

While planning a funeral liturgy, it is important that the family of the deceased person meet with their pastor. During this meeting, the family will be given an opportunity to bring some personalization to the Mass as far as selecting the readings, the prayers of the faithful and involving the family members in the Mass.

Three readings and a responsorial psalm could be chosen by the family for the funeral Mass. If you decide to have three readings, the first reading should be from the Old Testament, the second from the New Testament and a reading from one of the Gospels. Usually the responsorial psalm is sung by a cantor.

The family is free to have their own (liturgical) favorite hymns of their choice. However, remember no secular music is allowed during the celebration of the Mass.

If the family members regularly attend Mass and any of them are lectors or Eucharistic ministers, they are encouraged to participate in that capacity during the funeral liturgy. Even if you're not a lector or Eucharistic minister and yet you are a practicing Catholic and attend Mass regularly on Sundays you could be given temporary permission by your pastor to become a lector or Eucharistic minister just for that Mass.

We talked about eulogies in my last column. The Funeral Mass is a momentous moment as far as the deceased person's family members are concerned. It brings enormous spiritual comfort to the family. The readings, homily and the celebration of Jesus' death and resurrection during the funeral liturgy lead the grieving family to hope, faith and spiritual consolation. During the Mass we are comforted by our faith that our loved one is in the powerful hands of God. That wonderful faith experience is distracted by focusing on the life of your loved one while they were on earth. The Church does not want any of those peak moments of spiritual experience to be disrupted by having a eulogy at the end of the Mass. That's why the church discourages a eulogy and prefers that it's done at a different time.

Some of your relatives may be going to a different denomination and they might persuade you to do certain things they practice in their church in the event of a death in your family. But remember they don't have a Mass, so they can do whatever they want. When they persuade you to do things contrary to our Catholic tradition and Mass, you should know why we don't do it their way!