



*CATHOLIC FUNERAL MASS PLANNING GUIDE
SAINT MARY PARISH, Alexandria, KY*

*Source: Diocese of Portland, Oregon
Edited for use by Saint Mary Parish*

The Catholic Funeral Rite

Saint Mary Parish

- 1. It is important to collaborate with the funeral home staff. They will work with the pastoral staff of a parish when planning a funeral.**

When faced with the loss of a loved one, immediate planning of a funeral is a difficult and trying experience. Parish staff can help expedite the task of planning the funeral rites and make the process less burdensome.

Here at Saint Mary, parishioners serve on a Bereavement team that assists not only in the planning of the funeral, but also organizes and assists other ministries that take place during and after the funeral (i.e., readers, altar servers, Special Ministers of Holy Communion and hospitality ministers at post-funeral receptions in our Undercroft).

Before you begin making any plans for the day-time of the funeral of a loved one, call the funeral home first. They will work with the Priest and parish staff to coordinate the details of the funeral.

- 2. The Church encourages the celebration of funerals with a Mass whenever possible.**

Since the celebration of the Mass is a foretaste of the heavenly banquet in union with God that commemorates and makes present Christ's victory over death, funerals are principally and preferably celebrated with a Mass, our most profound way of expressing communion with the living and the dead. By offering Christ's sacrifice to the Father through the Mass, the Church pleads for God's mercy for the deceased and gives thanks for the hope of eternal life with God.

Various reasons (including deference to the scheduled celebration of the Eucharist on Sundays/Saturday evenings, Holy Days of Obligation, and the Easter Triduum) may lead the pastor to decide, in consultation with the family, to celebrate a funeral *without a Mass*. Nevertheless, the family always has the option to celebrate a funeral Mass (even in the absence of a body or cremated remains) at a later date. In this way, we recall that every member of the Christian faithful shares equally in Christ's death and Resurrection.

3. Music at funerals should express our Catholic faith and be drawn from the Scriptures.

Because of the sacredness of the funeral and its focus on the Paschal Mystery with its promise of salvation, music should be carefully chosen to reflect our shared beliefs, especially as articulated in the Word of God. Ultimately, the purpose of music in the funeral rites is to offer praise and thanksgiving to God. Thus, each funeral is linked with the common prayer and musical tradition of the whole Church, especially the psalms, which have, throughout the ages, expressed the suffering and hope of all God's people. Secular music is not the appropriate accompaniment to the sacred liturgy because it cannot express fully these values of ultimate significance. If this music is to be used, it would be more appropriate during the Wake/Visitation.

Here at St. Mary, Jim Wolfe is the usual musician/cantor for funerals and will assist in arranging for music and songs used for the Funeral Mass. A list of suggested songs will be provided to assist in all of this.

4. During a funeral liturgy, the pall which drapes the casket should never be replaced by an American flag or any other non-Christian covering.

In the United States, it is customary to place a pall (a large, white, rectangular cloth) over the casket as it is received into the church for the funeral liturgy. The pall is a reminder of the white garment with which every Christian is clothed on the day of baptism and is a testament to the dignity of the deceased as a member of the faithful.

American flags and other non-Christian (i.e., secular) symbols do not belong on the casket during the liturgy since they do not evoke the same meaning as the pall. Flags and other insignia may cover the casket **before and after** the funeral liturgy.

5. Cremation.

Cremation *is permitted*, unless chosen for reasons that contradict Christian teaching, particularly on the dignity of and hope for the resurrection of the human body. However, in order to express the symbolism described above, cremation should occur *after* the celebration of the funeral liturgy. *If this is neither possible nor advisable, it is acceptable for the celebration of the funeral rites in the presence of the cremated remains instead of the body.* The presentation and placement of the urn for the funeral liturgy should be simple and solemn so as not to detract from the dignity of the body in its cremated form.

6. Non-practicing Catholics may receive Catholic funerals.

It is an unfortunate reality that many baptized Catholics no longer practice their faith and may consider themselves to have been away from the Church for too long to be ever welcomed again by the Church. Such individuals or their families may feel uncomfortable in a church and ultimately decide against having a Catholic funeral.

