

Order of Christian Funerals

What can we do?

CELEBRATING Christian funerals:

"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. Christians celebrate the funeral rites to offer 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."

PRAYING for our beloved departed:

"The Church through its funeral rites commends the dead to God's merciful love and pleads for the forgiveness of their sins. At the funeral rites, especially at the celebration of the eucharistic sacrifice, the Christian community affirms and expresses the union of the Church on earth with the Church in heaven in the one communion of saints. Though separated from the living, the dead are still one with community of believers on earth and benefit from their prayers and intercession. At the rite of final commendation and farewell, the community acknowledges the reality of separation and commends the deceased to God. In this way it recognizes the spiritual bond that still exists between the living and the dead and proclaims its belief that all the faithful will be raised up and reunited in the new heavens and a new earth, where death will be no more."

COMFORTING mourners:

"The celebration of the Christian funeral brings hope and consolation to the living. While proclaiming the Gospel of Jesus Christ and witnessing to Christian hope in the resurrection, the funeral rites also recall to all who take part in them God's mercy and judgment and meet the human need to turn always to God in times of crisis... 'If one member suffers in the body of Christ which is the Church, all the members suffer with that member' (I Corinthians 12:26). For this reason, those who are baptized into Christ and nourished at the same table of the Lord are responsible for one another when a member of Christ's body dies, the faithful are called to a ministry of consolation to those who have suffered the loss of one whom they love The Church calls each member of Christ's Body -- priest, deacon, layperson -- to participate in the ministry of consolation: to care for the dying, to pray for the dead, to comfort those who mourn. "

SHOULDERING our responsibilities:

"Members of the community should console the mourners with words of faith and support and with acts of kindness, for example, assisting them with some of the routine tasks of daily living. The community's principal involvement in the ministry of consolation is expressed in its active participation in the celebration of the funeral rites, particularly the vigil for the deceased, the funeral liturgy, and the rite of committal. In the celebration of the funeral rites, laymen and laywomen may serve as readers, musicians, ushers, pallbearers and, according to existing norms, as special ministers of the eucharist.

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Some commonly asked questions

Why do we celebrate the funeral rites?

In the funeral rites we pray for the deceased, entrusting them to God's mercy and care. We honor the body. We comfort the living in their grief. We celebrate the funeral rites not only for the dead but also for the living.

Is cremation permitted by the Catholic Church?

Since 1963, the Church has permitted cremation as long as the Church's teaching on the resurrection of the body is upheld.

How are the rites celebrated for someone who chooses cremation?

The Church prefers that the body be present for the Funeral Liturgy and cremated following the Final Commendation of the Liturgy. If there is a serious reason, it may be possible to celebrate the Funeral Liturgy in the presence of cremated remains.

What rites can be used for miscarried or stillborn infants?

"Funeral Rites may be celebrated for children whose parents intended them to be Baptized but who died before Baptism. In these celebrations the Christian community entrusts the child to God's all-embracing love." (Order of Christian Funeral #237)

What rites can be used for a suicide victim?

This person is entrusted to God's love and mercy and is therefore entitled to the usual Funeral Rites.

What is done for a lapsed Catholic?

By virtue of Baptism this person is entitled to the prayers of the Church including the Funeral Rites.

What is the proper place for the Funeral Rites?

The Vigil service is celebrated in the presence of the body either in the funeral home or the Parish Church the night before. The Funeral Mass is always celebrated in the Church. The Committal Rite is preferably celebrated at the grave or the tomb.

Why do we recommend viewing in the Church before the funeral?

Gathering at the Church before the Funeral Mass begins allows family and friends a time to console one another, to say final goodbyes, and to enter into the spirit of prayer.

Where can I find the text for the prayers of the funeral service?

The Order of Christian Funerals is the text of all Catholic funeral rites approved for use in the United States of America. It has been in mandatory use in all Latin rite Catholic parishes of the United States since All Souls Day, November 2, 1989. All the major Catholic book publishers have a ritual edition. There is a less-expensive, paperback Study Edition published by:

Liturgy Training Publications

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What is the Rite of Committal?

The Rite of Committal is the third station of the Catholic funeral liturgy, after the Vigil (usually the day or night before the funeral) and the Funeral Mass (or Funeral Liturgy outside Mass). It is normally celebrated at the site of burial.

