

The death of a loved one invites us into the Paschal Mystery of Jesus' passion, death, and resurrection.

Soon afterward he journeyed to a city called Nain, and his disciples and a large crowd accompanied him. As he drew near to the gate of the city, a man who had died was being carried out, the only son of his mother, and she was a widow. A large crowd from the city was with her. When the Lord saw her, he was moved with pity for her and said to her, "Do not weep." (*Luke 7:11-13*)

Without our Christian faith in the resurrection of Jesus Christ, his words to the mourning woman of Nain would be difficult to accept. Yet our faith reminds us that God is a God of life, not of death. And so, Jesus, touching the coffin, said to the young man, "I tell you, arise!"

The woman from Luke's Gospel story teaches us that grieving the death of one we love is a natural human response. As well, it illustrates for us the importance of having our community of faith gather around us for prayer and support.

Our Catholic Church, in recognizing the importance of grieving and of gathering the faith community, offers many forms of pastoral care for those who suffer and mourn.

Anointing of the Sick

Throughout our lives, and especially as we grow older, we may experience periods of poor health. When these moments are marked with a greater seriousness, for example life threatening surgeries, chronic illnesses, and impending death, the sacrament of the anointing of the sick can offer both spiritual and physical healing. Because this is a sacrament of our Church for the living, it is most appropriate that it be received by one who is conscious and able to participate in its celebration. Notifying your pastor early will also allow one suffering or preparing for death to partake in *viaticum*, or "food for the journey": the Holy Eucharist.

Funeral Planning

When one learns of the presence of a terminal illness or impending death, we are given the opportunity to speak with our family and friends about life lived in this world as well as entrance into eternal life. These moments provide a setting, not only for expressing our affections toward those who will remain after our death, but also a time to speak about our funeral arrangements. By choosing Scripture passages and music selections to be used at our funeral services, we are able to share with those we love our Christian faith in the



resurrection and encouragement and hope in the midst of sadness and mourning.

Funeral planning may also occur while we are yet young and healthy. By doing so we can lessen the anxiety placed on those responsible for making immediate funeral preparations. Pastors and parish ministers are open to assisting in this process. As well, funeral homes are obliged to provide the general public with a list of funeral costs.

Prayers at the Time of Death

Following the death of a loved one, the family members and friends who have gathered around the body may wish to offer special prayers for his or her eternal salvation. Such prayers are also meant to assist in the consolation of those who remain. If a priest is present at this time, it is certainly appropriate for him to lead those gathered in prayer.

Making Funeral Arrangements

At the time of death the one responsible for making the funeral arrangements should first contact the parish priest. This will allow the priest to work with the family of the deceased in determining an appropriate time for the funeral services to take place. Similarly, the funeral director should not set any dates or times without first speaking with the parish priest. Because death so closely touches our life of faith, it may be helpful to speak with a leader in the faith community as we begin the grieving process and are in need of hopeful words of encouragement. The parish priest will also be able to assist those responsible for making funeral arrangements in determining those services that would be most helpful to those who mourn the death of a loved one

Vigil Service

Throughout the history of our faith there has always been a particular importance given to the place of the vigil. The vigil is marked by a sense of "being with" and "watching over" the body of the deceased. The vigil service offers encouragement through the proclamation of Sacred Scripture, song, prayer, and intercession. As well, the vigil service serves as a time for family and friends to remember the gift of life given to the deceased and his or her impact on our own life. While the vigil service is optional, its importance should not be minimized.

The Funeral Mass

The Documents of the Second Vatican Council state that the Eucharist is "the source and summit of the Christian life." (*Lumen gentium*, 11) Since all aspects of Catholic life are to flow from the Eucharist and should lead back to the same Eucharist, the funeral Mass with the body of the deceased present is preferred for those baptized or received into the Catholic faith. As death invites us into the Paschal Mystery of Jesus Christ, so too does the celebration of the Eucharistic liturgy; we experience the redemptive act of Jesus' death on the cross and share in the joyous *alleluia* of his resurrection on the third day. As the one who died was offered hope of eternal

life, was guided by the Word of Scripture, and nourished by the Body and Blood of Christ throughout his or her life, we who remain are in need of that same hope, guidance, and nourishment.

