

CELEBRATION OF CATHOLIC FUNERAL RITES

INTRODUCTION

For your faithful, Lord, life is changed, not ended. When this earthly dwelling turns to dust, an eternal dwelling is made ready for them in heaven. – Roman Missal: Preface I for the Dead

With these concise and telling words the prayer of the Church both comforts and challenges us in moments of sorrow at the loss of loved ones. We are consoled to know that the ties of family and friendship, developed over a lifetime, although broken in death, are not destroyed by it. The passing of those we have cherished can also be a graced moment for us to become more reflective about our own mortality and the direction of our lives.

Over the centuries the Church has crafted special rituals, or liturgical celebrations, to guide us through times of turmoil, sadness and pain brought by death. Through words and actions rich in meaning, we are invited to see more clearly how the Death and Resurrection of Christ, instead of being events of the distant past, are a present reality at work in those who pass from this life to Eternal Life, as well as in us who are on our earthly pilgrimage. We gather at funerals, not to celebrate the past life of the deceased, but rather to celebrate the present action of Christ in our midst. We gather at funerals to pray that Christ's victory over death at Calvary will now be completed in those whom we commend to God. We continue that prayer whenever we remember our loved ones at Mass or when we visit their graves. The Commemoration of the Faithful Departed (All Souls Day - November 2), makes the Church mindful of its duty to pray for the dead. When we pray for the deceased, faith in our own resurrection is deepened and we are consoled by the certainty that one day we will be with our loved ones.

This policy statement is a pastoral guide to assist pastors and rest of the Catholic faithful in preparing and celebrating the Catholic Funeral Rites. Rather than being an arbitrary set of rules, these norms aim at being sensitive to the needs of mourners. Every effort has been made to craft them so that they clearly draw attention to the various ways the Funeral Rites reflect our faith in the Risen Christ. That faith should be the primary point of reference when considering the various issues addressed in this document.

After careful consultation, these norms are presented with the confidence of a faith community which knows from experience that, when celebrated with dignity and care, its Funeral Rites have the power to both console and challenge us as we commend to the unfailing mercy of God the ones we have loved and who have loved us.

GENERAL NORMS

1. The 1989 edition of the *Order of Christian Funerals* (OCF) and the prayers in the 3rd edition of the *Roman Missal* contain the rituals and norms for the Catholic celebration of Funeral Rites.
2. The Catholic Funeral Rites consist of the Vigil (a Liturgy of the Word or the Office of the Dead), the celebration of the Holy Eucharist (Funeral Mass) or the Funeral Liturgy outside of Mass and the Rite of Committal.
3. Guided by the norms in the *Order of Christian Funerals*, the proper implementation of these policies falls to the pastor of the parish where the deceased has been an identifiable member and where the Funeral Rites are to be celebrated. Even if it is not possible to make this determination, the pastor exercises this responsibility when a family member responsible for making the funeral arrangements requests the assistance of his/her parish. When no parish relationship can be determined reasonably, the "pastor" is the pastor of the place in which the Funeral Rites are to be celebrated.
4. Parochial vicars, deacons and lay ministers assist with Funeral Rites in accord with the mind of the pastor or supervisor to whom they have been assigned by the Bishop.

5. The pastor or his delegate determines the time and place for the Funeral Rites in consultation with the family of the deceased and the funeral director chosen by the family.
6. Because of his office, the pastor normally presides at the Funeral Rites but he may delegate this responsibility to others. Before a priest, deacon, Religious or lay person from outside the Diocese may be permitted to preside, he/she must present to the Bishop's Office a testimonial letter from his/her Ordinary.