The rite begins with an Invitation to prayer, followed by a Scripture Verse, for which there are several options. Then comes the Prayer over the Place of Committal, with seven text options. Next comes the Committal itself, for which there are also seven text options.

Then come the Intercessions (four text options), the Lord's Prayer, a Concluding Prayer (five), the Prayer over the People, with two forms of the final blessing, depending on whether the minister is a cleric or not, and a dismissal.

A song may conclude the rite. Where it is the custom, some sign or gesture of leave-taking may be made.

Why is the grave or tomb the preferred site for the Rite of Committal?

The grave or tomb is preferred because the prayers from the ritual express clearly the finality of placing the body in the ground or in the tomb.

Order of Christian Funerals

THE ORDER OF CHRISTIAN FUNERALS has three principal parts: the Vigil for the Deceased; the Funeral Mass or the Funeral Liturgy outside Mass; the Rite of Committal.

VIGIL FOR THE DECEASED

INTRODUCTORY RITES

Greeting

Opening Song

Invitation to Prayer

Opening Prayer

LITURGY OF THE WORD

Scripture Readings with Responsorial Psalm

Homily

PRAYER OF INTERCESSION

Litany

The Lord's Prayer

Concluding Prayer (A family member or friend may speak in remembrance of the deceased.)

CONCLUDING RITE

Blessing

Song and/or a few minutes of silent prayer

FUNERAL MASS

INTRODUCTORY RITES

Greeting & Sprinkling with Holy Water

Placing of the Pall (and Christian Symbols)

Entrance Procession

Song

Opening Prayer

LITURGY OF THE WORD

Scripture Readings with Responsorial Psalm and Gospel Acclamation

Homily

General Intercessions

LITURGY OF THE EUCHARIST

Preparation of the Altar and the Gifts

Eucharistic Prayer

Communion Rite

FINAL COMMENDATION

Invitation to Prayer

Song of Farewell and Incense

Prayer of Commendation

PROCESSION TO THE PLACE OF COMMITAL

RITE OF COMMITTAL

Invitation

Scripture Verse

Prayer over the Place of Committal

Committal

Intercessions

The Lord's Prayer

Concluding Prayer

Prayer over the People

Readings for a Christian Funeral

These Readings are suggested in the Order of Christian Funerals. At a funeral, one reading from the Old Testament, one from the New Testament and a Gospel are proclaimed. (Click onto the [Bible Gateway](#) and enter a bible reference from the tables below to get the verse online.)

Old Testament	New Testament	Gospel
Job 19:1, 23-27	Acts 10:34-43	Matthew 5:1-12a
Wisdom 3:1-9	Romans 5:5-11	Matthew 11:25-30
Wisdom 4:7-15	Romans 5:17-21	Matthew 25:1-13
Isaiah 25:6a, 7-9	Romans 6:3-9	Mathew 25:31-46
Lamentations 3:17-26	Romans 8:14-23	Mark 15:33-39, 16:1-6
Daniel 12:1-3	Romans 8:31b-35, 37-39	Luke 7:11-17
2 Maccabees 12:43-46	Romans 14:7-9, 10b-12	Luke 12:35-40
	1 Corinthians 15:20-23, 24b-28	Luke 23:33, 39-43
	1 Corinthians 15:51-57	Luke 23: 44-46, 50, 52-53; 24:1-6a
	2 Corinthians 4:14-5:1	Luke 24:13-35
	2 Corinthians 5:1, 6-10	John 5:24-29
	Philippians 3:20-21	John 6:37-40
	1 Thessalonians 4:13-18	John 6:51-58
	2 Timothy 2:8-13	John 11: 17-27
	1 John 3:1-2	John 11:32-45
	1 John 3:14-16	
	Revelation 14:13	
	Revelation 20:11 - 21:1	
	Revelation 21:1-5a, 6b-7	

Here are other alternate suggestions for appropriate readings:

Old Testament	New Testament	Gospel
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	Ephesians 3:14-21 2 Timothy 4:6-8, 17- 18 1 Peter 1:3-9 Revelation 22:1-7	Matthew 6:19-23 Luke 1:67-74 John 3:13-17 John 10:11-18 John 10:27-30

Music for a Christian Funeral

This is a list of appropriate songs for a Catholic funeral Mass. We hope it will be of aid to you at a difficult time. A parish representative will help you with your planning. During the season of Lent, we do not sing "alleluia."

