

Can non-scriptural material be used?

In every liturgy, the Church attaches great importance to the reading of the Word of God. The readings proclaim to the assembly the paschal mystery, teach remembrance of the dead and convey the hope of being gathered together again in God's heavenly kingdom. Above all, the readings tell of God's designs for the world in which suffering and death will relinquish their hold on all whom God has called his own. In the celebration of the Liturgy of the Word biblical readings may not be replaced by non-biblical material. However, non-scriptural material such as a favorite poem may be incorporated into the vigil.

What about prayer services, memorials and tributes from non-church organizations?

The funeral Mass is the central celebration of the funeral rites. Additional prayer services or memorials should be held apart from the funeral Mass and at another time. Such additions are best included in the vigil celebration.

Why a funeral pall to cover the casket?

To emphasize the importance of the person's baptism, the ritual uses a funeral pall at the funeral mass. This pall is a reminder of the white baptismal garment and a sign of the Christian dignity of the deceased. Just as the new Christian was clothed in the white garment when he or she became a member of the Church, the casket is covered with a white cloth as the person enters into new life in the resurrection of Jesus. The pall is placed on the coffin during the rite of reception of the body at the beginning of the funeral mass.

Where is the appropriate place of burial?

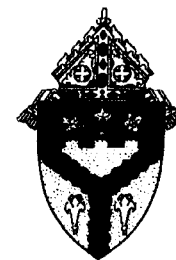
The Church asks that, in keeping with a spirit of reverence, the earthly remains of the deceased be buried in a grave or entombed in a mausoleum that has been blessed. A specific place for a person's remains helps focus the remembering of and prayer for the deceased person by family and friends, and by the Church in general.

The scattering of cremated remains, their placement in a favorite place or keeping them in the homes of relatives does not display appropriate reverence. The Church does not offer a prayer service when this kind of disposal is chosen.

Who should be contacted upon the death of a loved one?

It is important to contact the parish regarding the planning and scheduling of a funeral before arrangements are finalized with a funeral service provider. Ideally it is the family members themselves who contact the parish rather than leaving details and planning to the funeral director.

A CHRISTIAN FUNERAL: SOURCE OF HOPE



THE ARCHDIOCESE OF WINNIPEG
2005

PREPARING TO CELEBRATE THE ORDER OF CHRISTIAN FUNERALS

Why Funeral Rites?

The death of a relative or friend is a time of great grief. Every death is mourned in a unique way depending on the relationship one has had with the deceased. In many ways every person's grief is personal. At the same time, as members of a faith community we join with others in remembering, grieving and seeking consolation. It is in this community that we find comfort and support. It is in this community that we are reminded of the risen Lord who is our strength. The rites of the Church during this time of the funeral help us to come to terms with our loss. The rites offer meaning during our time of despair.

Walking through the Order of Christian Funerals

The three funeral rites are principally concerned with the final journey that a community makes with its deceased loved one. Christian liturgy places a person's death, and the sorrow of the mourners, in the context of Christ's death and resurrection. We pray for the deceased and allow our faith in the resurrection of Jesus to sustain us. All three rites are to be celebrated in the presence of the body of the deceased whenever possible.

The principal ritual unfolds in three moments:

i) The Vigil

The vigil, customarily in the form of the Liturgy of the Word, consists of the introductory rites, a proclamation from scripture, a homily, the prayer of intercessions and a concluding rite. The vigil takes place in the church or the funeral home. The body of the deceased is present. The vigil provides the opportunity of personalizing the liturgy and offering words of remembrance.

ii) The Funeral Mass

The funeral mass includes the reception of the body or cremated remains, the celebration of the Liturgy of the Word, the Liturgy of the Eucharist, and the final commendation and farewell. The Mass may be followed by the procession to the place of committal.

iii) The Rite of Committal

The rite of committal begins with an invitation and prayer over the place of burial. The rite continues with the words of committal and the Lord's prayer. A responsory and blessing conclude the three moments of the Order of Christian funerals.

Commonly Asked Questions:

When is it the appropriate time for Words of Remembrance?

The central focus of the funeral liturgy is the death and resurrection of Jesus, whose gift of redemption gives us victory over death. It is important to maintain the primacy of this message of hope. Words of remembrance ideally occur as part of the vigil celebration, at a time prior to the Funeral Mass or following the liturgy at the reception.

Is Cremation permitted?

Cremation is permitted. However, the Church prefers the option of having the cremation take place after the funeral liturgy in order to celebrate its three principal funeral rites in the presence of the body. The Church can then show reverence to the body through the signs that have long been part of the Church's tradition.

Why have a Vigil?

The role of the vigil for the deceased in the process of Christian burial is very important. In a society that prizes expediency, there is a growing trend to omit the vigil and proceed immediately to the funeral liturgy. The vigil is the opportunity for family, friends and the Christian community to gather to remember the life of the deceased, express grief and offer comfort and consolation. It is also a time for family and friends to face the reality of death, to begin the process of grieving and to continue the process of healing and consolation. The vigil is an integral moment in the pastoral care of the living and is not to be omitted.

Can a Funeral Mass be celebrated in the funeral home?

The Church is where the community gathers to celebrate our Christian journey. The parish church is the place of prayer and sacrament for the local community. A funeral, though personal, is not private and therefore is worthy of the dignity of the church's worship space. The celebration of the funeral mass is not permitted outside of the parish church.

What type of Music is acceptable?

Music is an integral part of the funeral rites. The text of the songs should express the paschal mystery of the Lord's suffering, death and resurrection. The music selected should relate to the readings from Scripture and the proclamation of the Christian faith. The limited use of secular music may be incorporated into the vigil.