RIGHTS

1. Unless specifically excluded according to the norm of law, a member of the Catholic faithful is entitled to the Church's ministry at the time of death (*Code of Canon Law* [CCL], 1176.1). Before denying Funeral Rites to anyone or celebrating them for someone with a "notorious reputation," the pastor is to consult the Bishop, whose decision is determinative (CCL, 1184.2).
2. Catechumens are entitled to the celebration of the Funeral Rites of the Church. Even though they are unbaptized, they are members of the household of the Church (CCL, 1183.1).
3. Permission is granted according to the norm of law for a child who dies before baptism to receive Catholic Funeral Rites if the parents intended to have the child baptized (OCF, 237,318; CCL, 1183.2).
4. Permission is granted according to the norm of law to celebrate Funeral Rites for baptized non-Catholics (CCL 1183.3).
5. The pastor, or his delegate, may celebrate the Funeral Liturgy outside of Mass and/or the Rite of Committal for a non-baptized person, as a matter of pastoral sensitivity toward a Catholic spouse and provided that this is not contrary to the manifest intention of the deceased. Care should be exercised to avoid the use of rituals and prayers which are proper to the baptized.
6. The Funeral Rites may be celebrated if the deceased has committed suicide (OCF, 398-44, 45). Such circumstances call for special pastoral compassion and sensitivity.

VIGIL

1. The Vigil for the deceased (popularly referred to as the "Rosary") normally is celebrated on the evening before the celebration of the Funeral Liturgy. The Vigil may be celebrated in the home of the deceased, the funeral home or another suitable place (OCF, 55). It may be celebrated in the parish church, but at a time well before the Funeral Liturgy. Although the Vigil is not mandated, the faithful should be encouraged to make arrangements for its celebration since the occasion allows for the incorporation of elements of social custom and practices not appropriate at the Funeral Mass or Funeral Liturgy outside of Mass. Based on the celebration of a liturgy of the Word or the Office of the Dead, the Vigil published in the *Order of Christian Funerals* is the public norm and should not be replaced by other forms of prayer, although other forms of devotional prayer certainly may be incorporated, especially the recitation of the Rosary.
2. Planning for the Vigil should be sensitive to family needs and yet always maintain good taste and proper decorum, (e.g., requests for eulogies, special music selections, visual presentations of the life of the deceased). Since the Vigil is a liturgical action of the Church, the pastor exercises the responsibility of making decisions in this regard.
3. Social and devotional practices are appropriate to the Vigil (e.g., eulogies, video/DVD presentations, secular songs) rather than at the Funeral Liturgy.

FUNERAL MASS

1. When one of its members dies, the Church especially encourages the celebration of the Funeral Mass (OCF, 46). The substitution of a Funeral Mass with the celebration of a Memorial Mass or Funeral Liturgy outside of Mass should only be made for genuine pastoral reasons. A decision to not celebrate a Funeral Mass for the deceased should not be based solely on mere convenience or the reduction of funeral home costs.
2. The Funeral Mass has first place among the Masses for the Dead. The Funeral Mass may be celebrated on any day with these exceptions:
 - a. According to the norms of the Church, the Funeral Mass may not be celebrated on Holy Thursday, the Easter Triduum, or on the Sundays of Advent, Lent, and the Easter Season (OCF, 177-80).
 - b. The Funeral Mass may not be celebrated on the solemnities of obligation. In the United States these occasions are: The Solemnity of Mary, the Mother of God (January 1); the Assumption of Mary (August 15); All Saints (November 1); the Immaculate Conception (December 8); and Nativity of the Lord – Christmas (December 25) (OCF 177-80).
 - c. If there is genuine pastoral need for the celebration of the Funeral Liturgy outside of Mass on a solemnity of obligation, a Liturgy of the Word is to be used, closing with the Rite of Farewell (OCF, 177-80).
 - d. Because of the complexity of Sunday Mass schedules and related activities, it is diocesan policy that neither a Funeral Mass nor a Funeral Liturgy outside of Mass may be celebrated on any Sunday. A Vigil may be celebrated on a Sunday evening at the pastor's discretion.
3. The normative place for the celebration of the Funeral Mass is the parish church. Any exception is not to be made lightly, and requires the permission of the Bishop. [Also, see Addendum, 5]
4. The Funeral Liturgy - using the form, Funeral Liturgy Outside of Mass - may be celebrated in the parish church, a funeral home or cemetery chapel – or in another suitable place approved by the pastor (OCF, 179).
5. As a norm, the Church recommends that the body of the deceased be present at the Funeral Rites, even if it is to be cremated later. In accord with OCF, 426, the Bishop grants pastors permission to decide on a case-by-case basis the propriety of celebrating the Funeral Rites in the presence of the cremated remains of the body of the deceased. In such cases it is appropriate that the cremated remains be present for the full course of the Funeral Rites.
6. Pastoral sensitivity should be exercised in assisting family members of the deceased and the faithful to understand and embrace the Christian tradition of caring for the remains of the deceased.
7. Only a bishop, priest or deacon is permitted to preach the homily at the Funeral Mass. A eulogy is never appropriate during the time designated for the homily (OCF, 27); however, examples from the life of the deceased which highlight the virtues of Christian life may be used in the homily.
8. Every effort is to be made to implement the full range of ministries, both lay and clerical, at the Funeral Mass or Funeral Liturgy outside of Mass. The active participation of the assembly is normative.
9. In preparation for the Funeral Mass, the pastor approves those who exercise the ministries of server, reader, and minister(s) of Holy Communion. These ministers must have the prerequisite knowledge and skill for the exercise of these ministries. Extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion, in particular, must be Catholics who have been trained and approved to properly exercise this ministry.
10. In consultation with the family of the deceased and following liturgical norms, the pastor approves the music ministers and the music selections for the Funeral Rites. Recorded music used for accompanying the communal celebration of the Funeral Rites is not appropriate.