By our baptism, however, we have been made equal in dignity before the Lord, and the Church, our Mother, bears the suffering of all those who became her sons and daughters through baptism. Thus, the Church offers funeral rites (including a funeral Mass) even for non-practicing Catholics and, under certain circumstances, for non-Catholic Christians. Although the deceased may not have participated fully in the life of the Church on earth, the Church longs for her separated children to share in Christ's blessings. She desires to pray for them and with their loved ones so that their sins may be forgiven and they may dwell forever in the presence of God in Heaven.



At the death of a Christian, whose life of faith was begun in the waters of baptism and strengthened at the Eucharistic table, the Church intercedes on behalf of the deceased because of its confident belief that death is not the end nor does it break the bonds forged in life. The Church also ministers to the sorrowing and consoles them in the funeral rites with the comforting word of God and the Sacrament of the Eucharist.



My Wishes for Funeral Mass

Name: _____

Date: __/__/__

Copies to: Church Office ___ Spouse ___ Children _____ Other _____

If you wish to have your Funeral Mass celebrated at St. Mary Parish, please make a copy and mail/bring to Office. If you have any questions, please call 635-4188.

PLANNING THE FUNERAL LITURGY

CHOOSING THE READINGS:

The first step to planning the liturgy involves choosing the readings: the first reading is from the Old Testament, the second reading is a New Testament and the Gospel reading. On our website you will find readings from each category to choose from. We recommend you begin by choosing the Gospel reading. The Gospel you choose will be the core message of the Mass.

FAMILY PARTICIPATION:

There are many ways friends and family can actively participate in the funeral Mass.

PSALMS & HYMNS:

More than anything else in worship, music affects our feelings and the atmosphere in which we pray. In this packet you will find a list of hymns to choose from. You will need to select a Gathering hymn, Offertory hymn, Communion hymn, and a Recessional hymn. You will also find a list of Psalm with their refrains.

NOTE:

Frequently on these occasions there is a scarcity of time for quiet reflective reading. If that should be the situation, concentrate on selecting the three readings.

THE FUNERAL LITURGY

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 faith as one Body in Christ to reaffirm 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.

The funeral Mass includes; the Welcoming Rite, the Liturgy of the Word, the Liturgy of the Eucharist, the Final Commendation and Farewell.

RECEPTION OF THE BODY AT THE CHURCH

Since the church is the place where the community of faith assembles for worship the rite of reception of the body at the church has great significance. In the act of receiving the body, the members of the community acknowledge the deceased as one of their own, one who was welcomed in baptism and who held a place in the assembly. Through the use of various baptismal symbols, the community shows the reverence due to the body, the temple of the Spirit, and in this way prepares for the funeral liturgy.

LITURGY OF THE WORD

The reading of the word of God is an essential element of the celebration of the funeral liturgy. The readings proclaim the paschal mystery, convey the hope of being gathered together again in God's kingdom, and encourage the witness of Christian life. Above all the readings tell of God's design for a world in which suffering and death will relinquish their hold on all whom God has called his own.

Through the Psalm the community expresses its grief, praise, and acknowledges its Creator and Redeemer as the sure source of trust and hope in times of trial. In the Intercessory prayers the community responds to the proclamation of the Word of God by prayer for the deceased and all the dead, for all who mourn, and for all in the assembly.

LITURGY OF THE EUCHARIST

The community with the priest offers to the Father the sacrifice of the New Covenant and shares in the one bread and the one cup. In partaking of the body of Christ, all are given a foretaste of eternal life in Christ and are united with Christ, with each other, and with all the faithful, living and dead.

FINAL COMMENDATION AND FAREWELL

The final commendation is a final farewell by the members of the community, an act of respect for one of their members, whom they entrust to the tender and merciful embrace of God.

LITURGICAL SYMBOLS

PLACING OF THE PALL

A funeral Pall (a white cloth draped over the casket) reminds us of the white garment given at baptism and symbolizes our life in Christ. Family members are encouraged to assist in the placing of the pall, which takes place during the Welcoming Rite at the church.

SPRINKLING OF HOLY WATER

When the priest sprinkles holy water over the casket during the service it should serve to recall the initial washing in baptism which gives us the basis for hope in the personal rising of our loved one to eternal life.

INCENSING OF THE BODY

As Christians we believe the body is a temple of the Holy Spirit and one day will be resurrected by God's mighty power. During the Mass the priest walks around the casket and incenses the body as a sign of our respect for the remains, as a symbol of the community's prayers rising to the throne of God, and as a final farewell of this departed one to God.

