

**THE CATHEDRAL OF OUR LADY OF VICTORY**  
**GUIDELINES FOR CHRISTIAN FUNERALS**

**INTRODUCTION:** The Catholic funeral rites celebrate the mystery of our life, death and resurrection in Christ. Through Baptism, we enter into this mystery. We live our lives in the hope of sharing eternal life with God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit when we complete our passage through death. For Christians, death in Christ results in life in greater abundance. This new life, like a seed, was planted in us at Baptism, flowered during our lifetime, and at death yields a rich harvest. Faith in this mystery should motivate people arranging the funeral of a loved one. With this in mind, and praying with you in this time of grief, we present to you the funeral guidelines for our parish. We stand ready to assist you, in this difficult time.

**A QUICK LOOK AT THE NECESSARY STEPS:** When a funeral is requested, provided below is a quick look at the necessary steps to be followed:

- Contact a funeral home of choice.
- The funeral home will contact the parish to establish a day and time for the Funeral Mass.
- The family will meet with a member of the Parish Bereavement Committee to plan the details for the funeral.

**PLANNING THE FUNERAL SERVICES/WHO CAN BE BURIED WITH A FUNERAL MASS:** The Cathedral of Our Lady of Victory Parish provides funeral services for current or former parishioners and their relatives. The priests on staff will determine other requests, for those having no parish connection. Catholic burial, including Mass, is permitted for a baptized non-Catholic who might reasonably be presumed to desire or prefer Catholic burial services. Such a decision would be appropriate if the spouse of the deceased is Catholic, the non-Catholic party worshiped regularly at the Catholic Church or the deceased identified with the Catholic Church more than any other. It would not be appropriate if the deceased were an active member of a non-Catholic Christian Church, except in cases where the minister of the deceased was unavailable. (Canon 1183.3 of the *Code of Canon Law*).

**FUNERAL MASS/SERVICE TIMES:** The Funeral Mass is the primary service, customarily celebrated in the morning, reflecting the theme of resurrection. Procession to the cemetery and burial usually follows the Mass. Funeral arrangements begin with a meeting with the funeral director. Next, the parish is contacted by the funeral home, where the parish secretary will confirm the time for the funeral Mass and will contact the family to discuss the details of the Funeral Mass. At The Cathedral of Our Lady of Victory, we schedule funerals at 10:00 a.m. or 2:00 p.m., depending on the availability of the church. If another time is necessary, accommodations may be arranged.

**VIEWING OF THE BODY:** This is left to the discretion of the family or the personal wishes of the deceased. If viewing of the body is desired, it is permitted in the narthex of the church, one hour prior to the beginning of the Funeral Mass.

**VIGIL SERVICE/ROSARY AT THE FUNERAL HOME:** This is an opportunity to gather in pray, to read Scripture, pray the rosary, sing or play the favorite music of the deceased and to celebrate the life of the deceased. Someone from the parish will be available, if the family so requests, to lead the Vigil Service/Rosary.

**CREMATION:** Through the centuries, the Church has followed the practice of burial or entombment, after the manner of Christ's own burial. This burial expresses respect for the human body, as a member of Christ, and faith in the resurrection of the body. *"The Church earnestly recommends that the pious custom of burial be retained; but it does not forbid cremation, unless this is chosen for reasons which are contrary to Christian teaching" (canon 1176, § 3).* The priest celebrating the Funeral Mass must verify the proper motivation and determine that those arranging for the funeral have made satisfactory provision for the cremated remains, preferably in a Catholic cemetery. When these required conditions are met, the various elements of the Catholic funeral rite are conducted in the usual way. The body of the deceased should be present for the Funeral Mass. The respect that the Church has for the bodies of the deceased should also be evident in the way cremated remains are treated before burial.