11. In consultation with the family of the deceased, the pastor approves the reader(s) and the readings from Sacred Scripture selected for the Funeral Rites, including those selected for the Funeral Mass or Funeral Liturgy outside of Mass. Only readings from Sacred Scripture may be used for the Liturgy of the Word.

12. If necessary, and with the approval of the pastor, public instruction consistent with the moral and liturgical law of the Church regarding reception of Holy Communion may be given in a pastorally sensitive manner prior to the Funeral Mass.

13. Video/DVD presentations of the life of the deceased are appropriate at the reception following the Funeral Rites and should not be part of the Funeral Mass or Funeral Liturgy. If approved by the pastor, such presentations may be part of the Vigil.

EULOGIES

1. Since the purpose of the Catholic Funeral Rites is to pray for the deceased and comfort the bereaved, eulogies which praise the deceased are more appropriately given at the Vigil. A family member or friend of the deceased may speak briefly before the Final Commendation at the Funeral Mass or Funeral Liturgy (OCF, 170). Or, in order to preserve the integrity of the flow of the Funeral Mass or Funeral Liturgy outside of Mass, the presider may encourage that it take place before they begin.

2. The person who gives a eulogy at the Funeral Mass or Funeral Liturgy outside of Mass should be someone who can speak publicly with composure about the deceased person's relationship to God, family, the community and the Christian legacy left as an example for others. Statements and memories about the deceased should be sensitive to and helpful to the family and friends in their time of loss, by giving them comfort in their grief rather than for comic effect. The eulogy should not extend beyond five minutes. The speaker should have a prepared written text to manage the time limit.

RITE OF COMMITTAL (BURIAL, INTERMENT, INTOMBMENT, INURNMENT)

1. As a rule, the Rite of Committal follows at the cemetery immediately after the Funeral Mass or Funeral Liturgy. Since Catholic Faith affirms that the body of the deceased is a former temple of the Holy Spirit, after the Funeral Mass or Funeral Liturgy the body is to be taken to its "place of rest" - an action which reflects hope in the deceased's final resurrection in Jesus Christ. Pastoral circumstances, however, may warrant a later celebration of the Rite of Committal. Following the burial or inurnment, attendees may be invited to return to the church or other appropriate place for a reception or other celebration.

2. As a rule, the burial of Catholics is to take place in a Catholic cemetery where the ground is consecrated to receive sacred remains (CCL, 1180.1).

3. Burial in a Catholic cemetery is available to every Catholic. Burial costs should not deter families from using our Catholic cemeteries, whose staff is committed to work with families in this regard.

