

Order of Christian Funerals

Q: What is meant by the Order of Christian Funerals

The prayers and rituals surrounding a person's death are designed to be a continuous flow of prayer and liturgies from death until burial.

At the time of death those present will, with prayer, commend the deceased's soul to God. The rituals that follow are designed to give a special remembrance to the faith filled life of the deceased and give comfort to those loved ones left behind.

After the body has been prepared by the family or others the Wake service is usually held the night before the funeral liturgy. The wake is a collection of prayers, songs, intercessions, and scripture readings. It is also an excellent time for eulogizing the deceased, usually by friends or family members.

The funeral liturgy (MASS) takes place at the parish of the deceased so that the entire community has a chance to pray for, remember and commend to God the soul of the deceased. The family and the presiding priest can personalize the service by choosing appropriate scripture reading and songs from the several available for the funeral liturgy. As a general practice eulogies are not done during the Mass but if so permitted by the presider should be short and at the appropriate time.

After the final commendation at the end of the Mass the procession takes place to the Catholic Cemetery where The Committal takes place. While many see this as the last good-bye in reality it is once again the opportunity for the living to commend the soul of the deceased into the loving and eternal arms of God.

Q: My mother went to church everyday of her life until she got sick, then she was in a nursing home for 6 years and the new pastor at her parish does not know her, why should we have a funeral Mass for her in her parish?

Returning the body to the parish church for the Funeral Mass provides a strong witness to the love of the Church and Her sacraments that your mother had all her life. The Funeral Mass in the church also allows the entire community to pray for the soul of your mother and to commend her to the loving care of God. The Funeral Mass provides a familiar comfort for all those who are mourning. It is also an appropriate time to remind ourselves of the bond between the dead and the living and the eternal Communion of Saints.

Q: Who designs the Funeral Mass?

As with all the prayers and rituals surrounding dying, death and burial, the Parish Priest is the best possible resource for putting together the Vigil, Funeral Mass and Committal. Catholic Cemeterians also have special training concerning the committal and funeral directors can be of assistance but the priest is the prime source of information.

Booklets such as “Now and at the hour of our Death” are available through the Catholic Cemeteries and they are very helpful in preparing for funerals.

Q: Cremation and the Church may have me very confused as to the Mass?

The rules on cremation have been changing since 1963. As far as the Funeral Mass is concerned, it is preferred that the corporeal remains be present for the Mass and then the remains are cremated with burial or entombment in the Catholic Cemetery to follow. Recently permission has also been given for the cremated remains to be present during the Funeral Mass if so desired.