



ARCHDIOCESE
OF PORTLAND
IN OREGON



FUNERAL POLICIES

November, 2005





Office of the Archbishop

November 2, 2005

A death in the family, paradoxically, is often an opportunity for grace among the survivors. Clergy and other pastoral ministers have a marvelous opportunity to touch people's hearts, comfort them in their sorrow and lead them closer to Jesus and the church. The rites of the church at the time of death reflect our respect for the human remains of all people and provide comfort for mourners.

My brother priests and I once again, as we did three years ago in developing policies for the celebration of marriage in the Archdiocese of Portland, have studied and determined policies to guide us in providing funeral and burial services for our people. During this month of November our minds and hearts turn to those who have gone before us and we ourselves acknowledge through the prayers of the church that "life is not ended, but changed" at the time of death. This affords us all great hope and consolation, the graces that particularly need to be shared with our people during days of mourning.

These policies are the result of the fine collaboration of the members of our Presbyteral Council and the entire presbyterate during recent convocations. I am grateful to all who have provided input and I offer these sentiments with profound respect for all the people of this archdiocese and particularly those who minister to the dying and the grieving. May all our deceased sisters and brothers rest in peace.

Sincerely yours in the Lord,

/s/ + John G. Vlazny

Most Rev. John G. Vlazny
Archbishop of Portland in Oregon

Responding to concerns raised by council members, the Executive Committee of the Archdiocesan Presbyteral Council appointed a committee to study pastoral practices surrounding funerals and weddings. With the agreement of the council, this committee adopted the following procedure:

- 1. Identify areas/issues where the lack of common sacramental practice is considered by clergy to be problematic from a pastoral point-of-view and confusing to the faithful.*
- 2. Analyze these issues in light of the latitude/discretion allowed by Canon Law and liturgical documents.*
- 3. Prepare proposals whereby the clergy of the archdiocese may identify those areas of common sacramental practice to which they would commit (covenant) themselves.*

At the Archdiocesan Clergy Convocation 2003 the assembled clergy reviewed the committee's report of the requirements of Canon Law and the Order of Christian Funerals relating to those issues raised in vicariate meetings of clergy throughout the archdiocese. Working in small groups, the priests identified where they would like to see more consistent pastoral practice in the celebration of funerals.

The following year this committee submitted recommended practices for each of the areas previously identified. At the Archdiocesan Clergy Convocation 2004 the assembled clergy after discussing the recommendations in small groups expressed in written vote their willingness to bind themselves to the recommended common practice.

The votes and consequent revisions were approved and submitted to Archbishop Vlazny by the Archdiocesan Presbyteral Council on September 8, 2005.

Rev. Joseph S. McMahon
Rev. Donald Buxman
Sr. Jeremy Gallet, SP

Rev. Kelly Vandehey
Rev. Timothy Mockaitis
Rev. Richard Rutherford, CSC

Topic 1: When funeral liturgies are celebrated (day and time)

Summary: The Code of Canon Law does not specifically state when Funeral Liturgies may be celebrated. However, it does state that ecclesiastical funerals “must be celebrated according to the norm of the liturgical laws.”

The *General Instruction of the Roman Missal* states: "The funeral Mass has first place among the Masses for the dead and may be celebrated on any day except solemnities that are days of obligation, Holy Thursday, the Easter Triduum, and the Sundays of Advent, Lent and the Easter season."

The *Ordo* indicates for each day whether or not a Funeral Mass may be celebrated. A *Funeral Liturgy Outside of Mass* may be celebrated on days when Funeral Masses are not permitted.

See *Archdiocese of Portland MARRIAGE POLICIES (July 2002)* for a complete treatment of restrictions regarding Ritual Masses.

Archdiocese of Portland:

- *Celebrating a Funeral Mass at the time of the regularly scheduled parish weekday Mass is allowed, provided it is not a Solemnity of obligation. The scheduling of a Funeral Mass should respect the requirements as well as the legitimate needs and expectations of the family/mourners.*

Topic 2: Where should funeral liturgies be celebrated?

Summary: Canon 1177 §1,2, and 3:

Generally, a funeral Mass for any deceased member of the Catholic Church is to be celebrated in his or her parish church.

However, any member of the faithful or those charged with the making of arrangements for the funeral of a deceased member of the faithful may choose to have the funeral rites celebrated in another church with the consent of that pastor. The proper pastor of the deceased should be notified of this decision as a courtesy to the one responsible for his or her pastoral care.

Should one of the members of the faithful experience death outside of his or her proper parish, and if the body has not been transferred to it or to another church legitimately chosen for the funeral rite, the ritual is to be celebrated in the parish church where the death occurred.

Canons 1178 and 1179:

Generally the funeral rites for a diocesan bishop are celebrated in the cathedral church of his diocese. He may choose another church, however.

Funeral rites for religious or members of a society of apostolic life should normally be celebrated in the church or oratory of the community. If the institute or society is clerical, the superior should celebrate the rites. If the institute or society is not clerical, the rites are presided over by the chaplain.