4. Non-Catholics - especially members of Catholic families - are most welcome to arrange for interment in a Catholic cemetery, particularly since doing so helps maintain close family ties. In these circumstances, clergy of other faith communities may conduct the cemetery rites according to their own tradition, if the family so desires or if it was the expressed wish of the deceased.

5. Many Catholics generously make prior arrangements to donate their bodies, in whole or in part, to advance medical science. Such arrangements should include the assurance about the final disposition of the deceased's remains in a proper, reverential manner (OCF, 224-233). In these circumstances, it may be appropriate for the family to arrange for the celebration of the Funeral Rites with a Memorial Mass as soon as possible after death.

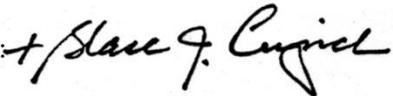
6. Whenever possible, appropriate means for creating a memorial to the deceased should be utilized, such as a plaque or stone, which identifies the name of the deceased (OCF, 417).
7. The remains of miscarried or stillborn babies are to receive reverent and proper disposition in accord with practices which reflect Catholic Faith and its respect for human life. Families are encouraged and welcome to work with their pastors to prepare Funeral Rites for these infants.

CREMATION

1. Cremation is permitted by the Catholic Church, unless it is chosen for reasons contrary to Christian doctrine (CCL, 1176.3). The cremated remains of a body are to be treated with the same respect given to the human body from which they came. 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 their final and proper disposition (OCF, 417).
2. The cremated remains are to be buried in a grave or entombed in a mausoleum or columbarium, as a rule in a Catholic cemetery. For reasons firmly rooted in our Catholic faith, the practice of dividing up the ashes among family members, preserving them in lockets, scattering them in some fashion or keeping them in the home of a relative or friend of the deceased is not appropriate. Pastors can use this moment to assist family members to more fully understand the Church's tradition about the proper and reverential disposition of cremated remains and the obligation to pray for the deceased by visiting on special occasions the places of burial.

OFFERING

1. Although it is customary and helpful to make an offering to the parish where the Funeral Rites are celebrated, neither the parish nor the celebrant himself are permitted to require such an offering or charge any other fee. The recommended customary offering is published in the *Policy Manual* of the Diocese of Spokane (Policy 2.02.02).
2. Except when the Funeral Rites are celebrated by a visiting priest, the honorarium is to be deposited as a stipend given to the parish.

APPROVED:  October 7, 2013, Feast of Our Lady of the Rosary

Most Reverend Bishop Blase J. Cupich
Bishop of Spokane

ADDENDUM:

CATHOLIC FUNERAL AND CEMETERY SERVICES OF SPOKANE

1. Catholic Funeral and Cemetery Services of Spokane (CFCS) enjoys a unique relationship with the Catholic Diocese of Spokane. Although it is a separate non-profit 501(c) 3 corporation established to provide funeral and cemetery services and products for the benefit of the Catholic community, it shares intimately in the mission of the Catholic Church in the Diocese. The services it provides are an extension of the pastoral ministry of the local Church.
2. Catholics in the Diocese of Spokane, particularly those who reside in the Spokane metropolitan area, are encouraged to avail themselves of the services and benefits offered by CFCS.
3. CFCS is obligated to conduct its business and provide its services in congruence with the policies and regulations of the Diocese of Spokane, particularly those which govern the celebration of the Funeral Rites of the Catholic Church.

4. The provision of Funeral Rites for a Catholic through the services of CFCS is to be made in congruence with these policies and protocols. In exceptional cases, when special application is required or requested, CFCS is to consult with the pastor of the deceased.
5. The chapels associated with CFCS may be used for the Funeral Rites for Catholics and non-Catholics alike - including the celebration of the Funeral Mass – when the celebration of these rites is consistent with applicable diocesan policies.
6. Because of its unique relationship with the mission of the local Church, the Diocese of Spokane, priests, deacons and Religious may allow their identity or ecclesial status to be used for promotional purposes by CFCS with the explicit permission of the Bishop.