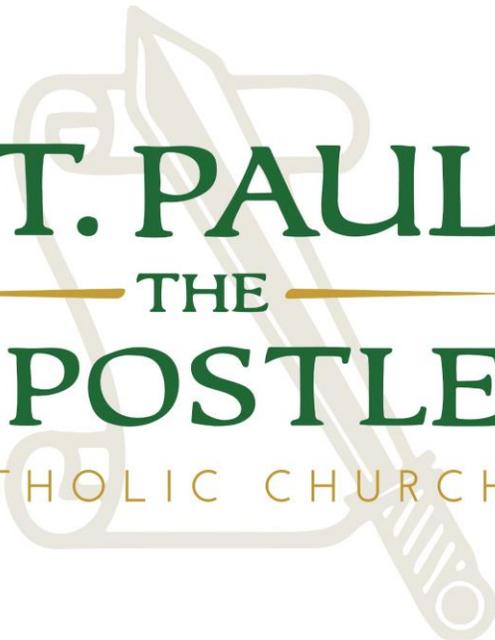


*Parish Guidelines for the Celebration of*  
**THE ORDER OF CHRISTIAN FUNERALS**



**ST. PAUL**  
— THE —  
**APOSTLE**  
CATHOLIC CHURCH

125 S SPRUCE STREET • ANNVILLE, PENNSYLVANIA

*In the face of death, the Church confidently proclaims that God has created each person for eternal life and that Jesus, the Son of God, by His death and resurrection has broken the chains of sin and death that bound humanity. Christ “achieved His task of redeeming humanity and giving perfect glory to God, principally by the Paschal Mystery of His blessed passion, resurrection from the dead and glorious ascension.”*

*- Second Vatican Council, Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy*

*The celebration of the Christian funeral brings hope and consolation to the living. While proclaiming the Gospel of Jesus Christ and witnessing to Christian hope in the resurrection, the funeral rites also recall to all who take part in them God’s mercy and judgment and meet the human need to turn always to God in times of crisis.*

*- General Introduction, Order of Christian Funerals*

## **THE ORDER OF CHRISTIAN FUNERALS**

The *Order of Christian Funerals* is the official liturgical book of the Roman Catholic Church (Latin Rite). It guides the prayer and rituals that follow death and accompany burial. The *Order* provides for three principal rites for baptized Catholics. These are the *Vigil*, the *Funeral Liturgy* and the *Rite of Committal*.

### **THE VIGIL**

This service is often the first gathering of the faithful and friends with the family of the deceased. It also provides an opportunity for those who cannot attend the Funeral Mass, because of work or other reasons, to pay their respect to the deceased and personally offer their condolences to the family.

At the Vigil Service, usually conducted in the funeral home on the eve of the Funeral Mass, the faithful keep watch with the family in prayer to the God of Mercy and find strength in Christ's presence. In this time of loss the family and community turn to God's Word as the source of faith and hope. Consoled by the abiding presence of Christ and his Spirit, the assembly calls upon the Father of Mercy to receive the deceased into the kingdom of light and peace.

### **THE FUNERAL MASS**

The Funeral Mass is the central liturgical celebration of the Christian community for the deceased. Here, the community gathers with the family and friends of the deceased to give praise and thanks to God for Christ's victory over sin and death, to commend the deceased to God's tender mercy and compassion, and to seek strength in the proclamation of the Paschal Mystery. Through the Holy Spirit, the community is joined together in faith as one Body in Christ to reaffirm in sign and symbol, word and gesture that each believer through baptism shares in Christ's death and resurrection and can look to the day when all the faithful will be raised up and united in the kingdom of light and peace.

### **THE RITE OF COMMITTAL**

The Rite of Committal is the final act of the community of faith in caring for the body of its deceased member. In committing the body to its resting place, the community expresses the hope that, with all those who have gone before us marked with the sign of faith, the deceased awaits the glory of the Resurrection.

### **FAMILY PARTICIPATION IN THE FUNERAL LITURGY**

Funerals at Saint Paul the Apostle Church are planned and celebrated so that the family members of the deceased have the opportunity to feel the consoling and healing presence of God in their lives. We are celebrating that life for the deceased has changed, not ended.

Prior to the funeral, families are invited to attend a meeting with the Parish Bereavement Team, which includes the priest celebrating the Funeral Mass, the Parish Bereavement Coordinator, and the Director of Music. During this time of prayer and remembrance, the family is encouraged to help choose appropriate Scripture readings and sacred music for the Liturgy; and if desired, to select family members or friends who may wish to take an active role in the Liturgy as a reader and/or by bringing the bread and wine to the altar. Family members may also place the funeral pall (*white cloth*) on the casket prior to entering the church.

