



## **GUIDELINES FOR CATHOLIC FUNERAL RITES**

Church of St. Gabriel the Archangel

### **INTRODUCTION**

The *Catholic Funeral Rites in the Order of Christian Funerals (1989)* are celebrations that enable the Christian community to mourn as well as to hope by focusing on the mystery of the death and resurrection of Christ. These guidelines are offered to assist in effectively preparing the funeral rites with individuals and families.

### **Understanding Death: A Christian Perspective**

Death and passing on to eternal life are mysteries at the center of the Church's belief.

Although American culture generally recoils from death and tries to deny it, "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)*

### **Celebration of the Church**

Christian funerals are not private observances, but celebrations of the whole Body of Christ, in which, "Christians celebrate the funeral rites to offer worship, praise, and thanksgiving to God for the gift of life which has now been returned to God, the author of life and the hope of the just." *(Order of Christian Funerals, #5)* Therefore these rites are celebrated with appropriate choices of music, readings, gestures, and decorations that are consistent with a Catholic understanding of death. "The celebration of the Christian funeral brings hope and consolation to the living. While proclaiming the Gospel of Jesus Christ and witnessing to Christian hope in the resurrection, the funeral rites also recall to all who take part in them God's mercy and judgment and meet the human need to turn always to God in times of crisis." *(Order of Christian Funerals, #7)*

## **PREFERENCES FOR FUNERAL RITES**

### **First Preference: Funeral rites with the body present.**

The Catholic Church prefers that the body of the deceased be present for the Vigil Service. In addition, the body of the deceased should be brought to the local parish church for the Funeral Mass.

The Rite of Committal of the body normally takes place at the cemetery although the committal can be done at the end of the Funeral Mass. The body of the deceased is to be interred, either in the ground or in a crypt following the Funeral Mass.

### **Second Preference: Funeral rites with the body present and cremation afterwards**

If the choice to cremate a body has been made, the Church recommends that the cremation take place after the Funeral Liturgy. In this case, the Vigil for the Deceased and related rites and prayers should be celebrated in the presence of the body. Then, the body should be brought to the parish church for the Funeral Liturgy with cremation taking place afterwards.

After cremation of the body, the cremated remains should be committed for burial according to the Order of Christian Funerals. The cremated remains should be treated with the same respect given to the human body. Therefore, they should be buried in a grave or entombed in a mausoleum or columbarium (but not a common/communal columbarium). This is the reverent disposition of the cremated remains that the Church requires.

### **Third Preference: Funeral rites with the cremated remains present**

The Catholic Church does allow the celebration of the Funeral Liturgy in the presence of the cremated remains of the deceased as a third choice. The Church strongly prefers that the body of the deceased be present for its funeral rites since the presence of the body clearly recalls the life and death of the person.

For various reasons someone may choose cremation first. When this happens, the Vigil for the deceased may be celebrated in the presence of the cremated remains. Likewise, the cremated remains may be brought to church for the celebration of the Funeral Mass and then buried appropriately.

## **SCHEDULING THE FUNERAL LITURGY**

While we will do everything we can to accommodate family needs, funeral arrangements should never be finalized at the funeral home until the parish has been consulted. We always have to consider the scheduled use of the building, the availability of clergy, and the occasional restrictions of the Church year (which prohibit the celebration of a funeral Mass). Since we want to serve you as best we can this consultation is important.

Funeral Masses are not celebrated on Solemnities of obligation, on Holy Thursday, Good Friday, Holy Saturday, Easter Sunday, or on the Sundays of Advent, Lent and the Easter Season.

## **THE CELEBRATION OF FUNERALS**

We at St. Gabriel the Archangel Catholic Church express our condolences to you during this time of sorrow. Please know that we are praying for you and your loved one. The Catholic Funeral Rites in the Order of Christian Funerals are celebrations that enable the Christian community to mourn as well as to hope by focusing on the mystery of the death and resurrection of Christ. These guidelines are offered to assist in effectively preparing the funeral rites with individuals and families.

### **GUIDELINES FOR CATHOLIC FUNERAL RITES**

A parish priest will meet with the family to prepare the Funeral Mass. He will explain the meaning and significance of a Catholic Funeral Mass and explain the Funeral Planning Sheet.

Floral arrangements are welcome, but should not take away from the liturgical space.

Recorded music or non-worship music may not be used within the Funeral Mass. Appropriate recorded music can be used at the wake and at the cemetery.

Liturgical music, appropriate to the liturgical season, and the funeral rite may be chosen. The role of organist, cantor and choir is to assist the congregation in singing the Mass.

Soloists have very limited possible roles within Catholic worship. Their role is to assist the congregation in its prayerful meditation on the mystery of salvation. An appropriate solo is possible during the presentation of the gifts and after the congregation's communion hymn.

Ordinarily, trained and prepared liturgical ministers may exercise the role of cantor, lector, or Eucharistic minister. Family members or friends who wish to participate at the Funeral Mass should be familiar with the structure of the Mass and consult with the priest preparing the Funeral Mass.

One family member or friend may speak briefly before the "Final Commendation" when invited by the presider to offer some words of remembrance. The brief words need to be prepared. Spontaneous remarks and eulogies can be offered at the luncheon or gathering afterward. Eulogies and biographical sketches of the deceased's life are not appropriate within the church service, but are fitting at the conclusion of a wake, at the family gathering after the burial, or may be included in the printed worship aid. A eulogy recounts some or all of the significant events in the life of the deceased.

Non-religious symbols may not be displayed in church at the Funeral Mass.

To choose the readings and universal prayers, please visit our [website](http://stgabrielstl.org), stgabrielstl.org.

## **WORDS OF REMEMBRANCE**

Words of Remembrances are given to address the virtues of a Christian life well-lived; it is most appropriate to share the gifts the person received and the gifts they shared in their life. Words of remembrance do not attempt to give a biography, but to share some insight into the faith and values of the deceased.

The Words of Remembrance should not last longer than ten minutes.

## **VOLUNTARY FUNERAL STIPENDS**

While no stipend is expected, families often choose to make a gift as a sign of their appreciation for the pastoral services rendered by the presiding priest and assisting deacon. In addition to the funeral service itself, this may include visitation and burial services.

The following are suggestions. In case of financial hardship, all stipends may be waived.

Funeral	\$200.00
Visitation in church	\$100.00
Servers	\$10.00 per server

## **GUEST PRIEST/DEACON**

If the family of the deceased requests a guest priest or deacon to be present at the Funeral Mass, the priest from St. Gabriel is to be informed. The family would need to provide the name and phone number of the guest clergy. Typically, a guest priest or deacon who is presiding would meet with the family to plan the Funeral Mass. The St. Gabriel clergy can also assist, if necessary. A guest priest or deacon is always welcome to concelebrate (or assist in the case of a deacon), as long as he is in good standing. At the discretion of the presider, the guest priest/deacon may be permitted to give the homily, lead the final commendation and/or the committal service at the cemetery.

## **CHARITABLE DONATIONS**

Charitable donations are a great alternative for families who do not want to receive a lot of flowers, and are particularly appropriate when the deceased has suffered from a specific illness or disability. St. Gabriel offers a pre-printed envelope for those families who wish to have friends and family make a donation to the Society of St. Vincent de Paul in the name of your loved one. We also offer an online giving option as a one-time guest for those who wish to give electronically. They can visit our [Online Giving](#) page.

\* Revised July 2021