



Guidelines to assist you in planning the various liturgies at the death of a loved one.



Eternal rest grant onto them, Oh Lord.

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## **What does the Catholic Church do when someone dies?**

The Catholic Church does not deny death but recognizes that God, in the person of Jesus of Nazareth, has gone before us in all things, including death, has experienced what we experience in our mourning and is with us in our sorrow.

The “Order of Christian Funerals” offers a progression of liturgical services (rites) that are associated with the funeral of a person associated with the Catholic Church. The prayers, readings from Sacred Scripture, music and actions involved during these times of prayer offers those who mourn hope, consolation, and support in their time of grief while reminding them of the Christian belief of salvation, heaven, and resurrection on the last day.

After dealing with the initial shock and bewilderment of being with a loved one when they die or upon hearing the news of the death of a loved one, the immediate family begins to notify family and friends. We encourage that only one member of the family be appointed to contact the priest at Saint Luke University Parish. This contact with the parish should come before any plans are made with a local funeral home because:

1. We want to offer pastoral assistance in your time of grief and mourning - offering condolences both personally and on behalf of the parish community, to pray with those who mourn and for the deceased, and to talk and plan the funeral liturgies.
2. We want to make sure that the dates and times you request for the funeral liturgies are available on our calendar.

While every effort will be made to meet the requests of the grieving family, sometimes other commitments and calendar events may require some flexibility concerning the date and time of the funeral rites.

The liturgies that are involved in the funeral rites of the Catholic Church are:

- the Vigil for the Deceased, also known as the Wake Service
- Mass of Christian Burial
- the Rite of Burial

Ideally, these funeral rites take place at a time that allows as many of your family and friends to take part as possible.



## **What is the Vigil for the Deceased?**

One could say that the “vigil” is the whole block of time that extends from the death of a person through their funeral or burial. This period allows the family to begin to adjust to their loss: the death of a loved one; to begin to express their sorrow and bereavement; to receive emotional and physical support from one another, their friends, and their Church. In many cultures, the time between the death of a person and their funeral has been called the “wake.” The wake or visitation most often takes place at a funeral home, with the body of the deceased present. The visitation is not a Church requirement. It does, however, give the family and friends a chance to gather to console one another and to receive the condolences of family, friends, and acquaintances of the deceased. In the past few years, it has become more common for families to receive visitors in the gathering space of the parish church, or perhaps in the church itself, in a timely fashion just before the funeral Mass.

At some time during the visitation, the family may decide to have prayer service that is structured around the Liturgy of the Word. Along with readings from Sacred Scripture, there is a homily, intercessory prayers, and the Lord’s Prayer. The singing of hymns is encouraged. A priest or deacon is the usual presiding minister, though a layperson may preside if a priest or deacon is not available. The recitation of the rosary is not required as part of the vigil for the deceased. If the rosary was a prayer often used by the deceased, then it may be prayed by those assembled at some point during the time of visitation. It does not have to be led by a priest.



## **Are there times when a Funeral Mass cannot be celebrated?**

Funeral Masses cannot be celebrated on:

- Holy Thursday
- Good Friday
- Holy Saturday
- Easter Sunday
- Holy Days of Obligation
  - January 1, Mary, the Mother of God
  - August 15, the Assumption of Mary;
  - November 1, All Saint's Day;
  - December 8, the Immaculate Conception of Mary;
- December 25, Christmas
- Sundays of Advent, Lent, or Easter

When it is not possible to have a funeral Mass, the vigil for the deceased and the rite of committal may take place and a Mass for the repose of the soul of the deceased is scheduled for a convenient time.

The funeral Mass or Mass of Christian Burial is for the repose of the soul of the deceased, as well as the consolation of the family and friends. It is an opportunity for the family and friends to gather at the Eucharistic table and pray for the deceased. Whether the Mass is a funeral Mass or a memorial Mass (in memory of), the homily should be based on the readings and offer solace to the mourners while reminding them of the Christian belief of salvation, heaven, and resurrection on the last day.