### **VIEWINGS /VISITATIONS AT CHURCH**

If a family wishes to have a viewing or visitation at the church prior to the Funeral Mass, a place is set aside in the narthex. This chapel area is located off the narthex of the Church and provides a dignified setting for families to receive friends and relatives and be with their loved one before the Funeral Mass.

### **THE LITURGY OF THE WORD**

The Liturgy of the Word is one of the principal parts of the Funeral Mass. It includes one or two Scripture texts in addition to a sung Responsorial Psalm, a sung Gospel Acclamation, and the Gospel itself. Only selections from Sacred Scripture may be used.

There are several Scripture reading options for the Funeral Mass. The Bereavement Team will assist the family in selecting those that are most appropriate. It is expected that the readings will be proclaimed directly from the Lectionary for Mass. The Liturgy of the Word also includes the Universal Prayer (the General Intercessions/Petitions).

### **SACRED MUSIC**

The music at a Funeral Mass is chosen to bring solace and consolation to those who mourn the loss of a loved one, and to reflect our Catholic belief in the Resurrection of the Dead through the grace of Baptism. Therefore, music that is selected must fulfill this purpose and be appropriate to the liturgical action taking place. The Director of Music will guide the family in choosing appropriate hymns during the planning meeting.

Music of a secular nature is not appropriate for the Mass. Such music would be appropriate (even played electronically) during the visitation at the Funeral Home or during a post-funeral luncheon. Occasionally, a member or friend of the family wishes to sing or play a musical instrument at the Funeral Mass. The Director of Music will coordinate this participation with them.

### **PRINTED BOOKLET/PROGRAM**

Saint Paul the Apostle Church will provide printed programs/worship aids that contain the Order of the Mass, reading citations, responses, and hymn lyrics to assist the families and attendees in actively participating in the Mass.

### **HOLY COMMUNION**

Catholics believe that the Eucharist is the true Body and Blood of Jesus Christ and that our sharing in the Eucharist is the sign of our oneness and unity in the Catholic Church.

At a Funeral Mass there may be a number of non-Catholics or Catholics who no longer practice their faith. While they may not receive the Blessed Sacrament, they are invited to join with us in prayer and song as those Catholics prepared to receive Holy Communion approach the altar. This direction is always printed in the funeral program.

At his own discretion, the priest celebrant may also wish to make a verbal announcement about the guidelines for the reception of Holy Communion. This is not to be insensitive or exclusive, but to be sure that there is no confusion among those who attend.

### **CREMATION AND THE FUNERAL RITES**

While the Church continues to hold a preference for corporeal burial, cremation has become part of Catholic practice in the United States and around the world. The Church's reverence and care for the body grows out of a reverence and concern for the person whom the Church now commends to the care of God. This is the body once washed in Baptism, anointed with the oil of salvation, and fed with the Bread of Life. There are specific Church laws regarding cremation that must be observed.

### **WORDS OF REMEMBRANCE**

Occasionally a member of the family will request the opportunity to offer *Words of Remembrance* on behalf of the deceased. Our parish strongly recommends that *Words of Remembrance* are most appropriately and effectively delivered at the time of the Vigil Service or at the post-funeral luncheon, not during the Funeral Mass. Remembrances offered at this time allow a more casual reflection of their loved one.

If the family decides to have the *Words of Remembrance* shared at the Funeral Mass, they are offered following the *Prayer After Communion* and before the *Final Commendation and Farewell*. The following guidelines are to be followed:

- Only one speaker may offer *Words of Remembrance*.
- The speaker should begin by introducing him/herself and give his/her name and relationship to the deceased.
- The text should focus on the way the deceased was faithful to his/her baptismal call to love God and neighbor.
  - The speaker's remarks should be no more than five minutes.
- Speaking extemporaneously during such an emotional time is difficult. Therefore, we request that the text be no more than two standard typed, double-spaced pages.
- The *Words of Remembrance* should not attempt to detail life accomplishments or give a complete biography of the deceased. As is the case with the entire Funeral Liturgy, it is a time to emphasize Faith.
  - The speaker must remember that he/she is in a sacred space and speaking during a sacred time. Therefore, the language used and images chosen for the *Words of Remembrance* must be appropriate for the house of God.

It is most important that the above guidelines be followed to maintain the dignity and reverence for the sacred liturgy, as well as respect for the one whose funeral mass is being celebrated.

### **POST -FUNERAL LUNCHEON**

The Parish Hall, when available, may be used for post-funeral luncheons. This facility is located next to the church. It can seat as many as 150 people. Arimathean luncheon services are available when the deceased was a registered member of the parish. Arrangements are made through the parish office.

### **BEREAVEMENT CARE**

The parish clergy and staff are always available to offer pastoral care and spiritual support. Within a few weeks of the funeral the Parish Bereavement Coordinator will be in touch with the family to see how they are doing and offer additional assistance if needed. The parish has media resources and materials that are also available for families to help them during their time of grief.