

*Eternal rest grant unto them O Lord  
and let perpetual light shine upon them.  
May they rest in peace.  
Amen*



## St. Gregory Parish

### Funeral Service Guide

Dear Friends, be assured of our prayers for you at this time of loss.

It is our honor to support families as best as we can as we offer services for the repose of the souls of loved ones. Those who have gone before us are still part of our parish family.

The funeral offers an opportunity to remember our beloved dead, to comfort the suffering, and most especially, to offer the greatest prayer for their eternal rest and commend them to the eternal embrace of our Heavenly Father.

## *The Funeral Rites*

### The Vigil

- While this is not necessary or mandatory, this custom can be beneficial as it allows loved ones to show their respect and pray with the family and friends of the deceased. This is the most opportune time to share memories of the deceased through a eulogy or video tribute. This is held in the funeral home, the parish hall (if available) or a private home. This is not something that is offered at the church as the church building is consecrated and arranged for the liturgies celebrated there.

### The Funeral Mass

- This is the central liturgical celebration held with the deceased's body or remains present at a church. Our firm Christian belief is that those who "have died with Christ shall live with Him" (Rom. 6:8) body and soul. The Body is a temple of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 6) as St. Paul states and as our creed states, "we believe in the resurrection of the body and life everlasting." (We are not angels now, nor will we be angels in Heaven).
- There is no greater prayer that can be offered than that ritual given to us by Jesus at the Last Supper as the memorial of His passion, death and resurrection. While one may wish to simply offer a small prayer service instead of a funeral Mass, to fail to offer the Mass would be to offer something less than the fullness of charity and mercy that Jesus gave us (1 Cor. 11:26). Jesus died for them in order that they may have salvation. The greatest thing that can be done is the offering of the Sacrifice of the Mass for them since the Holy Mass makes present His saving Sacrifice on Calvary. Every baptized Christian has a right to a Christian Mass and burial. It is far more than merely our prayer; it is the offering of Jesus given to us as the eternal sacrifice that overcomes sin and death.
- The funeral rite is especially tied to the baptism of the person who has died. The ritual begins

with the same symbols (the holy water, the white garment placed over the casket and the paschal candle lit for those who were enlightened by Baptism). Note: funerals are also offered for children who are not yet baptized and for those who died prior to birth.

- The family is welcomed to choose readings that are fitting for the funeral Mass of their loved ones. Selections of the readings are found on our parish website.
- After Holy Communion, the priest will incense the casket while the ancient hymn (*In Paradisum*) is sung. Incense is symbolic of our prayers rising to God and is reminiscent of the incense offered with our eternal praise in heaven (Rev. 8:4).
- The family then escorts the body out of the Church to “take then to their place of rest.”

#### Rite of Committal

- The conclusion of the Funeral Mass takes place at the cemetery. This usually happens on the same day as the Mass.
- At this time, the place of burial is blessed and marked as a place for family, loved ones and even strangers to visit, remember, and pray for the dead.

- The Rite of Committal is the final Corporal Act of Mercy (to bury the dead) for the deceased member of the Church. We lay to rest our beloved dead just as Our Lord was laid to rest by his friends and family when lovingly wrapped in cloth and placed in the tomb.
- Committal is an essential part of the Funeral. Without specific plans for interment of the body or cremated remains, we are unable to perform the funeral rites.

#### Reflections on Cremation

- When the choice has been made to cremate a body, it is recommended that the cremation take place after the funeral liturgy. Though not essential or mandatory, the Church prefers that the body of the deceased be present for the funeral rites.
- The cremated remains should be treated with the same respect given to the human body, which includes interment. The proper care for the cremated remains is burial or entombment at a cemetery or mausoleum in a manner that will provide a guarantee of perpetual respect.
- When considering what can be done with the cremated remains, the following rule of thumb applies – *What is not done with the body should not be done with the cremated remains.*

Practices such as dividing, scattering or keeping them in the home of a relative or friend of the deceased is not considered reverent disposition, and is therefore not approved by the Church.

What more can I do for my deceased loved ones?

- First and foremost, the best thing that one can do for their loved one is to attend the funeral and make a worthy reception of Holy Communion. This may require making a good confession to return to a state of grace. Drawing close to Jesus is the best thing that one can do and Holy Communion is the way that Jesus has offered that union with Him.
- For many families, it is a custom to pray a Novena. This is a wonderful opportunity to get together to pray, to grieve and to thank God for the life of our beloved dead.
- Remember them on their anniversary of death, their birthday, All Souls Day or other special days with Mass attendance and worthy reception of Holy Communion, visits to the cemetery and other family get togethers.
- The Rosary remains a very powerful prayer for the dead. When we say those words “now and at the hour of our death” we ask God’s presence to us in our final moments of life. This can certainly be prayed for the dead as God is

not bound by time and can continually (even after the death of the loved one) act on that loving request.

We sincerely wish to help families of our parish understand the funeral and burial rites of the Catholic Church especially when families are faced with making sensitive decisions at a very painful and stressful time. Be assured that in caring for the dead in this way, you are doing the right thing.

Finally, our parish has no set funeral price. It is our honor to care for the dead. If the family has the means and wishes to make a memorial gift, they are welcome to do that. We simply ask that you pay the musician directly.

For further information or to arrange a funeral for a parishioner of St. Gregory, please call the parish at 602-264-4488. In order to ensure that we do our best in celebrating the Funeral Rites, we typically arrange a meeting with the family and the clergy who will be present at the funeral.

### *More Words of Comfort*

“In the face of death, the Church confidently proclaims that God has created each person for eternal life and that Jesus, the Son of God, by his death and resurrection, has broken the chains of sin and death that bound humanity.” (“Order of Christian Funerals” #1)

“Through the celebration of the funeral rites, the Church manifests its care for the dead . . .” (OCF #18)

“Since in baptism the body was marked with the seal of the Trinity and became the temple of the Holy Spirit, Christians respect and honor the bodies of the dead and the places where they rest.” (OCF #19)

“At the funeral liturgy the community gathers with the family and friends of the deceased to give praise and thanks to God for Christ’s victory over sin and death, to commend the deceased to God’s tender mercy and compassion, and to seek strength in the proclamation of the paschal mystery. Through the Holy Spirit the community is joined together in sign and symbol, word and gesture that each believer through baptism shares in Christ’s death and resurrection and can look to the day when all the elect will be raised up and united in the kingdom of light and peace.” (OCF #129)

## *Aftercare Ministry*

Counseling and ministry care are offered to our families through Catholic Cemeteries to extend support in your time of need. For aftercare ministry services, call 602.267.3961. If specific prayer is needed (for the grief, for forgiveness connected to the deceased or in the family during the difficult time), please seek assistance from the clergy of the parish.