END OF LIFE PLANNING

SUGGESTIONS FOR THE FUNERAL AND BURIAL OF:

Name: _______________________________________

Today’s Date: _________________________________

INTRODUCTION

Preparing for and anticipating events is a thoughtful approach to important parts of our life journey. We can't foresee all eventualities but we can discuss aspects of our own death and plan arrangements before it occurs.

There are some important decisions you can make about your funeral and burial to ease the burden on family and friends who will grieve your death. Preparation now may lessen the anxiety and pressures relatives may face when you die. The following outline can give you some basic information and start the process of recording wishes, and can be the framework when having conversations with loved ones. If you need assistance as you explore this topic please tap our parish staff person coordinating funerals and our bereavement services.

Janet Schirripa jschirripa@saintraphael.org or 919-865-5704 will be your companion through this process. The following phone number can be used at the time of death or when it is imminent: 919-865-5712. This number is monitored evenings and weekends.

I. THE CATHOLIC FUNERAL

The Catholic Church provides prayer and rituals for every moment of our final journey of the passing of life into everlasting life. The local priest has the ritual book with each component of the rite called “The Order of Christian Funerals.” Besides the ritual and texts for the Order of Christian Funerals there are lists of readings, psalms, and music to consider as you develop your plan.

A. Prayers right after death
B. Gathering in the Presence of the Body with the family and friends
C. Vigil of Prayer for the Deceased
D. The Funeral Mass (or Funeral Liturgy Outside Mass)
E. Rite of Committal

A. Prayers after death

Immediately after the death of a Catholic, there is a prescribed ritual of prayers offered. A priest or deacon (in their absence, a lay person) leads the prayers. These prayers occur with at least one other person present, although more family members may be present. You may ask your family – in advance - to be ready to contact a priest, deacon, or parish lay leader if they are aware that you are very near death. The leader will bring the rite and keep the final minutes of vigil with the family. When one passes away, the leader begins the prayer at an appropriate time. This rite can be used as a quiet and prayerful response to the death.

B. Gathering in the Presence of the Body

This part of the rite structures prayer for the family as they first gather in the presence of the body. The immediate family may invite other relatives and friends – who might be on site – to come into the room and pray with them. The leader with the rite will lead the ritual and prayer.

C. The Wake Service - A Vigil of Prayer

The purpose of the wake is to make it possible for others to share the family's sorrow, to lend them support, and to pray for the departed one. It is a time for family and friends to tell stories, to pray and offer farewell. The family and the community is encouraged
to stay awake, keep vigil, to pray and reflect near the body after death and before burial. The time is reserved to reverence the body created by God and redeemed by Christ.

The Catholic ritual for funerals suggests a flexible vigil service of readings, psalms, and prayers that Christians of all faith can join in. This service can be modeled on the Liturgy of the Hours. The Church now encourages this format as the main service of prayer for the vigil. It is also a perfect time to offer personal reflections and eulogies. A wake or vigil is most often the night before the funeral, often at a funeral home or at the family home. Various cultures may have additional vigil traditions that cover several days.

At St. Raphael we offer families an hour long visitation period prior to the funeral. This is held in the atrium and offers an informal time for family and friends to gather, offer condolences and share memories in a conversational format. The casket or cremains are present during this time. Often families opt to use this visitation time in place of a wake/vigil gathering.

I request my wake/vigil to be held:
- at home, or ___________________________________________ (address)
- at the funeral home ___________________________ (name of funeral home)

I’d like the family to have a visitation period in the atrium directly preceding the funeral. __________

D. The Funeral Mass

Christians believe that death is not an end, but a beginning. A loved one has passed through death from this present, temporary life, to a perfect, permanent eternal life in Christ. The funeral Mass expresses this faith in Jesus' victory over death and our personal share in that resurrection. It does so through prayers and blessings, songs and readings, and ceremonies and symbols. A Catholic funeral occurs in the home parish of the deceased where relatives and friends may gather to remember his or her life in faith among them. Ideally, the body is brought to the church and rests near the baptismal font where he or she began the life of faith. Cremation is also permitted. Funerals at St. Raphael may take place in our main sanctuary or our smaller chapel which seats approximately 120.

Color White. We normally associate the color white with Easter, weddings, baptisms, events of joy and happiness and victory. We may grieve the loss of a loved one but we also joyfully celebrate his or her entrance through death into eternal life. Due to this joyful faith in redemption, the priest will wear white vestments and the Christian believers often wear white.

Scripture Readings. There are nearly fifty scriptural readings to consider. It is easier to choose scripture when the planner chooses the gospel reading first, then the Old Testament reading, the New Testament reading, and then the psalm. Next, select music that reflects the text of the gospel and other readings.

Music. Music affects emotions and shapes the atmosphere in which we pray. It can express inner thoughts. The texts of hymns and songs for the Catholic funeral express Christian hope and joy. Easter music is appropriate because the texts speak of the Lord's joyful resurrection and victory over death. You may access a listing of suggested music on the Funerals web page of the parish website http://www.saintraphael.org/worship/funerals/ Secular music would be appropriate at a vigil or other gathering, not within the liturgy of the Mass.

The Easter Candle. The large Paschal Candle symbolizes the Risen Christ and reminds us he is the Light of the world because he has conquered sin and death and now lives in our midst. In the funeral liturgy, we carry this candle in procession or place it before the casket as a reminder that the deceased now shares in the victory of Jesus over the powers of darkness. There is no darkness for the believer – only eternal light.

