

# Office for Worship

## Funeral Liturgy Guidelines

The norms established by the Order of Christian Funerals are to be adhered to in all funeral liturgies celebrated within the Diocese of Greensburg. These guidelines are intended to elaborate upon certain matters pertaining to the funeral liturgy.

### The Choice of Liturgy

Two forms of the funeral liturgy are provided in the Order of Christian Funerals: the Funeral Mass and the funeral liturgy outside Mass.

There are days when the Funeral Mass may not be celebrated:

1. Solemnities that are holy days of obligation
2. Holy Thursday
3. The Easter triduum
4. The Sundays of Advent, Lent, and Easter
5. In the Diocese of Greensburg, the Funeral Mass may not be celebrated on any Sunday.

There are occasions when the funeral liturgy outside Mass may be most appropriate. Such times would include those where the assembly consists principally of individuals unfamiliar with or incapable of entering fully into the Eucharistic mystery.

Funerals celebrated for non-Catholics (catechumens excluded) are also most appropriately celebrated with the funeral liturgy outside Mass. Pastoral concern requires that consideration be given to the most appropriate means by which the funeral liturgy may bring hope and consolation to the living.

### Liturgical Ministers

The celebration of the funeral liturgy is especially entrusted to pastors and parochial vicars. When no priest is available, deacons preside at the funeral rites. When no priest or deacon is available for the vigil, the rite of committal, or related rites, a layperson presides.

Other liturgical ministers (readers, musicians, pall bearers, extraordinary ministers of holy Communion, altar servers, etc.) should normally assist in celebrating the funeral liturgy. Their participation actively speaks to the obligation of the believing faithful to console those who mourn.

### Eulogies

The focus of a Christian funeral is the paschal mystery: the suffering, death, and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ. Eulogies are therefore to be given at the vigil service or at some appropriate time during the wake.

Within the funeral liturgy, the Order of Christian Funerals does allow for a "remembrance of the deceased before the final commendation." This remembrance is to be brief and focus upon the Christian life of the deceased.

Only one person is permitted to offer such a remembrance at a Funeral Liturgy.

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## **Principles Regarding Cremation**

When cremation is chosen, the church prefers that the body be cremated after the funeral, thus allowing for the presence of the body at the Funeral Mass. When circumstances require it, however, cremation and committal may take place even before the funeral liturgy.

All the usual rites which are celebrated in the presence of the body of the deceased may also be celebrated in the presence of the cremated remains.

The primary symbols of the Roman Catholic funeral liturgy are retained even when the funeral liturgy is celebrated in the presence of the cremated remains. The remains should be treated with the same dignity and respect as the body.

They may be carried in procession and/or placed on a table where the coffin normally would be. The paschal candle and sprinkling with holy water are primary symbols of baptism and should be used during the Funeral Mass. However, the pall is not used.

Photographs and other mementos may be used at the vigil, but are not appropriate for the Mass.

"Cremated remains may be buried in a grave, entombed in a mausoleum or columbarium or even buried at sea." The practice of scattering cremated remains on the sea, from the air, or on the ground is not permitted.

Likewise, "keeping cremated remains in the home of a relative or friend of the deceased are not the reverent disposition that the church requires." The principle of respect for the cremated remains of a deceased Christian mirrors the respect afforded their body.

The body is always laid to rest with solemnity and dignity. (

*~ All references taken from the Order of Christian Funerals, Appendix: Cremation; 1997.*

## **Non-Christian Practices**

In the funeral liturgy the church gives thanks and praise to God for Christ's victory over sin and death. We commend the deceased to the mercy of God and seek his strength that we might continue to proclaim the paschal mystery.

Through sign and symbol, word and gesture, we reaffirm our belief that through baptism we share in Christ's death and resurrection. We look to the day when all the faithful departed will be raised up and united in the kingdom of heaven.

Ritual practices, actions and gestures provided by non-Church organizations, societies, or individuals should therefore be evaluated to ensure harmony with the church's message.

Any practice which contradicts or contravenes that message has no part in the funeral liturgy. Ongoing formation is therefore necessary to promote awareness that various popular customs may actually be inappropriate at Christian burial.