

In Preparation for a Funeral Mass

The Funeral Mass is Holy Mother Church's final blessing on the earthly ministry of her departed child. It is the culmination of our baptism. As such, it follows a structure and form that are universal throughout our Church. Family and friends gather as one community, the Church on earth, blending their prayers in one great communion of saints with the Church in heaven. Rather than a rite of mourning, it is a "...celebration of worship, praise, and thanksgiving to God for the gift of a life which has now been returned to God, the author of life and the hope of the just."

However, those of us who remain on earth *do* mourn. Holy Mother Church, understanding the individual nature of our grief, provides certain opportunities for participation within the structure of the Mass, by which the family and friends of the deceased may find comfort through an active role in the liturgy.

But please know that the extent to which you are able to participate in either the planning or the actual liturgy, in no way reflects the measure of your love for your deceased family member or your grief. There is no "right way" to grieve. There is no "correct way" to mourn. What is most important is that you are comfortable with your choices, and that the liturgy maintains its sacred and reverent nature.

The Funeral Rites consist of three parts- *Vigil for the Deceased*, also known as the "wake or viewing" focuses on the deceased, and usually takes place the night before the Funeral Mass at the funeral home. A priest or deacon will come to the funeral home to hold a short prayer service. The *Funeral Mass* focuses on Christ. It takes place in church the following morning. The parish community prays with the family and friends of the deceased. The *Rite of Committal* occurs after the Mass when the priest or deacon leads the service committing the body to its final resting place at one of our local cemeteries.

The goal of our Lazarus Ministry is to assist you in any way possible as you plan the Rite of Christian Burial for your loved one. Once the Funeral Mass has been scheduled with the rectory office, a Lazarus Minister will contact you to arrange a meeting that is convenient with your family.

Things to be decided...

At St. Francis Cathedral, you select both the Old Testament and New Testament readings so that you may derive the greatest comfort from the words of our sacred Scripture. The celebrant (priest) will select the Gospel reading for the Mass.

Other items that will be discussed and decided are:

- ❖ Music selections- you will select an Entrance Hymn, Offertory Hymn, Communion Hymn and the Responsorial Psalm. Music cannot be secular and should be in the hymnal so that the congregation is able to participate. *(Use the QR Code at the end for the webpage of Documents)*
- ❖ Readings- two will be chosen, one reading is selected from the Old Testament and one reading is selected from the New Testament. *(Use the QR Code at the end for the webpage of Documents)*
- ❖ Mass participants: Places in the Mass for family to participate are as follows: Placing of the Pall (white cloth reminiscent of our Baptismal garment) 2-6 people, Placing of the Christian Symbol-a crucifix, rosary or bible- 1 person, Readers- 1 or 2 people, reader of the intentions during the Prayer of the Faithful- 1 person, bringing up the gifts (bread and wine) during the Offertory- 2 people. All participation is voluntary – nothing is required.
- ❖ Funeral Programs- if desired, are created by the family. *(Use the QR Code at the end for the webpage of Documents)*
- ❖ Eulogy policy- Eulogies are permitted in the Diocese of Metuchen on the following conditions:
 - Only one person is permitted to speak.
 - Eulogy should be brief, not to exceed 3-5 minutes.
 - A written copy [or at least an outline] must be given to the presider beforehand to guarantee it is properly focused and consistent with our Catholic faith and ideals of Christian burial.
 - It is preferable that the eulogy take place outside the context of Mass; it may be given at the funeral home during the wake, at the cemetery during the committal or later at your repast.

We certainly understand that there may be several persons who have requested the honor of speaking. Rather than attempting the difficult task of selecting only one speaker, perhaps you might have all these reminiscences presented at one time outside of the Funeral Mass, where it would be possible for many people to share their thoughts.

To help the celebrant prepare for the homily, we request biographical information on the deceased that includes such things as:

- ❖ Date & place of birth
- ❖ Date & Place of death
- ❖ Family information – names of parents, siblings, children, grandchildren, extended family members.
- ❖ Schools attended
- ❖ Faith life/favorite Saints or devotions
- ❖ Profession
- ❖ Military service
- ❖ Employment
- ❖ Interests/Hobbies/Affiliations/Organizations
- ❖ Charities
- ❖ Pet peeves
- ❖ Favorite sports teams
- ❖ Funny stories/anecdotes
- ❖ And anything else that you would like to add that speaks to what was important in the life of your loved one.

FAQ

Where will the family sit?

The family will process in behind the casket and will be directed to sit in the front rows of the church to the right of the center aisle.

How many pallbearers are needed?

Six pallbearers will be needed. If you do not have six family members or friends that can assist as pallbearers, the funeral home can offer that service.

Will the priest/deacon go to the cemetery after the funeral?

The priest or deacon will accompany you to the cemetery if it is local. If it is not local, the funeral home can help you arrange for a priest or deacon in the area of the cemetery to be there for the committal.

Can we have a priest who is a family friend be the celebrant for (or concelebrate) the funeral mass?

Yes. The visiting priest must be a priest in good standing, he must call the rectory to get permission from St. Francis Cathedral, and the priest must supply a letter/card of suitability if he is not from the Diocese of Metuchen.

Qr code for other Funeral Documents