THE EASTER CANDLE

The large paschal candle stands in the sanctuary. It symbolizes the risen Christ and tells us he has conquered sin and death and now lives in our midst.

Pre-planning a Funeral Liturgy

USE Funeral Planning Booklet provided by Office or the resources on the parish website and then return this Form and Booklet to Parish Office when completed. Please write your selections on this page and make a copy for yourself.

1. First Reading: Old Testament

Reading _____

1st Reading read by: _____

2. Second Reading: New Testament

Reading _____

2nd Reading read by: _____

3. Gospel Reading: Gospel

Gospel _____

*The gospel reading will be read by a priest or deacon.

4. Psalm & Hymns:

Responsorial Psalm: _____

Gathering Hymn: _____

Offertory Hymn: _____

Communion Hymn: _____

Recessional Hymn: _____

HYMN SUGGESTIONS FOR FUNERAL LITURGY

USE BREAKING BREAD HYMNAL

Gathering Songs

I am the Bread of Life
In the Day of the Lord
I Know that My Redeemer Lives
Here I Am Lord
Canticle of the Sun
City of God
We Walk By Faith
We Belong to You
Christ in Me Arise
Be Not Afraid
On Eagles Wings
Glory in the Cross
Rain Down
Gather us In
Gather Your People
In This Place
Our God is Here
Blest Be the Lord
Sing with All the Saints in Glory
Alleluia Sing to Jesus

*(Any seasonal hymn depending on the time of year – i.e. Advent, Lent) – for example,
O Come O Come Emmanuel would be fitting for a funeral liturgy during the season of Advent*

Psalm Responses

Psalm 23: The Lord is My Shepherd
Psalm 25: To You O Lord
Psalm 27: The Lord is My Light and My Salvation
Psalm 34: The Cry of the Poor
Psalm 40: Here I Am Lord, I come to do your will
Psalm 63: My Soul is Thirsting
Psalm 91: Be With Me Lord when I am in trouble
Psalm 95: If Today you hear God's voice
Psalm 103: The Lord is kind and Merciful
Psalm 116: I Will Walk in the Presence of the Lord
Psalm 138: On the Day I Called

Preparation of Gifts

I Have Loved You
We Remember
Prayer of Saint Francis
We Walk by Faith
Servant Song
The Servant Song
Eye Has Not Seen
Amazing Grace
Lord of All Hopefulness
How Can I Keep from Singing
Here I Am
Here I Am Lord
Sacred Silence
O God You Search Me
There is a Longing
Age to Age
The Summons
O How Blessed (The Beatitudes)
(Any Marian hymn)

Communion hymns

(Any song from Preparation of Gifts or from Gathering Songs)

I am the Bread of Life
Shepherd Me O God (psalm 23)
We Remember
Unless a Grain of Wheat
One Love Released
The King of Love My Shepherd is (Psalm 23)
Worthy is the Lamb
There is a Longing
As Grains of Wheat
Taste and See
One Bread One Body
Bread of Life
Holy is His Name

Meditation or prelude hymns

Ave Maria

Hail Mary, Gentle Woman

Irish Blessing

In this Very Room

Songs from other denominations such as The Old Rugged Cross, In the Garden, Just a Closer Walk With Thee, etc.

Recessional hymns

(Songs from Gathering, preparation of Gifts and Communion)

How Great Thou art

How Can I Keep From Singing

Alleluia Love is Alive

Mine Eyes Have Seen the Glory

Rise Up With Him

Soon and Very Soon

Lead Me Lord

City of God

Canticle of the Sun

Holy God We Praise Thy Name

Seasonal Songs to Consider during:

Advent

O Come O Come Emmanuel

Ready the Way

Soon and Very Soon

The King Shall Come

In the Day of the Lord

Creator of the Stars of Night

Christmas

(Any Christmas Hymn in
the Christmas section of the hymnal)

Lent

Hosea (Come Back to Me)

Beyond the Days

Jesus Meek and Humble

Create in Me (Psalm 51)

Easter

Jesus Christ is Risen Today

Glory in the Cross

Alleluia Love is Alive

Alleluia Alleluia Let the Holy Anthems Rise

Jesus is Risen