Sprinkling. We share in the resurrection of the Lord because of baptism. In baptism, saving waters poured over our body washed us free of the permanent effect of sin. This washing in the baptismal waters made us Children of God. In the funeral liturgy, the priest sprinkles holy water over the casket to recall this initial washing in baptism. The faith of believers gives hope that the loved one will rise to new life in Christ forever.

Incense. As Christians, we believe the body is a holy creation of God that will rise up again by God’s power. The priest incenses the body at the end of the Mass as a sign that we give our loved one back to God (commendation). The sweet smell of the rising incense signifies that we offer him or her to God our Father a final time.

Holy Communion. The Church encourages all Catholics to share in the Eucharist at the funeral Mass. Jesus told us that the one who "... feeds on my flesh and drinks my blood has life eternal, and I will raise him up on the last day." (John 6:55) Holy Communion helps us to remember sharing the Body and Blood of Jesus with the deceased during his or her life and sharing in the Catholic faith in prayer and action. A Funeral Liturgy Outside of the Mass is what the church calls a funeral without the Liturgy of the Eucharist (communion). This may be an option if the family has members with other faith traditions.
Time of the funeral. The funeral Mass may be celebrated in the morning or the afternoon depending upon the availability of family and friends to gather, clergy and parish logistical resources. Weekend services are very rare as Saturdays are typically booked ahead with weddings, baptisms and parish events in addition to three Masses and Reconciliation. Funerals do not happen on Sundays or Holy Days.

Remarks of Remembrance. This is an opportunity toward the end of our funeral liturgy at St. Raphael when an individual may share the poignant lesson or legacy of the individual. This is three to five minutes in length and is a prepared presentation by one individual. It is not a eulogy which covers the arch of one’s life, rather a powerful memory, conveying the core legacy the loved one has left to the family and friends.

Transfer of the body to the place of committal. The ritual at the end of Mass and at the cemetery helps the community to express farewell and commend the deceased to God. The comfort of faith tells us, however, that we will all see each other again on the last day. Family may choose to use a cemetery, commit the cremains to the sea (not sprinkled) or use the Columbarium here at the parish. You may access information about the Columbarium on our website http://www.saintraphael.org/worship/funerals/columbarium/ Catholic teaching with respect to the sanctity of life, the honor we afford to the unique creation of this individual and the reverence we hold for the body of the deceased means we plan for a respectful final resting place with the cremains kept together.

E. Following the funeral Mass

Families often gather following the funeral; it is an emotionally exhausting time, often with loved ones present who live far away. A reception or gathering may make sense for your family. The options include something at your home or that of a friend or family member, at a local restaurant or perhaps here at the parish. Depending on availability of space and volunteers, the parish may be able to offer the Lewis Room for an hour directly following a funeral. Volunteers will set up, host and clean up and provide the beverages. Refreshments may be catered at family expense. We can assist family members in the arrangements if needed.

F. Bereavement Services

Compassionate Care is what St. Raphael Parish calls our bereavement services. We have a multifaceted program of services to respond to the needs of our families following the death of a loved one. The deceased need not be a parishioner, or even local. Please access the web page on the parish website http://www.saintraphael.org/social-action/compassionate-care-ministry/ for an up to date listing of support group, workshops, memorial gatherings and supportive materials. Direct questions to Janet Schirripa jschirripa@saintraphael.org or 919-865-5704

II. INFORMATION FOR THE TIME OF MY DEATH

In the spirit of the Risen Lord and with hopeful expectation of the fullness of life after death, I peacefully compiled this file for your use. This information may help to make final arrangements.

☐ The following person/persons may implement the attached guidelines as fully as possible. The following may make decisions and adjustments concerning my funeral and burial.

Name ____________________________________________________________

Name ____________________________________________________________

☐ A copy of my last will and testament are located: ______________________________________________________________

☐ Veterans Records:

Identification Number: ____________________________________________

VA office to notify: ______________________________________________

Location of discharge papers: ______________________________________

☐ Social Security number: ________________________________________

☐ Pension benefits from employer and person to be notified: ________________________________

☐ Insurance policies: ________________________________________________
Safety deposit box: __________________________________________
Key location: ________________________________________________
Bankbooks and certificates: ______________________________________
Digital information: websites / passwords are located
______________________________________________________________
Other important documents: ______________________________________
To administer my estate I have appointed: ________________________________
My attorney is: __________________________________________________
In case my spouse and I should die at the same time: ________________________________
______________________________________________________________
has consented to act as guardian of the children.
The funeral home that will pick up and prepare my body is: ______________
______________________________________________________________
Final disposition: ______ burial ______ cremation ______ organ donation
Type of casket: __________________________________________________
Designate location of burial plot, cemetery, columbarium, place of donation or other institutions: ______
______________________________________________________________

AT THE TIME OF DEATH, PLEASE NOTIFY

Name _________________________________________________________
Address ___________________________ Telephone ______________________

Name _________________________________________________________
Address ___________________________ Telephone ______________________

Name _________________________________________________________
Address ___________________________ Telephone ______________________

Name _________________________________________________________
Address ___________________________ Telephone ______________________

III. OBITUARY NOTES

Obituaries sent to the following publications: ________________________________
Full Name: _________________________________________________________
Birth date: ____________________________
Birthplace: __________________________

Name of relatives to be noted: ____________________________

Other important dates: (e.g. marriage, education): ____________________________

Information about work: ____________________________

Information about special interests: ____________________________

Organizations and Churches: ____________________________

Memorial gifts may be sent to: ____________________________