GATHERING SONG

In the Worship hymnal:

5 - Gospel Canticle of Zachary 373 - The King Shall Come When Morning Dawns 445 - I Know that My Redeemer Lives 451 - The Strife Is O'er 467 - Sing with All the Saints in Glory		During the season of Advent 357 - O Come, O Come, Emmanuel (v. 1, 4, 5, 6) 368 - Creator of the Stars of Night
496 - Crown Him with Many Crowns 497 - To Jesus Christ Our Sovereign King 520 - All Creatures of Our God and King (v. 1, 5, 6, 7)	During the season of Christmas: 387 - Hark The Herald Angels Sing 391 - Good Christian Friends, Rejoice	

524 - Holy God, We Praise Thy Name 525 - Joyful, Joyful, We Adore You	409 - As with Gladness Men of Old	
568 - Lord of All Hopefulness 575 - God Is Our Fortress & Our Rock 583 - Amazing Grace Listen 585 - <i>How Firm a Foundation</i> 588 - <i>Love Divine, All Love's Excelling</i>	During the season of Lent. 427 - Jesus Walked This Lonesome Valley 433 - When I Survey the Wondrous Cross	
600 - <i>What Wondrous Love Is This</i> 674 - <i>Morning Has Broken</i> 690 - <i>Jerusalem, My Happy Home</i> 705 - <i>For All the Saints</i> 737 - <i>Alleluia! Sing to Jesus</i> 738 - <i>I Am the Bread of Life</i> 741 - <i>Let Saints on Earth in Concert Sing</i> (tune: <i>Amazing Grace</i>)	During the season of Easter: 441 - Alleluia, Alleluia, Give Thanks 442 - Jesus Christ Is Risen Today	

In the Gather hymnal:

- 217 - *Sing of the Lord's Goodness*
- 252 - *We Walk by Faith*
- 263 - *Be Not Afraid*
- 275 - *Eye Has Not Seen*
- 282 - *Singing Songs of Expectation*
- 296 - *We Have Been Told*
- 306 - *Peace Is Flowing Like a River*
- 321 - *We Shall Rise Again*

RESPONSORIAL PSALM

Psalm 16: [Center of My Life](#) (Gather 251)
Psalm 19 (Gather 18)
Psalm 23 ([Worship 163](#))
Psalm 25 (Gather 21)
Psalm 27 (Gather 23)
Psalm 30 (Gather 24)
Psalm 33 (Gather 25)
Psalm 42 / 43 (Worship 825)
Psalm 63 (Worship 42)

COMMUNION SONG

Any of the Responsorial Psalms could be sung, or one of the following songs:

In the Worship hymnal:

- 423 - *Jesus, Remember Me*
- 451 - *The Strife Is O'er*

<p><i>Psalm 91 (Gather 42)</i> <i>Psalm 91: On Eagle's Wings (Gather 261)</i> Listen <i>Psalm 103 (Gather 46)</i> <i>Psalm 116 (Gather 48)</i> <i>Psalm 121 (Gather 52)</i> <i>Psalm 122 (Come, let us go rejoicing to the house of the Lord)</i> <i>Psalm 126 (Gather 256)</i> <i>Psalm 130 (Worship 71)</i> <i>Psalm 130 With the Lord There Is Mercy (Gather 56)</i> <i>Psalm 143 (Worship 75 -v. 1-10)</i> <i>Psalm 145 (Gather 59)</i> <i>Psalm 146 (Gather 60)</i> <i>Psalm 147 (Gather 61)</i></p>	<p>727 - Let Us Break Bread Together 734 - Eat This Bread 736 - You Satisfy the Hungry Heart (Gift of Finest Wheat) 738 - I Am the Bread of Life</p> <p><i>In the Gather hymnal:</i></p> <p>20 - Shepherd Me, O God 180 - Easter Alleluia 248 - Your Love Is Finer Than Life 263 - Be Not Afraid 284 - Blest Are They 338 - Taste & See 346 - One Bread, One Body 274 -The Lord Is My Shepherd</p>
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FAREWELL SONG

I Shall See My God (inside front cover of Worship)
God's Holy City (inside front cover of Worship)
177 (Worship) - May Saints & Angels Lead You On
691 (Worship) - Lord, Bid Your Servant Go in Peace (v. 1, 2, 5)
261 (Gather) - [On Eagle's Wings](#)