



Bishop's Office
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Guidelines for Catholic funerals in the Diocese of Sale

Introduction

“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, Intro., 1*)

Funerals in the Catholic Tradition

In the Catholic tradition, a Funeral Mass (sometimes also called Mass of Christian Burial or Requiem Mass) is celebrated for the deceased loved one. For pastoral reasons, a Liturgy of the Word could be more appropriate.

We pray for the repose of the soul and the forgiveness of sins of the deceased. We thank the Risen Lord for the life of his/her life and offer prayers of comforting hope for the bereaved (*cf. General Instruction of the Roman Missal, 379-385*).

The Priest or Deacon asked to celebrate the funeral determines the content and form of the funeral liturgy, keeping in mind the wishes of the family. We use an officially approved book: ‘Order of Christian Funerals’. This book gives a wonderful selection of prayers, readings and rituals that can be used.

Some people have experiences of secular funerals made up of eulogies, photo presentations, poems and popular music. However, the Catholic Church has developed, since ancient times, a richness of liturgical prayers and biblical readings. We offer some guidelines, therefore, of what is appropriate for a Catholic funeral.

- Terms such as ‘Words of Remembrance’ or ‘Reflections on the person’s life’ are preferable to ‘Eulogy’,
- It is not necessary to have a EULOGY. The priest can be given some information or notes about the deceased for him to use in his homily.
- If the family would like some words of remembrance we suggest ONE written out (it can be emotional and difficult to say what should be said). It could be shared with someone else (to avoid repetition) or even read by someone else.
- LENGTH – we ask that Words of Remembrance be kept to 5 minutes and no more than 10 minutes. This can help a Funeral Mass or Liturgy of the Word, but numerous and/or lengthy reflections can undermine funerals.
- CONTENT: a couple of appropriate reflections that will bring out the Christian character of the person, rather than too much historical detail.
- Memories of the life of the deceased could be shared at a viewing, in a separate moment before the Mass or Liturgy of the Word.

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- POWERPOINT PHOTO PRESENTATIONS are not appropriate during a Catholic funeral; our recommendation is to do this at the wake or some other time with the family.
- The title page of a booklet and media announcement should read: **Mass of Christian burial** for..... or **Funeral Mass** for..... or **Requiem Mass for the repose of the soul of** A simple service, i.e. not a Mass, should be called: **the Funeral liturgy of.....** or **Rite of Christian Burial** of
- We do not like calling a Catholic Funeral “a Celebration of the life of” , because it does not express the full depth and meaning of our understanding of funerals.
- Funeral directors are to be reminded that they tell their clients it is not necessary to have booklets for the funeral service

Music

Music for a Catholic funeral is liturgical. Appropriate hymns or music should be chosen. Romantic ballads, popular or rock music, political or football club songs are not appropriate. But a song like that could be used after the burial service.

Cremation

Whereas the burial or interment of earthly remains is the preference of the Church, cremation is allowed. If a cremation was to follow the funeral Mass, it would be expected that prayers would not be prayed at the cremation. Care is to be taken to ensure that the ashes are interred in an appropriate place.

Prayer

Eternal rest grant unto them, O Lord. And let perpetual light shine upon them. May they rest in peace. Amen.

Please ensure that these guidelines are made known to local funeral directors.

Bishop Christopher C Prowse
Catholic Bishop of Sale
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