## **What is involved in the Mass of Christian Burial?**

The format of the Mass of Christian Burial is similar to Sunday Mass. This is not a private, family-only celebration of the Eucharist; it should be celebrated in its fullness by the whole community. Like Sunday, there is usually a reading from the Old Testament; a Psalm Response, which should be sung; a reading from the New Testament; and a Gospel reading. On pages seven and eight, we offer some selections from Sacred Scripture that the Church recommends for funeral liturgies.

The Mass parts should be sung and involvement by the worshiping community in the liturgical celebration is called for. Appendix A is a planning guide to assist you, with the help of the pastoral staff, in planning a funeral Mass.

### **Funeral Mass distinction are:**

- The deceased's body is welcomed and blessed with holy water, as a reminder of baptism, at the doors of the church as the funeral Mass begins.
- The pall is a white cover that is placed on the casket by family members or the pallbearers, after the coffin has been blessed with holy water. The pall is a reminder of the baptismal garment given to us at baptism when we "put on Christ." It is also a sign of the Christian dignity of the deceased and that all are equal in the eyes of God.
- The casket sits at the entrance to the altar area with the lit paschal candle in front of it. Tradition has the deceased facing the same way they faced in life, i.e., the laity facing the altar, clergy facing the people.
- After Communion, and immediately before the final commendation, a member or a friend of the family may speak briefly in remembrance of the deceased. This is not the time for an extended eulogy or listing of accomplishments or the telling of stories about the deceased.
- Incense is often used as a sign of honor to the body of the deceased, which through baptism became a temple of the Holy Spirit. Incense is also used as a sign of the community's prayers for the deceased rising to the throne of God and as a sign of farewell.

### **Please note that only Christian symbols may rest on or be placed near the coffin during the funeral liturgy.**

- A Book of the Gospels or a Bible, as a sign that Christians live by the Word of God and that fidelity to that Word leads to eternal life.
- A cross, as a reminder that the Christian is marked by the cross in baptism and through Jesus' suffering on the cross is brought to the victory of the Resurrection.

Any flowers or other symbols, such as a national flag or flags or insignia of associations, have no place in the funeral liturgy. They are removed at the entrance to the church and may be replaced at the end of the funeral Mass as the casket is taken from the church.

## **Music**

The music format of the funeral Mass is similar to Sunday Mass. Families of the deceased may request specific music selections for the service, and those requests will be met whenever possible, with the final decision left to the Music Minister. The Saint Luke University Parish Music Minister is available to assist you in choosing music that is appropriate to the funeral Mass and other funeral services. On pages, nine and ten there are some selections to help you in your planning.

Families of the deceased may request specific musicians (i.e., a member of the family, etc.) to assist Saint Luke University Parish musicians in providing music for the service. Every effort will be made to incorporate your musicians, with the final decision on incorporation being left to the Music Minister.

Should the family develop an electronic media memorial presentation, please contact the Music Minister to make arrangements for its display.

You should contact our Music Minister for names and payment arrangements for musician(s).

## **Cremation**

The Catholic Church does not prohibit cremation. The preference is that the body is present for the vigil service and funeral Mass, since the focus of the readings, prayers and images speak of the body. Following the final commendation, rather than proceeding to the cemetery for the internment, the body would be taken to the crematorium. Later the family would gather privately for the internment of the cremated remains. There is no prohibition with regards to the cremation taking place first. While the imagery is somewhat awkward, it is acceptable.

The Catholic Church does not support the keeping of the cremated remains at home or having them spread in the air, over water, or on the ground. The Church's preference is always internment: in the ground or in a columbarium, a burial vault with niches to hold the urn containing cremated remains of the deceased.

## **Burial**

It is the hope of the Catholic Church that the body of the deceased is buried in the earth or interred in a crypt or mausoleum or that the cremated remains are interred in the earth or in a columbarium and that the mourners can gather at the site for the burial or committal.

The burial service is short and signifies the separation in this life of the mourners from the deceased. "The Rite of Committal is a stark and powerful expression of this separation." (Order of Christian Funerals)

The rite of committal, or burial, consists of:

- Invitation to prayer
- Scripture verse
- Prayer over the place of committal
- Committal
- Intercessions
- The Lord's Prayer
- Concluding prayer
- Prayer over the people
- Sign or gesture of goodbye

While usually led by a priest, deacon or a parish minister, a member of the family or a friend of the family may lead those present at the rite of committal.

