

When A Loved One Dies

At the death of a Christian, the Church ministers to those in sorrow. Through the funeral rites, the Church commends the dead to God's merciful love and brings hope and consolation to the living. *"If one member suffers in the body of Christ which is the Church, all the members suffer with that member."* (1 Corinthians 12:26)

In the face of death, the Catholic Church proclaims that God has created each person for eternal life and that Jesus, by his death and resurrection, has broken the chains of sin and death.

When we hear of a death in one of the parishes of the Heart of Jesus Area Faith Community, several things occur. We notify the pastoral leaders so they can keep the deceased and their family in prayer. The appropriate pastoral leader(s) are in contact with the funeral home to arrange the date and time of the funeral and visitation. Then they meet with the family to plan the funeral services.

The funeral rites in the Catholic Church include three major steps – the **vigil** for the deceased, the **funeral liturgy**, and the **rite of committal at the cemetery**. The priest or parish staff meets with the family. Planning funeral services always blends two elements – the needs and desires of the family and the guidelines of the Catholic Church. We will discuss options for the funeral services.

Planning the Funeral

Planning the elements of the funeral liturgies may be done prior to death. Whether you are planning the funeral before or after the death of a loved one, it is important to know the general guidelines for the celebration of funeral liturgies in the Catholic Church. You are always welcome to contact one of the pastoral leaders in the Heart of Jesus Area Faith Community about planning the funeral liturgy.

1. Vigil Service

The Vigil Service is the first part of the funeral rites. This is a simple prayer service including scripture readings and an opportunity to share memories of the deceased. This is also the time where mementos, pictures, and other items special to the deceased are displayed. If the family wants to have a **eulogy** for the deceased, it is preferred that it is shared at the vigil service. It is done along with the invitation for people to share memories about the deceased.

The vigil service and visitation may be held in the funeral home or the church. Often there is a shorter visitation for an hour immediately prior to the funeral Mass at the funeral home or the church.

Favorite songs of the deceased, popular songs or ethnic music should be used at the vigil service. Only sacred music is to be used at the funeral Mass.

2. Funeral Liturgy

This central liturgy is normally celebrated in the church at a **funeral Mass**. It begins with the reception of the body when the casket (or urn) is sprinkled with holy water and the funeral pall (white cloth reminding us of our baptism) is placed on the casket. (No pall is used for cremated remains). A crucifix or bible may be placed on the pall.

The family is given a copy of commonly used **scripture readings** used at funerals. Other scripture passages may be chosen. Generally there is a selection from the Old Testament, Psalms, New Testament, and the Gospel. The Responsorial Psalm is usually sung.

The family gives input on the **music** for the funeral Mass. Since the Mass is a public act of worship of the Church, the liturgical guidelines for selection of music apply. Hymns should reflect the idea of resurrection and hope. The parish staff or musicians can help in choosing hymns. People from several parishes are present so the music chosen should be well known. Normally there are four hymns – opening, preparation of the gifts, at communion, and recessional. The **Lord's Prayer** is recited rather than sung as a solo so everyone can pray together.

The family may also help select the **liturgical ministers** (servers, lector, musician, song leader, extraordinary minister of communion). Extraordinary ministers of communion must be Catholic and appointed in their parish.

3. Rite of Committal

The rite of committal is the final act of the community of faith in caring for the body or remains of its deceased members. It can immediately follow the funeral liturgy or take place at a later date. It is because of our deep reverence for the human body and our hope in the resurrection that we lay the body/remains of our brother/sister to rest" in traditional burial in the cemetery. This usually takes place at the cemetery immediately following the funeral liturgy. After the burial, we welcome everyone to the parish for the funeral luncheon. Sometimes, if the burial is going to be some distance from the parish, the luncheon is served first and then the burial.

If the body or the cremated remains will be buried later, arrangements should be made with the parish.

One of the first decisions you must make is regarding the disposition of the body. Will you have a burial of the body or will the body be cremated? Cremation is permitted by the Catholic Church since 1963. However, the Church does require treating the cremated remains in the same manner as the body. They should be buried in the cemetery. **Scattering the ashes or keeping them at home is not to be done.**

Funeral Envelopes

Loved ones are encouraged to use the "Mass intention" envelope to have a Mass offered for your deceased family member. This is the greatest prayer one can offer for the deceased.

Coping With Grief Prayer

Lord, in this time of grief, loneliness and uncertainty, guide our fumbling steps. Hold us up when we cannot bear to go further, when we cannot see the path before us. Support us and fill us with your strength and grace that we may once again find joy in the morning and peace in our hearts.

Grief to Grace Ministry

Jesus realized that those left behind, after a death, need love and comfort as they grieve. That is why, as he hung on the cross and knew the time for his death was near, he gave the care of his mother to the "disciple whom He loved." At the Heart of Jesus Area Faith Community, we continue this model of care through the *Grief to Grace Ministry*. This ministry contacts loved ones periodically throughout the first year after a death, and beyond as needed, to offer Christian assistance and prayer support in the grieving process.

Holy Redeemer Church in Renville

St. Aloysius Church in Olivia

staloyusius@heartofjesusafc.com

320-523-2030

St. Mary's Church in Bird Island

St. John's Church in Hector

stmary@heartofjesusafc.com

320-365-3593

When A Loved One Dies Planning the Funeral



Psalm 130

Out of the depths I cry to you,
O Lord;

Lord, hear my voice!

Let your ears be attentive
to my voice in supplication.

I hope in the Lord,

I trust in his word.