

Understanding and Preparing The Funeral Liturgy at Queen of Angels Church

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It is our hope that the following information will assist you in preparing a meaningful and prayerful funeral service. If you have any questions, please contact us:
Queen of Angels Church, Ph. 619-445-2145

THE FUNERAL LITURGY

This is the central public liturgical celebration of the Christian community for the deceased. At the Funeral Liturgy the community gathers with the family and friends of the deceased to offer prayers and intercessions for the faithful departed, to provide support for those who are mourning, to give praise and thanks to God for Christ's victory over sin and death, and to commend the departed to God's tender mercy and compassion. There are different forms of the Funeral Liturgy and the family, along with the priest/deacon, should decide which form is best suited for their individual family and circumstances.

Our funeral tradition, described in *The Order of Christian Funerals*, consists of distinct options:

1. An *optional Vigil for the Deceased* or "wake." This may take place in the home of the deceased, at the funeral home, or at the church.
2. The liturgical *Funeral Service* in the Church on the day of burial. Either the body of the deceased, or the cremated remains, are present in the sanctuary. This includes the Liturgy of The Word, constituting Old and New Testament with prayers for the deceased, homily, and final commendation. *This option is best suited for families that have mixed faith backgrounds.* A Mass would be offered at a separate date and time.
3. The liturgical *Funeral Mass of Christian Burial* like the Service (2 above) however, it centers on the celebration of the Eucharist and Holy Communion. This option is best suited for families that have full Catholic Faith backgrounds.
4. The liturgical *Funeral Memorial Mass* (like 3 above) however, the body or cremains are not necessarily present at the celebration. This is an option for those who have had previous burial in another place other than the local environs.
5. The *Rite of Committal* at the graveside. This includes the blessing of the grave site. This flows from the Final Commendation celebrated in the church.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS FOR CATHOLIC FUNERALS

1. Does the Catholic Church permit cremation?

Answer: Yes. Although cremation is now permitted by the Church, it does not enjoy the same value as burial of the body. *The Church clearly prefers and urges that the body of the deceased be present for the funeral rites, since the presence of the human body expresses the values which the Church affirms in those rites.*

2. What should be done with cremated remains?

The cremated remains of a body should be treated with the same respect given to the human body from which they come. This includes the use of a worthy vessel to contain the ashes, the manner in which they are carried, the care and attention to appropriate placement and transport, and the final disposition. *The cremated remains must be buried in a grave or entombed in a mausoleum or columbarium.* The practice of scattering cremated remains on the sea, from the air, or on the ground, or keeping cremated remains in the home of a relative or friend of the deceased are not the reverent disposition that The Church requires. Whenever possible, appropriate means for recording with dignity the memory of the deceased should be adopted, such as a plaque or stone which records the name of the deceased.

3. Can non-Catholics receive Communion at Mass?

Answer: No. As Catholics, we believe that the celebration of the Eucharist is a sign of our oneness in faith, life, and worship. Members of Christian communities with whom we are not yet fully united are therefore not ordinarily invited to participate in Holy Communion....

We welcome our fellow Christians to the celebration of the Eucharist as our brothers and sisters. We pray that our common baptism and the action of the Holy Spirit in this Eucharist will draw us closer to one another and begin to dispel the sad divisions which separate us. We pray that these will lessen and finally disappear, in keeping with Christ's prayer for us "*that they may all be one*" (Jn 17:21).

Because Catholics believe that the celebration of the Eucharist is a sign of the reality of the oneness of faith, life, and worship, members of those churches [e.g., Protestants] with whom we are not yet fully united are ordinarily not admitted to Holy Communion. Eucharistic sharing in exceptional circumstances by other Christians requires permission according to the directives of the diocesan bishop and the provisions of canon law (canon 844 § 4).

All who are not receiving Holy Communion are encouraged to express in their hearts a prayerful desire for unity with the Lord Jesus and with one another. We also welcome to this celebration those who do not share our faith in Jesus Christ. While we cannot admit them to Holy Communion, we ask them to offer their prayers for the peace and the unity of the human family. (US Catholic Conference of Bishops Statement)

4. Can a flag (or insignia) be used during a Catholic funeral?

Answer: No. A pall will be placed over the coffin when it is received at the church. A reminder of the baptismal garment of the deceased, the pall is a sign of the Christian dignity of the person. *The use of the pall also signifies that all are equal before God.*

Only Christian symbols may rest on or be placed near the coffin during the funeral liturgy. Any other symbols, for example, national flags, or flags or insignia of associations, have no place in the funeral liturgy. Any national flags or the flags or insignia of associations to which the deceased belonged are to be removed from the coffin at the entrance of the church. They may be replaced after the coffin has been taken from the church.