## **Some other things to consider**

Reception after the funeral when the burial will take place at the convenience of the family or at a distance, the family may wish to have a luncheon to visit with family and friends following the funeral Mass. Saint Luke University Parish is available to be the location for a post-funeral reception. It is the family's responsibility to make reservations. Please contact the parish office for more information.

Flowers for the funeral Mass are the responsibility of the family. They may be brought from the funeral home. Cut flowers and floral arrangements are fragile and often do not last very long. If the funeral takes place close to a weekend, we will try to make use of them for the Sunday Masses.

In lieu of flowers, memorial donations, in the name of your loved one, may be made to Saint Luke University Parish. Please let the parish office know that this might take place, so we can make sure all gifts are acknowledged properly.

**The following are readings from Sacred Scripture that the Catholic Church offers as possible readings for use during the funeral liturgies.**

### **From the Old Testament**

Job 19:1, 23-27

Wisdom 3:1-9

Wisdom 4:7-15

Isaiah 25:6a, 7-9

Lamentations 3:17-26

Daniel 12:1-3

2 Maccabees 12:43-46

### **Other readings that have been found useful:**

Proverbs 31:10-13, 19-20, 30-31

Ecclesiastes 3:1-11

Song of Songs 2:8-14

Song of Songs 8:6-7

Sirach 44:1, 10-15

Isaiah 35:1-6, 10

Isaiah 41:8-10, 13

Isaiah 57:15-19

Isaiah 61:1-3

Isaiah 65:17-21

Ezekiel 34:11-16

Ezekiel 37:12-14

Micah 6:6-8

Zephaniah 3:16-20

### **From the New Testament**

Acts 10:34-43

Romans 5:5-11

Romans 5:17-21

Romans 6:3-9

Romans 8:14-23

Romans 8:31b-35, 37-39

Romans 14:7-9, 10b-12

I Corinthians 15:20-23, 24b-28

I Corinthians 15:51-57

2 Corinthians 4:14-5:1

2 Corinthians 5:1, 6-10

Philippians 3:20-21

1 Thessalonians 4:13-18

1 Timothy 2:8-13

1 John 3:1-2

1 John 3:14-16

Revelation 14:13

Revelation 20:11-21:1

Revelation 21:1-5a, 6b-7

### **From the Gospels**

Matthew 5:1-12a

Matthew 11:25-30

Matthew 25:1-13

Matthew 25:31-46



Mark 15:33-39, 16:1-6

John 5:24-29

Luke 7:11-17

John 6:37-40

Luke 12:35-40

John 6:51-58

Luke 23:33, 39-43

John 11:17-27

Luke 23:44-46, 50, 52-53; 24:1-6a

John 11:32-45

Luke 24:13-35

## Suggestions for Funeral Music Selections

Amazing Grace

Be Not Afraid

Be With Me, Lord (when I am in trouble and need)

Because The Lord Is My Shepherd

Center Of My Life

Come To Me (when you are weary)

