

GUIDELINES FOR CHRISTIAN BURIAL

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 us 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 parishes.

WHO CAN BE BURIED WITH A FUNERAL MASS?

The parish is open to celebrating funeral services for current or former parishioners and for their relatives. Our pastor, Fr. Alex McCullough, will determine other requests having no parish connection. Non-parishioners will be accommodated if staff resources allow.

In the Archdiocese of Cincinnati, 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 where the non-Catholic party worshiped regularly at the Catholic Church or 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).

In some cases, it is more appropriate to celebrate the funeral liturgy outside of Mass. Such services can be done at the Church, at the funeral home, or at the gravesite. More information on these services is available upon request.

PLANNING THE FUNERAL SERVICES

The Mass of Christian Burial 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. Then the parish is contacted by the funeral home where the parish staff or bereavement team will confirm the time for the funeral Mass and will contact the family to discuss the details of the Mass of Christian Burial. In the Winton Wyoming Pastoral Region we work to accommodate the date and time requests of the bereaved family, but in some cases this is not possible due to conflicts with the cemetery or with other parish events, including other funerals. We will always do our best to meet the needs of the family.

VIEWING THE BODY

This practice is highly encouraged, because it helps remove doubts that the loved one has truly died. If death occurs at home, hospital or nursing home, it is appropriate to gather the family together at the scene of death to pray before the body is removed. The body should also be viewed at the funeral home. At the time of the Mass of Christian Burial the casket is closed.

VIEWING AT THE FUNERAL HOME

This is an opportune time for the family to gather on the night of the viewing to pray, read scripture passages, preferred poem of the deceased, listen to their favorite song, eulogize them or allow family members to share memories

of their loved one. You should inquire with your funeral director about having a podium and microphone available for your use the evening of the viewing.

VIEWING AT THE CHURCH

Our Lady of the Rosary, St. James of the Valley, and St. Matthias do offer the option of a church viewing. Considering the limited space, we suggest that visitations where a great number of people are expected should be held at the funeral home, if at all possible. All church viewings are limited to 1 hour. The funeral Mass must start promptly at the scheduled time. There is an additional fee for a visitation prior to the Funeral.

CREMATION

Through the centuries, the Church has followed the practice of burial or entombment after the manner of Christ's own burial. This 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).

It is the priest's responsibility, in conjunction with the bereavement team and the funeral home, to verify the proper motivation and to 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, with the approval of the bishop (which has been granted to all priests of the Archdiocese to confer), it is permitted to celebrate the funeral liturgy, including the Eucharist, in the presence of the ashes of the deceased. In this case, the ashes are to be placed on a small table covered with a white cloth. The table is placed in front of the altar, in the place that the casket usually occupies. The paschal candle, holy water and incense may be used; the alternative form of the dismissal is used. Cremated remains should never be scattered. Placed in a worthy container, they must be buried in a grave or inurned in a columbarium niche, preferably in a Catholic cemetery.

FLOWERS

Flowers are permitted for the Mass of Christian Burial. Parish staff will direct the placement of the flowers. Funeral Directors should take notice of flowers that are already in the sanctuary. Please be sure to remove, after Mass, only those flowers the family has brought in. The parish welcomes donation of flower arrangements should the family wish it. Flower arrangements are not to be carried in the recessional.

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. They are never to block the view of the tabernacle or the celebrant.

MUSIC

Because the Mass is a public act of worship of the church, the parish is ultimately responsible for the music in the liturgy. Hymns should reflect the idea of resurrection and hope. You may have in mind some specific religious music,

which would be appropriate during the Mass. The music director, clergy, and bereavement team can help you choose music that would be appropriate for the funeral Mass. **Secular music is not appropriate within the context of the funeral liturgy.** The entrance hymn, communion hymn and recessional hymn are music that the congregation should be encouraged to sing, as well as the usual service music and responses. Guest musicians must work through the parish Music Director. Use of recorded music in the liturgy is not permitted.

READINGS

The bereavement team can assist in the selection of scriptural readings. One reading is from the Old Testament, one from the New Testament. The gospel reading is ordinarily the choice of the celebrant, but if the family has a preference, they may request a certain passage from the Gospel. Non-scriptural readings are not permitted at Mass. It is sometimes difficult for immediate family members to proclaim the readings at the funeral Mass.

For cultural and familial reasons, there are times when the family would like one or more of the readings to be proclaimed in a language other than English. These requests will be handled on an individual basis, but we will make every effort to accommodate such requests when possible.

If the family cannot, for whatever reason, provide a trained, commissioned lector who is currently active in his/her parish, the staff and bereavement team will see that the readings are proclaimed with care.

PALL AND CANDLE

The casket itself, though a center of reverence, is not the focus of attention at the Mass of Christian Burial. 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. Usually immediate family members place the funeral pall on the casket.

The American flag, a symbol of honor for military service, never covers the casket in church during the Mass. In cases where the American flag is draped over the casket, it is removed before the placing of the pall, and replaced with care at the conclusion of the service, before the military honors at the cemetery.

ENTRANCE PROCESSION

The order of the entrance is as follows: altar servers, deacon, presider, casket, followed by family members. The same order is used as the procession leaves the Church. Other ministers, such as musicians, lectors, and extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion, are not part of the procession. At these times the music ministers are in the appropriate area leading the congregation in the entrance or recessional song. Other additions to the entrance and recessional procession, such as the Knights of Columbus or other Catholic fraternal or charitable organizations, can be accommodated upon request.

HOMILY

The homily is the sermon by the priest or deacon after the Gospel. It is meant to be a reflection on Christian life, death, and resurrection. **This is not a time for a eulogy on the life of the deceased.** The Archdiocesan policy reads: “only an ordained priest or deacon is allowed to preach the homily at the funeral liturgy. 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.” The bereavement team works with the family in the days leading up to the celebration of the

funeral liturgy to get an understanding of the deceased's life, interests, and devotional practices, so that they can be incorporated into the homily.

PRESENTATION OF GIFTS

We encourage members of the immediate family 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. We encourage practicing Catholics to receive communion under both species. If you have family members who are commissioned Eucharistic Ministers, (even from another parish) they are permitted to assist. Otherwise, the parish will provide Eucharistic Ministers.

EULOGY

The eulogy is not part of the Mass of Christian Burial. Eulogies by family members or friends are encouraged at the viewing and at the cemetery, but are not permitted during the Mass.

COSTS

Most funeral directors itemize all cost within their billings and make a check out to the parish. Our parish fee is \$300.00 and covers the cost of the music director, altar servers, and use of the church. At St. Matthias, a cantor can be available for an additional fee. The stipend does not belong to the priest; it is turned in as church income. The addition of a one hour viewing prior to the funeral is an additional \$100.00. Printed programs are provided for those present at no additional charge. The pastor retains the right to discount any funeral stipends; which is a decision based on his discretion.

LUNCHEON

The three parishes of the region have varying capacities for receptions and/or luncheons after the celebration of the funeral liturgy. These rentals are

processed on a case by case basis. St. Matthias offers the use of the parish hall for gatherings after the funeral at no cost to the family.

OTHER REQUESTS

We understand that just as each life is different, funeral liturgies will also differ from one another. If there are any special circumstances that arise during the funeral planning process, the bereavement team will do their best to accommodate within the guidelines of a Catholic funeral, and the discretion over all such exceptions ultimately rests with the pastor.