5. Can we use readings from non-biblical sources in a Catholic funeral?

Answer: No. In every celebration for the dead, The Church attaches great importance to the reading of The Word of God. The readings proclaim to the assembly the paschal mystery, teach remembrance of the dead, convey the hope of being gathered together again in God's kingdom, and encourage the witness of Christian life. Above all, the readings tell of God's designs for a world in which suffering and death will relinquish their hold on all whom God has called his own.

In the celebration of the liturgy of the word at the funeral liturgy, the biblical readings may not be replaced by non-biblical readings. But during prayer services with the family non-biblical readings may be used in addition to readings from Scripture

6. Can there be a Eulogy?

Answer: No. The Order of Christian Funerals is the ritual book that regulates funeral liturgies, and it notes that "eulogies" are out of place. The Holy See has approved the current version of the Order of Christian Funerals, and the local pastor simply follows the rules. No. 27 states, "*A brief homily based on the readings is always given after the Gospel reading at the funeral liturgy and may also be given after the readings at the vigil service; but there is never to be a eulogy.*"

There may be a special remembrance, however. The preferred time for a remembrance is during the vigil service. It should be brief (no more than three minutes) and delivered by one person who is reasonably adept at public speaking. If the family does not gather prior to the funeral liturgy, a brief remembrance may be given before Mass by a Catholic. *The text of the remembrance must be submitted to the principle celebrant for approval well in advance.*

The distinction between a remembrance and a eulogy should be noted relevant to this directive. A *remembrance* is an informal talk about how the deceased personally touched the lives of the bereaved, and especially the life of the one speaking. A *eulogy*, on the other hand, is a formal oration or speech on the life of the deceased. Its content is based solely on the life of the person being honored, particularly on the deceased's accomplishments during life.

Whether during the vigil service or the funeral liturgy, the remembrance does not take the place of the homily. Neither should the homily take the form of a eulogy (Ref. GIRM, 382).

7. Non-Religious Services at the Liturgy

When the deceased has been a member of some group or organization (e.g., the military, the Knights of Columbus, firefighter, police officer, etc.), a special service by that group or organization is sometimes held. Traditionally, such services are held either after the vigil or after the commendation and final farewell, *but never after the committal. The funeral should end with the committal so that the final action for the deceased is the prayer of The Church* (Ref. OCF, No. 204).

MUSIC GUIDELINES FOR CATHOLIC FUNERALS

Music is an important part of Catholic funeral rites. Music allows convictions and feelings to be expressed that words alone may fail to convey. Music has the power to strengthen the faith and hope of those present. The hymns chosen should express the mystery of our salvation in Christ, namely, the saving power of the Lord's suffering, death and resurrection. Funeral music should support, console, and uplift those present and help create in them a spirit of hope in Christ's victory over death and in the Christian's share in that victory. Secular songs (popular/non-religious songs), even though they may have been meaningful to the deceased or the family, do not capture the Gospel message of hope nor the sacred quality of Christian worship, and so *secular songs are not appropriate for funeral services*. Secular songs would be more appropriate for a funeral reception (or for a non-religious funeral service).

Below are some hymn titles offered for your consideration. Other appropriate selections can be made from the parish worship books. Please work with the musicians in making your selection. If there are any questions, please contact the priest or deacon assisting with the funeral services.

SUGGESTED HYMNS

Amazing Grace

Be Not Afraid

Bread of Life (2)

Christ, Be Our Light

Death Will Be No More

Eye Has Not Seen

Hail Mary: Gentle Woman'

How Great Thou Art

I Know That My Redeemer Lives

Jesus, Come to Us

Like A Shepherd

On Eagle's Wings

Prayer Of St. Francis

Speak, Lord

The Supper Of The Lord (2)

This Alone

We Will Rise Again

You Are Mine

Ave Maria (1)

Blest Are They

Center of My Life

Come to the Water

Eat This Bread (2)

From All That Dwell Below the Skies

Hosea

I Am the Bread of Life (2)

Isaiah 49

Lead Me, Lord

Lord Of All Hopefulness

Only In God

Shelter Me, O God

The Lord Is My Light

There Is A Longing

Unless A Grain Of Wheat

Yes, I Shall Arise

You Are Near

1 -Marian hymns should be used only for the closing hymn or as special music.

2 -This hymn should be used only if a Mass is being celebrated. It is especially appropriate as a communion hymn.

