

*AS YOU PREPARE
FOR A
CATHOLIC FUNERAL*

Our prayerful sympathies go out to you. May your loved one rest in the Lord's peace.

As you prepare for a Catholic funeral, normally the Mass of Christian Burial, the information that follows will be helpful to you in making necessary choices.

(Note: If you are thinking about cremation, please turn first to the paragraph on cremation for guidelines.)

If you have not yet contacted a Catholic parish, your funeral home can help you. This should be done as soon as possible. The priest or deacon who will preside at the liturgy may want to visit with you prior to the liturgy. Funeral directors are familiar with Catholic customs, guidelines, and requirements. Some are listed below:

Wake and Visitation may be the night before, with or without a Prayer Service, in church or at the funeral home.

Visitation in the church, prior to the Mass of Christian Burial, may be at the place designated by each church, with the casket closed or open. At the conclusion or final moments of visitation, the clergy presiding at the liturgy may, with the family gathered, offer a short prayer. If cremated remains are present, the same applies.

Mass of Christian Burial follows.

As the Mass begins, the family may spread the pall over the casket.

Family may be invited to participate in the selection of readings from the Bible to be used during Mass. One reading is normally taken from the Old Testament and one from the New Testament. In addition, there is one Gospel reading. (There are some suggested readings from which it would be appropriate to select. The priest or deacon can help with this.) Catholic family members or friends may read the first and second readings. The Gospel is read by a deacon or the priest, followed by the homily.

It is appropriate for family members or friends to present the gifts of bread and wine to be used for Mass. In the Mass, through the words entrusted by Christ to His Church, these gifts become the Body and Blood of Christ, the source of our hope in the resurrection.

Music is an ancient part of celebrating our Catholic tradition in moments of great joy or deep sorrow. Sacred music is one way of expressing our faith and hope in eternal life. Some beautiful and loved music expresses this faith more readily than others. Some music, especially recorded music and secular songs, is more appropriate at wakes or funeral luncheons. Most Catholic churches have guidelines to help with the selection of appropriate music.

In planning music, it will be helpful to start with a few of these guidelines: The *Our Father* is traditionally recited or sung by the *entire* congregation at Mass. Music chosen should fit the action/prayer taking place. For example, an *Ave Maria* would be better placed as a meditation after communion rather than during communion itself. If in doubt, ask the individual at the parish who is responsible for music planning. *Please include congregational singing where possible.*

Eulogies are an option, but they are not required. If done in good taste, they can be appropriate at the wake and/or luncheon. The Mass of Christian Burial is time set aside to pray for the deceased and for family and friends to be consoled by the words of Christ, “whoever believes in me, though he should die, will come to life.” (Jn. 11:26) If there is to be a eulogy, it should be only a few minutes in length and given by one person. The Catholic rite states that a short eulogy may be given following the prayer after Communion.

Lengthy or multiple eulogies, should take place outside the Mass of Christian Burial. These might be incorporated into the wake service or the luncheon program.

The Rite of Committal concludes the Rite of Christian Burial. Whenever possible, it is celebrated at the site of committal—at the open grave or place of interment.

When thinking about cremation . . .

The Christian faithful, in the presence of the body of one who has died, are confronted with the mystery of life and death. The body, even in death, calls to mind a personal story of faith, loving family bonds, friendships, caring words and deeds of kindness offered by the one who has died. This same body, washed in the waters of Baptism, anointed with Holy Oils and fed with Bread of Life is recognized by the Church as a Temple of the Holy Spirit, destined for resurrection and meant for glory. The Catholic Church urges that the body be present for funeral rites since this gives better expression to the truths that the Church affirms.

- Order of Christian Funerals

Cremation is allowed in the Catholic faith, preferably **after** the Mass of Christian Burial in the church.

Whether the Mass of Christian Burial is chosen, or some other type of funeral service is preferred, the following regulations for Catholic disposition and burial of cremated remains are to be strictly followed:

The proper respect given to the body of the deceased is likewise to be accorded to the cremated remains, both in handling and in final disposition of cremated remains.

Where cremation is chosen, cremated remains are to be placed in a mausoleum or columbarium or in ground that is blessed specifically to receive the body or cremated remains of the faithful.

It is the desire of the Catholic Church that utmost respect be accorded to both the bodies and cremated remains of the deceased. Thus the scattering of ashes or the reserving of ashes privately on mantels, shelves or even in lockets or other mementos is not in keeping with the respect owed to the cremated remains of loved ones. Dividing the cremated remains for multiple burial sites or other reasons is not the reverent disposition that the Church requires.

Prayers for the Deceased

The Catholic Church teaches that all who die in God's grace and friendship, but still imperfectly purified, are indeed assured of their eternal salvation; but after death they undergo purification, so as to achieve the holiness necessary to enter the joy of heaven. Thus, family and friends are encouraged to remember their deceased loved ones in prayer. From the beginning the Church has honored the memory of the dead and offered prayers in suffrage for them, above all the Eucharistic Sacrifice of the Mass, so that, thus purified, they may attain the beatific vision of God.

Prepared by the Diocese of Duluth
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