Although ordinarily the body is present for the funeral, there may be occasions when it is permitted to celebrate the funeral liturgy, including the Eucharist, in the presence of the ashes of the deceased. In this case, the cremated remains are to be placed on a small table covered with a white cloth in the sanctuary. The paschal candle and holy water are used; the alternative form of the dismissal is utilized. Cremated remains should never be scattered. Placed in a worthy container, they should be buried in a grave or inurned in a columbarium niche, preferably in a Catholic cemetery. Please see the attached policy of the Diocese of Victoria, regarding cremation.

**FLOWERS:** Flowers are permitted for the Funeral Mass. Funeral Directors are to remove the flowers, at the conclusion of the Mass.

**PHOTOGRAPHS AND MEMORABILIA:** Memorial displays are encouraged at the wake at the funeral home. If some images are to be used in church, the display is to be kept simple and placed in the narthex of the church.

**MUSIC:** Hymns at the funeral Mass are to reflect the theology of resurrection and hope. The Parish Director of Music provides this service. The family may select appropriate hymns from the list provided or ask the Music Director to do so. The entrance hymn, communion hymn and recessional hymn are music that the congregation is encouraged to sing, as well as the usual service music and responses. Guest musicians/soloists must work through the Director of Music, [olvmusic@olvcathedral.org](mailto:olvmusic@olvcathedral.org). The use of recorded music in the liturgy is not permitted.

**READINGS:** The funeral planner will assist in the selection of scriptural readings. One reading is from the Old Testament and the other one is from the New Testament. During the Easter season, both readings are selected from the New Testament. The gospel reading is the choice of the celebrant, while the Director of Music selects the Responsorial Psalm. Non-scriptural readings are not permitted at Mass. During this

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emotional time, it is often difficult for immediate family members to proclaim the readings at the Funeral Mass. If the family cannot provide a trained, commissioned lector who is currently active in his/her parish, the Parish will provide a lector.

**CHRISTIAN SYMBOLS:** The casket itself, though a center of reverence, is not the focus of attention at the Funeral Mass. Rather, the focus is our hope of sharing eternal life and resurrection, promised at Baptism. During the entrance blessing, the casket is covered with a white cloth, a pall, as a reminder of the white garment used at Baptism. The Easter Candle, another symbol of Baptism, will stand ahead of the casket. Normally, immediate family members place the funeral pall on the casket, though this can be done by the pall bearers, funeral home personnel or others. The American flag, a symbol of military service, never covers the casket in church during the Mass. It can be placed on the casket before and after the Funeral Mass. Family members or the priest place a crucifix and a bible on the casket, prior to the opening prayer.

**PRESENTATION OF GIFTS:** Family members or friends are encouraged to bring the gifts of bread and wine forward, as a symbolic way of offering their loved one to God. No other items may be included in the Presentation of the Gifts.

**EULOGY:** The eulogy is not part of the Funeral Mass. Eulogies by family members or friends are encouraged at the Vigil Service.

**RITE OF COMMITTAL AT THE CEMETERY:** The rite of committal is an expression of the communion that exists between the Church on earth and the Church in heaven. Since the Rite of Committal is a continuation of the Funeral Mass, the priest or deacon begins this portion of the liturgy as soon as the family and friends of the deceased have assembled at the cemetery. When concluded, military services, reflections from family members or friends, music, etc. is permitted.

**RECEPTION:** The Cathedral of Our Lady of Victory Parish provides bereavement meals for the family and friends of deceased parishioners, when space and help is available.

**STIPENDS:** Most funeral directors itemize all cost within their billings and make a check payable to The Cathedral of Our Lady of Victory. It is preferable that the check for services be presented to the priest upon arrival at The Cathedral or funeral home. The requested stipend for a Funeral Mass at the Cathedral is \$300.00, which includes a clergy stipend and music. If the family is unable to pay the requested stipend at this time, they may contact the parish office at the number listed below. If a priest or deacon leads a service at the funeral home or a graveside service, the stipend is \$100. If the family so chooses, a donation to the parish is always welcomed. Stipends and donations should be presented to the parish office, priest or deacon prior to or on the day of the funeral or service.

For clarifications or additional questions, call the parish office at (361) 575-4741.

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