

## HIGHLIGHTED POINTS from THE DIOCESAN GUIDELINES for FUNERAL and VIGIL SERVICES

### Music

“Music is integral to the funeral rites. It allows the community to express convictions and feelings that words alone may fail to convey. It has the power to console and uplift the mourners and to strengthen the unity of the assembly in faith and love. The texts of the songs chosen for a particular celebration should express the paschal mystery of the Lord’s suffering, death, and triumph over death and should be related to the readings from Scripture.” (Order of Christian Funerals - OCF #30)

1. Music should be provided for the vigil and funeral liturgy and, whenever possible, for the funeral processions and the rite of committal. The specific notes that precede each of these rites suggest places in the rites where music is appropriate. (OCF #32)
2. Secular music (live or recorded) is not appropriate during funeral liturgies.
3. “An organist or other instrumentalist, a cantor, and, whenever possible, even a choir should assist the assembly’s full participation in singing the songs, responses, and acclamations of these rites.” (OCF #33)

### d. Silence

“Prayerful silence is an element important to the celebration of the funeral rites. Intervals of silence should be observed, for example, after each reading and during the final commendation and farewell, to permit the assembly to reflect upon the word of God and the meaning of the celebration.” (OCF #34)

### The Vigil Service

Policy: When priests or deacons are unavailable to preside at the vigil, lay ministers or any fully-initiated Catholic who has been properly prepared may appropriately preside. (OCF 14)

### Guidelines:

1. During the time between death and the funeral liturgy (a time also commonly referred to as ‘the wake’) the Vigil Service is the public norm and should not be replaced by other forms of prayer. ‘It may take the form either of a Liturgy of the Word (nos. 69-81, 82-97 OCF ) or of some part of the Office for the Dead ( see Part IV, p. 296 OCF). Two vigil services are provided: “Vigil for the Deceased” and “Vigil for the Deceased with Reception at the Church”. The second is used when the vigil is celebrated in the church and begins with the reception of the body. (OCF 54)

The vigil may be celebrated in the home of the deceased, in the church, in the funeral home, parlor or chapel of rest, or in some other suitable place. (OCF 55)

The Vigil Service is focused on the Word of God and common prayer. During the Vigil Service family member(s) or friend(s) may speak in memory of the deceased. (OCF 62)

2. Appropriate Sacred Music should be part of the Vigil Service. Preference should be given to the singing of the opening song and responsorial psalm. The litany, the Lords Prayer and a closing song may also be sung. (OCF 68)

☒ When the vigil service is held in a location where there is no musical instrument available, pre-recorded music can be used to support the singing of the assembly, or 'a cappella' singing is also appropriate.

3. Customs associated with fraternal or military or ethnic traditions may be considered within the context of the 'wake period' as effective preludes to the Vigil Service itself. Other additional forms of Catholic devotional prayer, such as the Rosary, are permitted at another time during the wake. However, if the Rosary is still a popular devotion, there could be a place for reciting a "Hail Mary" in the prayers of intercession at the Vigil Service.

## The Funeral Liturgy

Policy: When one of its members dies, the church especially encourages the celebration of the Mass (OCF 46).

### Guidelines:

1. Only an ordained priest or deacon is allowed to preach the homily at the funeral liturgy. 'The homilist should dwell on God's compassionate love and on the Paschal Mystery of the Lord.' (OCF 141). A eulogy is never appropriate where a homily is prescribed (OCF 27), but examples from the person's life may be used in the homily.

2. One other person, a family member or friend of the deceased, may speak briefly before the Final Commendation begins. (OCF 170) Anyone who speaks at the Funeral Liturgy needs to be instructed beforehand by the presider or minister of consolation regarding the local Diocesan and Parish Policies on Eulogies. Video retrospectives on the life of the deceased have become a more common way to share memories. This is not permitted during the liturgy in the church. These presentations are more suitable for the reception or other occasions.

## Diocese of Sacramento Guidelines for Eulogies

The person who gives a eulogy at a Vigil Service or Funeral Mass needs to be someone who can speak for the family of the deceased without being overcome by grief and who states a willingness to cooperate with the local diocesan and/or parish guidelines.

### Content of Eulogies

Statements about the deceased should speak to the deceased person's relationship to God/family/community; tell of the Christian legacy left behind for others to learn from; help others put this person's life into the broader context of our Christian faith. Statements and

memories about the deceased should be sensitive to and helpful to the family and friends in their time of loss, by giving them comfort in their grief. Video retrospectives on the life of the deceased have become a more common way to share memories. Such media retrospectives are not permitted during the liturgy in the church. These presentations are more suited to the reception or other occasions.

#### Number and Length of Eulogies

During the Vigil Service- The number of people giving eulogies or telling stories about the deceased at the vigil service is not prescribed, but can be left to the discretion of those planning the rites. OCF recommends this take place following the Concluding Prayer and before the Concluding Rite, on page 43. An “open mic” format is not appropriate during any of the funeral rites

During the Funeral Liturgy – Normally, the number of eulogies to be given before the Final Commendation at the Funeral Liturgy should be limited to one person. (OCF #170 says...“A member or a friend of the family may speak in remembrance of the deceased before the Final Commendation begins.”)

Eulogies should last between 3-5 minutes and it is best if the speaker has notes prepared in writing ahead of time and has timed their remarks ahead of time. Sharing of additional stories about the deceased may continue in an “open mic” style during the reception following the liturgy.