

## St. Marianne Cope Parish

### **Guidelines for Preparing Words of Remembrance**

Thank you for accepting the responsibility of speaking Words of Remembrance on behalf of the family and friends of the deceased. Here are some points to guide you in the preparation of what you will say. We ask you to read them and observe them carefully.

1. You have been asked to offer “words of remembrance,” not a eulogy. A eulogy tends to tell the story of a person’s whole life and accomplishments, and can get very lengthy. Words of Remembrance provide briefly some insight into the faith and values of the deceased as seen in one or two representative example from his/her life. The words of remembrance then become words of encouragement and comfort to those who are present.
2. Since they occur within the Church’s acts of prayer for the deceased and the survivors, the Words of Remembrance should be no more than 3-4 minutes (a single type-written page). Keeping your remarks brief and to-the-point recognizes not only the flow of the liturgy, but also the fact that people have often made a sacrifice to be present. Brevity is the kindest and most appreciated consideration you can give them.
3. There may be some in the congregation who did not know the deceased, but have come in support of the family. Therefore, “inside” stories about the deceased may not be understood. Save such remembrances for the more intimate moments with the family, especially during the painful days and weeks after the funeral. The time for the words of remembrance is not a time for lengthy storytelling. A touch of humor may be helpful if done with respect and sensitivity.
4. Before you begin to compose the words of remembrance ask help from God, that you will be enabled to speak in a way worthy of the occasion. Ask suggestions from friends and family.
5. Write out your remarks in full. Writing out the complete text will insure that you stay within the time limitation. The presiding priest, deacon or other pastoral minister may be available to preview your remarks and make helpful suggestions. Rely on their judgment and experience.
6. Rehearse your words of remembrance before a friend or family member. If there are deep emotions that need to be dealt with, rehearsal is the time to express them. While a public display of emotion is understandable and sometimes laudable, copious tears and uncontrollable sobbing before the congregation will not be helpful.
7. Before the service begins, ask a parish staff to show you exactly where you are to speak. Go there and get “the feel” of the place. Please practice with the staff to ensure that you properly heard even those seated at the back of the church.
8. The priest, deacon or pastoral minister will introduce you at the proper time in the service, so that you will know exactly when you are to come forward. Approach the podium or lectern with great confidence. To begin with expressions like “I’m not used to this sort of thing” or “I hope I can get through this” defeats you before you ever begin. If you find yourself tensing up or getting dry, breathe deeply. A good supply of oxygen will get you back on track.