Eat This Bread

Eye Has Not Seen

Gentle Shepherd

Healer Of Our Every Ill

Here I Am, Lord

I Am The Bread Of Life

I Am The Living Bread

I Have Loved You

I Know That My Redeemer Lives

I Will Be With You

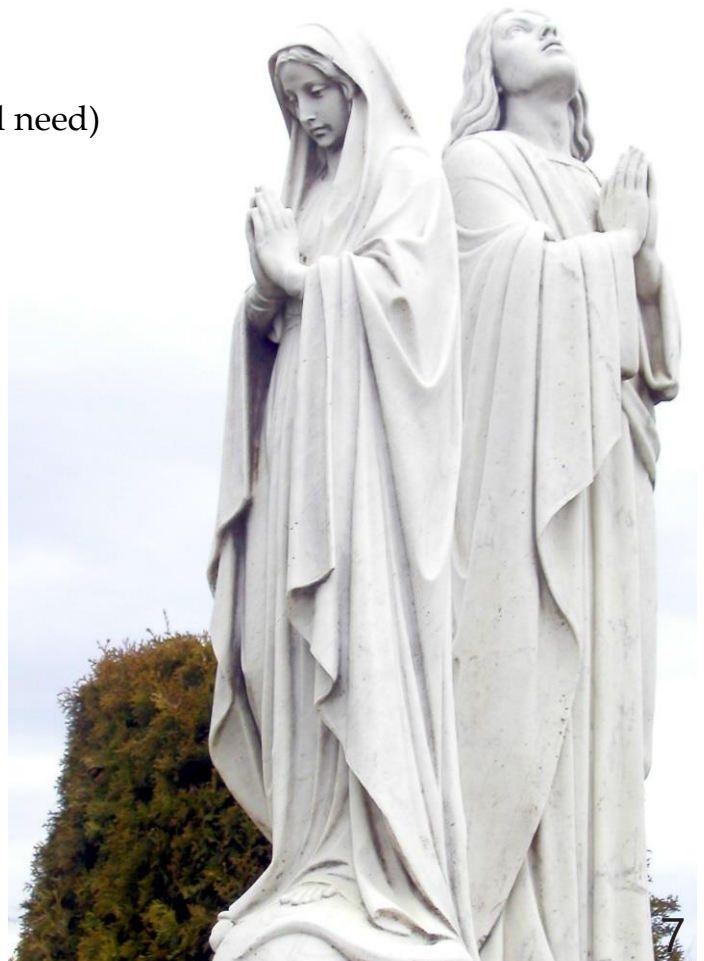
In The Land Of The Living (I will walk with God all my days)

Like A Shepherd

Neither Death Nor Life (can separate us from the love of God)

On Eagle's Wings

Only This I Want



Shepherd Me, O God

The Lord Is My Light And My Salvation

This Alone

We Will Rise Again

You Are Mine

Psalm 4: Let Your Face Shine Upon Us

Psalm 19: Lord, You Have The Words

Psalm 23: Shepherd Me, O God

Psalm 24: Lord, This Is The People

Psalm 24: We Long To See Your Face

Psalm 27: The Lord Is My Light

Psalm 30: I Will Praise You, Lord

Psalm 32: I Turn To You

Psalm 33: Let Your Mercy Be On Us

Psalm 42: As The Deer Longs

Psalm 63: My Soul Is Thirsting

Psalm 63: Your Love Is Finer Than Life

Psalm 80: The Vineyard Of The Lord & Make Us Turn To You

Psalm 85: Let Us See Your Kindness

Psalm 91: Be With Me

Psalm 95: If Today You Hear God's Voice

Psalm 103: The Lord Is Kind & Merciful

Psalm 116: The Name Of God

Psalm 145: Our God Is Compassion

Psalm 146: Happy The Poor In Spirit

## Appendix A

**Name of deceased:**

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**Primary contact to Saint Luke University Parish on behalf of family:**

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**Cell phone:** \_\_\_\_\_

**E-mail:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Parish staff member you spoke with:**

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**Cell phone:** \_\_\_\_\_

**E-mail:** \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix A - Planning Funeral Mass

Prelude	
Gathering (first song after the greeting of the body at the door of the church)	
Old Testament Reading	(read by):
Responsorial Psalm (after 1st Scripture reading)	
New Testament Reading	(read by):
Gospel Acclamation (after 2nd Scripture reading)	
Gospel	
General Intercessions	(read by):
Offertory Music	
Gift Bearers	

Holy, Holy (1st music sung after Offertory ends)	
Memorial Acclamation (“let us proclaim the mystery of faith”)	
Great Amen (“Through him, with him...”)	
Lord’s Prayer (immediately after Amen)	Recite
Lamb of God (after Sign of Peace)	
Ministers of Holy Communion	
Communion Song	
Eulogy (optional) one person, written	
Song of Farewell	
Sending Forth	





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### **Clergy at Saint Luke University Parish Pastoral Staff**

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(616) 616-895-2247  
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For information about arranging a reception after the funeral  
Contact the parish office for information.