

St Paul Parish, Princeton, New Jersey

Guidance for Those Preparing "Words of Remembrance" to be spoken at a Catholic Funeral Liturgy

To the Family Member or Friend who will be offering words on the life of the deceased:

Please accept the condolences of our parish as you mourn the passing of your loved one. In asking you to "Speak in Remembrance," you have been entrusted with a sacred task.

To help you prepare and deliver your remarks please understand:

- To "Speak in Remembrance" means to give a brief reflection of three to five minutes on the life of the deceased in the context of his or her life of faith. This revolves around God's presence and action in the life of the deceased and how his or her life bore witness to the Gospel of Jesus Christ.
- In the Church, words of remembrance are not the same as a secular "eulogy," which is a reminiscing and toasting of the life of the departed outside the context of faith; that is more appropriately done at a gathering outside of the church service.
- In preparing words of remembrance, it might be helpful to consider how the deceased most resembled Christ in his or her relationship with others (family, friends, co-workers, strangers); how his or her life reflected Christian virtues (faith, hope, love); and how his or her life demonstrated trust in our Heavenly Father. Consider not only the person's life, but also the hope we have of being united again in God's kingdom.
- A brief story or example might be a helpful means to illustrate a particular point, keeping in mind the spoken remembrance should not evolve into story telling.
- It is important to be at ease. The remembrance is generally given near the end of the liturgy and the celebrant will introduce you and let you know when to come forward.

Additional Guidelines:

- While only one person will speak at the funeral mass, the reflection could well be a summation of remembrances gathered from family members and friends.
- At no time is it acceptable to use inappropriate language, or to engage in actions that would not ordinarily take place during the sacred liturgy.
- The remarks should be put on paper. A five-minute reflection is the basic equivalent of a single typed page, double spaced. Rehearsing your remarks beforehand will help you to prepare and deliver the reflection more confidently.
- At any point in developing the remembrance, feel free to bring any questions to the bereavement minister who is assisting you with the funeral preparation.
- Speaking Words of Remembrance can be extremely emotional. Please be honest with yourself as to how you will react while speaking at the funeral liturgy, looking out over the casket, as well as all the people present. If you think that your emotions may hinder your ability to speak, it is perfectly all right to respectfully decline the request, informing the person who made the request as soon as possible.