The Catholic Church also allows for Funeral Masses to be celebrated for those who were not Catholic. These allowances would presume the Catholic faith of the family or those responsible for funeral arrangements, and that doing such would not be contrary to the wishes of the deceased.

The Funeral Outside of Mass

There are times when the celebration of the Eucharist may not be appropriate. Should the celebration of a Funeral Mass be contrary to the wishes of the deceased, if the deceased was a highly public figure and many of the people who would likely attend the funeral are not Catholic, or if the Catholic family members of the deceased have not been practicing their faith, it would be more appropriate for a Funeral Outside of Mass. Such a funeral service would embrace the Liturgy of the Word and the prayers of commendation, but would not include the Liturgy of the Eucharist.

Funeral Services Without the Body Present

At times circumstances may exist that would prevent the presence of the body or the cremated remains of the deceased at the celebration of the Funeral Mass or Funeral Outside of Mass. This may occur when the body of the deceased cannot be found, the body or cremated remains have already been interred, or the funeral services take place in a different location from the burial. Funeral services without the body present exclude the formal rites of reception of the body or cremated remains as well as the prayers of commendation.

Rite of Interment

Following the funeral liturgy, the family of the deceased may accompany the body or cremated remains to the cemetery or mausoleum for the Rite of Committal. Prayers are offered for the deceased as the body is committed to its final place of rest.

Cremation in the Catholic Church

Since 1963 the Catholic Church has permitted the cremation of the body and since 1997, with the approval of the Holy See, many bishops of the United States have allowed for the presence of the cremated remains at the funeral liturgy. It is preferred that cremation of the body not



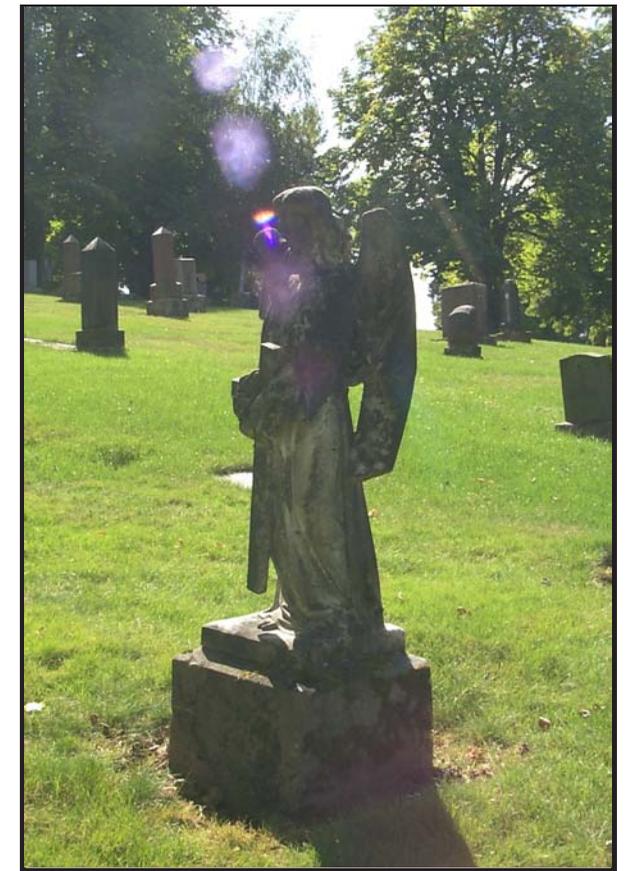
take place until after the funeral Mass or funeral service so that the complete life and death of the person may be more clearly realized.

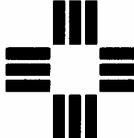
While the sprinkling of the cremated remains with holy water occurs in the usual manner, the pall is not used. Rather, the cremated remains are placed in a worthy vessel and may be either placed near the paschal candle prior to beginning the funeral service or carried in procession.

Cremated remains are to be buried in the usual manner or entombed in a columbarium/mausoleum. "The practice of scattering cremated remains on the sea, from the air, or on the ground, or keeping cremated remains in the home of a relative or friend of the deceased are not the reverent disposition that the Church requires." (*Order of Christian Funerals, Appendix II #417*) It is important to keep in mind the reverence and care the Catholic Church gives to the physical body.

When A Loved One is Dying

Anointing of the Sick and Funeral Planning



 ARCHDIOCESE
OF PORTLAND
IN OREGON