

GUIDELINES FOR REMEMBRANCES AT FUNERALS FOR ST. AGNES AND SACRED HEART

WHY ARE GUIDELINES NECESSARY?

- Catholic funerals are losing their essential nature as an act of *worship* of God and *prayer* for the soul of the deceased, and becoming settings for a series of eulogies, or “celebrations of life”;
- If one speaker becomes emotional and has great difficulty delivering his/her words, the situation becomes uncomfortable for the family and the assembly and often results in more grief for the bereaved at a time in the liturgy when they have hopefully been lifted a little beyond grief through the Eucharistic celebration; this possibility is compounded when there are several speakers;
- It has happened that, when there are several speakers, some in the congregation think that anyone is free to walk up to the sanctuary and speak, resulting in very lengthy funerals;
- On not a few occasions, inappropriate remarks glossing over the deceased's proclivities (drinking prowess, romantic conquests, etc.) or about the Church and its moral teachings have been made at funeral Masses, embarrassing the priest, the family and the congregation and becoming the focus of the service.

THE GUIDELINES:

- Remembrances are **optional**. Situations have arisen whereby the deceased or other family members do not want a remembrance at the Funeral. These wishes should be respected.
- **Only one person** may speak at the Funeral Mass or Funeral Liturgy outside Mass. Others may speak at the Vigil Service or luncheon.
- **The reflection should be brief: no more than 3 – 5 minutes (normally one typed page)**. If a more lengthy remembrance or eulogy is desired, as stated above, it may be given at another time.
- The reflection must be **prepared beforehand**, (written word for word) and must be approved by the priest or deacon beforehand, to avoid undue length or inappropriate situations.
- **Please get the remembrance to the clergy no later than one day before**. You may arrange to drop it off, or email it to the presiding priest. Fr. Timothy's email is frtimothylange@gmail.com.
- **If found necessary, even during the funeral, the clergy will bring the remembrance to a close.**

The following will assist the bereaved to prepare the words of remembrance:

- The words of remembrance should be about the deceased person's **human qualities** (including their life of faith), and **how these qualities can inspire the hearers**.
- The speaker should speak honestly, reflecting the life and circumstances of the deceased.
- It is neither necessary nor desirable that the speaker attempt to give a life history of the deceased, or to repeat what is already contained in an obituary. It is also helpful that the one being spoken of is not “canonized.” *In other words, we gather to pray for the person, that they may come to the fullness of everlasting life in heaven, rather than assume they already have.*
- While only one person will speak at the Funeral Mass, the reflection could well be a summation of remembrances gathered from family members and friends.
- It is useful to **rehearse the words aloud** to ensure that the hearers are given a clear message about the deceased person, and that the speaker is capable of delivering the reflection well.
- **Be honest with yourself** as to how you will react while giving the reflection. It is one thing to say you can do it, but it is a very different situation at the liturgy with all the people present.

SOME QUESTIONS ON "SPEAKING IN REMEMBRANCE OF THE DEAD"

What is the difference between a "eulogy" and "speaking in remembrance of the dead?"

- A eulogy recounts some or all of the significant events in the life of the deceased.
- Words of remembrance do not attempt to give a biography, but to share some insight into the faith and values of the deceased as seen in one or two examples from his/her life. A eulogy by its very nature tends to be lengthy, while words of remembrance are brief.

Do the Guidelines mean that all eulogies are forbidden at Catholic funerals?

- No. A eulogy is only forbidden at the funeral Mass, in accord with *THE ORDER OF CHRISTIAN FUNERALS*, which states: "A brief homily based on the readings should always be given at the funeral liturgy, but never any kind of eulogy."
- However, it does permit "words of remembrance" at the end of Mass, *but does not require it*: "A member or a friend of the family may speak in remembrance of the deceased before the final commendation begins."
- Both eulogies and words of remembrance may be offered at a vigil service on the eve of the funeral, at the luncheon or at the cemetery once the committal is finished. These are also the appropriate places/times for playing favorite secular tunes or showing slides or PowerPoint displays of photos of the deceased.

Are there any exceptions?

- There may be particular circumstances that would require more than one speaker, for example, a state funeral. In such a case a certain protocol of allowing a member of the government, or perhaps others is to be expected. But normally other speakers should be directed to speak at another time.