church encourages the celebration of the Mass. In the proclamation of the Scriptures, the saving word of God through the power of the Spirit becomes living and active in the minds and hearts of the faithful. Having been strengthened at the table of God's word, the community then turns to the Eucharist, which is a living sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving. Communion nourishes the community and expresses its unity. In communion, the participants have a foretaste of the heavenly banquet that awaits them and are reminded of Christ's own words: "Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood shall live forever" (John 6:55). In contrast to the Vigil service, which is a time of reflection and waiting for the Lord, the funeral Mass is a time when the community focuses intensely on the Resurrection. For this reason, eulogies about the person are never allowed at the mass.

Regarding the Liturgy

- The priest will give you and your family the opportunity to choose the Scripture readings for the Mass if you would like or you may defer to his competence in this area.
- Members of your family or friends who are Catholic may read from the Scriptures at the funeral Mass. It is preferred to have those who are already exercising the ministry of Reader in their Catholic Church, or who are skilled in the art of public speaking. Members of other religions or denominations, Christian or otherwise, are not permitted to proclaim the Scriptures at the Mass.
- You are welcome to choose people to place the pall on the casket at the beginning of Mass and to bring up the gifts of bread and wine at the offertory.
- Music is a very important part of the funeral Mass. When making selections, one should keep in mind that the focus at the Mass is on Christ, His Resurrection and our prayers for the deceased. For this reason, secular music and recorded music are never allowed at the Mass. Please feel free to include such music as part of the Vigil service.

Some Helpful Hints

- We would encourage you to contact the mortuary concerning any video or slideshow needs, as they normally will provide these services outside the Funeral Mass.
- Have someone "house sit" during the Vigil and funeral Mass. (Your immediate home and those of other family members whose names have been printed in the newspaper since the information is public.)
- Have someone greet those coming to your home after the death has been made public.
- Ask someone to organize the food that is brought to your home, keeping a record of food and donor. You may receive requests for donations/memorials from various organizations. If you are not familiar with these organizations, it would be wise to check their validity.