A NOTE TO NON-CATHOLICS

In our society, it sometimes happens that the surviving family members of a deceased Catholic are not Catholics themselves or practice no religion at all. Our experience is that sometimes these non-Catholics come to us assuming they are free to "create" their own funeral service. When this is the case, family members need to understand some basic things about what a Catholic funeral is and how a Catholic funeral must proceed.

A Catholic funeral is an act of worship offered by the local Catholic community in union with the universal Church. Catholic funerals normally take place within a Catholic Church building, since it is a place set aside for prayer and worship.

Our non-Catholic friends should be aware of the following: ***Since a Catholic funeral is an act of worship, God is always the central focus of our actions.*** We always listen to God's word in the Bible. We always pray to God through His Son, Jesus Christ, Who is Lord and Savior. We always use sacred music. We always try to use musicians and singers (rather than CD players), because the funeral, like all forms of Catholic worship, is a "work" of the Catholic community. The service is always lead by a priest or a deacon. We always pray for God's help and blessing. We always pray for the deceased person. These actions and dispositions are proper marks of true worship.

Since a Catholic funeral is an act of worship, it goes without saying that the funeral is not meant to be a form of entertainment. It is not meant to be a vehicle for the expression of personal interests. It is not meant to provide a "stage" for friends and family members. It is not meant to be a vehicle for the expression of personalized religious beliefs.

The Catholic Church has a two-thousand year history. Truth, wisdom, and tradition are aspects of the great treasure of the Catholic Faith. From her great storehouse of wisdom and experience, the Church provides directions about how funerals are to be conducted. ***The Church directs what is to take place during a funeral service. The Church provides the texts and prayers that are to be used. These directives and texts are mandatory.*** It is always the duty of the priest or deacon to see to it that the Church's norms are followed. For Catholic funerals, the priest or deacon has authority to determine what is acceptable and what is not, and he will be happy to offer guidance and suggestions.

One more thing should be noted. Catholics know that there are Christians who are not Catholic. We view baptized Christians as our brothers and sisters, and we respect them as such, but we have not yet achieved the unity of faith that all Christians hope for. Non-Catholic Christians have beliefs and practices that differ from those of Catholic Christians.

It is important to understand that at Catholic funerals, it is the Catholic faith that will be celebrated, expressed, and vocalized. Of course, non-Catholics are always welcome at Catholic funeral services. They simply need to be aware that the funeral will take place in a Catholic setting and follow a ritual that is based on Catholic beliefs.

When Catholic clergy are called upon to provide funeral services, they will assume that the person making the request seeks to have a funeral that is celebrated according to Catholic beliefs and norms. They will also assume that, even if friends and family members of the deceased do not hold the Catholic Faith, they are willing to give due respect to Catholic practices and authority.

Guest Book

There is a small table at the entrance of the church on which you may place a guest book. Other items, such as pictures and albums, can be placed on easels or additional tables in the vestibule with advance notice.

Flowers & Memorabilia

Flowers may be delivered to the church after 9 a.m. on the day of the funeral. Because of limited space, some of the arrangements may be placed at the entrance of the church. Flowers are never placed directly on the altar. Pictures or other memorabilia of the deceased may be placed at the entrance of the church, but not in the sanctuary.

Reception

If you desire to have a reception in Queen of Angels Parish Hall after the funeral service, you may check with the coordinator for availability of the hall. If our hall is used for the reception, you will need to supply your own plates, napkins, cups, coffee, etc. We have two refrigerators for your use. Joe Agosta caters many funerals here and brings his own supplies, servers, etc. His phone number is 619-733-0212.

(Please note: While the church may be able to provide the space, please personally coordinate all aspects of the reception, from setup to cleanup. It is your responsibility to make sure that the hall is cleaned and returned to its original condition.)

Stipends

Please contact the parish office for the customary offering to the church and use of the hall. Fees for music are paid through the parish office or sometimes handled through the mortuary, if they collected the stipends from the family.

Contacts:

Rev. Timothy Deutsch, Pastor
Dcn. Fred Thornton, Deacon
Katrina Thornton, Funeral Coordinator
Dorie Arietta, Parish Office

Please call or email the Parish Funeral Coordinator to set the date for the funeral and plan a liturgy: Select Scripture readings, and discuss options for family participation.
Katrina Thornton (619) 445-2145
Email: katrina@queenofangels.org



“For I am already being poured out like a libation, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have competed well; I have finished the race; I have kept the faith. From now on the crown of righteousness awaits me, which the Lord, the just judge, will award to me on that day, and not only to me, but to all who have longed for his appearance.” 1Tm 4:6-