

FUNERAL MASS FOR CATHOLIC FAITHFUL OF THE DIOCESE OF TOLEDO



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. The Mass, the memorial of Christ's death and resurrection, is the principal celebration of the Christian funeral.

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 great communion of saints. Though separated from the living, the dead are still at one with the 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.

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.

PRE-PLANNING

Preparing for death involves the careful planning for the celebration of the funeral rites. The faithful are highly encouraged to review the liturgical norms of the Church as prescribed in the *Order of Christian Funerals* and the particular law of the Diocese of Toledo.

OBITUARY

The obituary, like the homily, should carefully avoid any statements that imply that the deceased is already in heaven. Rather, the Church, in the sure and certain hope of our future rising with Christ, pleads for the mercy of God upon the soul of the deceased. We affirm, in the Profession of Faith, the Church's belief in the resurrection of the body when our souls will be reunited with our glorified bodies.

When announcing the liturgical rites kindly use the Church's terminology, such as "Funeral Mass" (cf. pages 11-13 of the Policy for the Celebration of the Order of Christian Funerals for Deceased Clergy of the Diocese of Toledo). Terms such as "Mass of the Resurrection", "Memorial Mass", "Mass of Christian Burial" are to be avoided.

WORDS OF REMEMBRANCE

In keeping with the sacred nature of the liturgy, if words of remembrance are to be given, it is suggested that they be offered either at the funeral home during visitation, following the Vigil, at the gravesite following the Rite of Committal, or at the funeral luncheon.

The *Order of Christian Funerals* does allow the option for a family member or friend to speak in remembrance of the deceased. The ritual permits that this may be done following the Prayer after Communion and before the Final Commendation.

In the Diocese of Toledo however, if appropriate words of remembrance are to be given in relation to the Funeral Mass, it is preferred that they would observe the following:

- to take place prior to the beginning of the Funeral Mass
- to be **no longer** than three minutes in duration
- to be shared with the Pastor at least the day before the Funeral Mass

CHRISTIAN SYMBOL

Only Christian symbols may rest on or be placed near the casket during the funeral liturgy. "Any other symbols... have no place in the funeral liturgy" (OCF, no. 38). "Any national flags or the flags or insignia of associations to which the deceased belonged are to be removed from the casket at the entrance of the church. They may be replaced after the casket has been taken from the church" (OCF, no. 132).

FLOWERS

“Fresh flowers, used in moderation, can enhance the setting of the funeral rites” (OCF, no. 38). During Lent, flowers are forbidden to decorate the altar (*GIRM*, no. 305). Exceptions are made only for *Laetare Sunday* (Fourth Sunday of Lent), Solemnities, and Feasts. Flowers arranged near the altar should not impede the celebrant’s ability to incense the altar by walking closely around it. Kindly note that floral arrangements brought inside the church to decorate the altar should remain in the church following the funeral liturgy.

ROSARY AND OTHER DEVOTIONALS

Because the vigil ranks as the principal rite to be celebrated before the funeral liturgy, it is to be given preference. It is important to note that a devotion should not take the place of prescribed liturgical acts. If, for example, the deceased held a deep devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary and requested a Rosary be recited; or had a particular devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus or to a given Saint, it is most fitting that the Rosary, or other devotional prayers or litanies, be recited before or after the vigil or prior to the Funeral Mass.

CELEBRATING THE FUNERAL MASS

CHOICE OF DAY

The Funeral Mass “may be celebrated on any day, **except for Solemnities that are Holydays of Obligation, Thursday of Holy Week (Holy Thursday), the Paschal Triduum, and the Sundays of Advent, Lent and Easter**, with due regard also for all the other requirements of the norm of the law” (*General Instruction of the Roman Missal*, no. 380).

SACRED MUSIC

“Music at funeral liturgies should strive to express the hope we have in faith. It should also possess a quality and dignity worthy of the worship of God” (Pastoral Policy, no. 3267).

- The directives found in the *General Instruction of the Roman Missal* and *Sing to the Lord: Music in Divine Worship* should guide liturgical music planning. In printing any worship booklet all copyright regulations are to be observed. Licenses and permissions for reprint of liturgical music are to be included in printed worship booklets for the celebration.
- In the privileged liturgical seasons such as Advent and Christmas, Lent and Easter, the music should primarily reflect the liturgical season as well as the celebration of the funeral rites.

- Hymns and acclamations are led from a designated place apart from the ambo.
- Popular/secular music, including recorded music, is not permitted during any of the funeral rites.
- The text for the Responsorial Psalm must be the given biblical text in the *Lectionary for Mass*. Paraphrased texts and hymns may never substitute for the sung Word of God. The Acclamation before the Gospel and verse comes from the choices provided in the *Lectionary for Mass*, *Masses for the Dead*.

FAMILY/FRIENDS AS LITURGICAL MINISTERS

Customarily, the parish provides liturgical ministers for the Funeral Mass (lectors, cantors, altar servers, extraordinary ministers of holy communion). However, family members or friends, who are trained in these roles may function provided they are emotionally able to carry out their liturgical ministry. Those family members who may become emotional or uncomfortable while leading sacred music or proclaiming Sacred Scripture should be spared this responsibility so that any embarrassment may be avoided and the Sacred Liturgy be celebrated worthily and well.

Only in the absence of a deacon does a lector or family member announce the intentions of the *Universal Prayer*. In the absence of a deacon, family members, if emotionally upset, should not announce the intentions for the same reason that they should not proclaim the Scripture Readings. Dividing the intentions between multiple family members is to be avoided. No more than six intentions are preferred. A sample *Universal Prayer* can be found in Appendix V, no. 11, of the *Roman Missal*.

HOMILY

The homily is not a eulogy or a series of stories or remembrances. Because the Sacred Liturgy exists to glorify God, a homilist should carefully avoid any statements that imply that the deceased is already in heaven. Rather, the Church, in the sure and certain hope of our future rising with Christ, pleads for the mercy of God upon the soul of the deceased.

PREPARATION OF THE GIFTS

Once the altar is prepared, the gifts are brought forward. It is most appropriate for family members to present the gifts. According to the *General Instruction of the Roman Missal*, only the bread, wine, or other gifts that have been collected for the Church or the poor are brought up (no. 73). Nothing else is to be included in this procession.

REGARDING THE BODY AND CREMATION

CREMATION

The 2016 Instruction *Ad resurgendum cum Christo* states that the Church raises no doctrinal objections to the practice of cremation, “since cremation of the deceased’s body does not affect his or her soul, nor does it prevent God, in his omnipotence, from raising up the deceased’s body to new life” (4).

“Although cremation is now permitted by the Church, it does not enjoy the same value as burial of the body. The Church clearly prefers and urges that the body of the deceased be present for the funeral rites, since the presence of the human body better expresses the values which the Church affirms in those rites” (*Order of Christian Funerals*, no. 413).

The Diocese of Toledo “encourages the celebration of the funeral Mass within a reasonable time after death, prior to cremation” (*Pastoral Policy 2011 of the Diocese of Toledo*, no. 3283).

If cremation is chosen “because of sanitary, economic or social considerations, this choice must never violate the explicitly-stated or the reasonably inferable wishes of the deceased faithful” (*Ad resurgendum cum Christo*, no. 4).

DISPOSITION OF THE ASHES

The ashes of the faithful “must be laid to rest in a sacred place, that is, in a cemetery or, in certain cases, in a church or an area, which has been set aside for this purpose, and so dedicated by the competent ecclesial authority” (*Ad resurgendum cum Christo*, no. 5).

“The cremated remains of a body should be treated with the same respect given to the human body from which they come. This includes the use of a worthy vessel to contain the ashes, the manner in which they are carried, the care and attention to appropriate placement and transport, and the final disposition” (*Order of Christian Funerals*, no. 417).

It is not permitted for the ashes of the deceased to be separated and distributed or conserved in a domestic residence nor be scattered “in the air, on land, at sea or in some other way, nor may they be preserved in mementos, pieces of jewelry or other objects” (*Ad resurgendum cum Christo*, nos. 6-7).

DONATION OF THE BODY FOR SCIENTIFIC PURPOSES

There is no objection to Catholics making prior arrangements to donate their bodies or parts of them to advance medical science. The only limitation is that, upon eventual disposition of the body or its parts, there is some reasonable assurance that the remains will be interred in a proper, reverential manner (*Pastoral Policy 2011 of the Diocese of Toledo*, no. 3274).

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS

FUNERAL LUNCHEON/RECEPTION

It is customary that a luncheon is provided following the funeral liturgy. If a luncheon/reception is planned, the financial responsibility rests with the deceased estate or the surviving family. Some parishes may provide, or arrange for, the funeral luncheon of a parishioner.

PHOTOGRAPHY/VIDEOGRAPHY/LIVE-STREAMING

It is preferred that photographing, videotaping as well as live-streaming the funeral rites, is to be avoided so as to respect both the dignity of the Sacred Liturgy and the mourners.



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Our Lady of Perpetual Help Shrine
Our Lady, Queen of the Most Holy Rosary Cathedral