Archdiocese of Portland:

- *A funeral Mass should be celebrated only in a parish church, chapel, or oratory where Catholic Mass is normally celebrated. Celebrating a Funeral Mass in a cemetery or funeral home chapel would require an exceptional circumstance and the permission of the local ordinary. A funeral celebrated outside of a parish church, chapel, or oratory should follow the "Funeral Liturgy Outside of Mass" or some appropriate accommodation.*
- *Parish clergy should make a reasonable effort to respond to the request of any family requesting a funeral even if they are not members of the parish. He may inform the proper pastor when appropriate. When it is not possible to respond to a family's request, the priest/deacon should assist them in contacting their proper parish or a priest able to assist the family.*

Topic 3: Who may have a Catholic funeral liturgy?

Summary: Canons 1176 §1; 1183 §1, 2, and 3:

There is a fundamental right for Christians to have a Christian burial. Therefore, according to the norms of law, deceased members of the faithful must be given ecclesiastical funerals. In doing so, the Church seeks spiritual support for the deceased as it honors their bodies and offers hope to the living.

With regard to funeral rites, catechumens, or those intending to receive baptism, are counted among the members of the faithful and given the prerogative to have an ecclesiastical funeral.

Similarly, children who have died prior to receiving baptism, but whose parents intended baptism, may have an ecclesiastical funeral with the permission of the local ordinary.

Baptized persons enrolled in non-Catholic Churches or ecclesial communities may also be granted ecclesiastical funerals with the following conditions having been met so as to respect the wishes of the deceased and to avoid any appearance of proselytizing:

- 1) the local ordinary, with the use of prudent judgment, gives such permission;
- 2) an ecclesiastical funeral would not be contrary to the intent of the deceased person;
- 3) the proper minister of the deceased is unavailable.

In the Archdiocese of Portland, pastors and parochial vicars have the faculty to “allow Church funeral rites for an unbaptized child whose parents had intended to have the child baptized” and “for baptized members of non-Catholic ecclesial communities if requested by the family and provided this is not clearly contrary to the wishes of the deceased.”

Funeral rites may be celebrated in an adapted form for non-Christian members of a Catholic household (cf., OCF #398.36 and Part III, chapter 15).

Archdiocese of Portland:

- *A priest/minister may not refuse funeral rites for a Catholic without the permission of the local Ordinary.*
- *The current Code of Canon Law does not prohibit an ecclesiastical funeral for someone who commits suicide. The OCF makes provision for a person who dies by suicide (cf., "Prayers for the Dead" OCF #398.44). For the purpose of arranging a funeral, a victim*

of suicide should be treated in the same manner as someone who dies of an untreated or incurable illness.

Topic 4: Who may not have a Catholic funeral liturgy?

Summary: The *Code of Canon Law* states that “Laws which establish a penalty or restrict the free exercise of rights or which contain an exception to the law are subject to a strict interpretation” [Canon 18]

Those who are not permitted an ecclesiastical funeral according to Canons 1184 and 1185 are limited only to those of the canon. The pastor or parochial vicar *does not have the right* to add to the following list:

- 1) Apostates or those who express a total post-baptismal repudiation of the Christian faith;
- 2) Heretics or those who hold an obstinate post-baptismal denial or doubt about some truth that is to be believed as part of divine and Catholic faith;
- 3) Schismatics or those who hold a post-baptismal refusal of submission to the Holy Father or of communion with the members of the church subject to him.

These sins warranting denial of the ecclesiastical funeral rites must be notorious or publicly known and would be of great cause for scandal. The same is true for those who are excluded from ecclesiastical funerals, such as those who have been officially excommunicated or have had a legitimate interdict placed upon them as a penalty. Such cases should be referred to the local ordinary who is to be consulted and his judgment followed.

Archdiocese of Portland:

- *In the case of someone who is not allowed an "ecclesiastical" funeral, a priest or parish minister may lead a service of prayer and scripture for the deceased at the cemetery or in the funeral director's chapel.*
- *A priest/minister may not refuse funeral rites for a Catholic without the permission of the local Ordinary*

Topic 5: What are the accepted means of laying the deceased to rest?

Summary: Canons 1176 §3 and 1180:

The Church maintains and earnestly recommends that the members of the faithful observe the pious custom of burying the bodies of the deceased.

However, the Church also holds cremation as an option and does not prohibit its practice unless it is chosen for purposes that are contrary to the Christian faith, such as:

- a) the deceased or those responsible for his or her burial have no belief in the resurrection;
- b) the choice is based on a sectarian spirit;
- c) there is a hatred of the Catholic religion or the Church.

It would be most proper that, if a parish has its own cemetery, deceased members of the faithful of that parish should be buried in it, unless the deceased or those given charge of his or her burial arrangements have legitimately chosen another cemetery for the final burial.

The "Appendix" of the *Order of Christian Funerals* adds: "The cremated remains should be buried in a grave or entombed in a mausoleum or columbarium. 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. Whenever possible, appropriate means for recording with dignity the memory of the deceased should be adopted, such as a plaque or stone which records the name of the deceased" #417.

Archdiocese of Portland:

- *Archdiocesan and parish cemeteries should make provision for the interment of cremated remains.*
- *Burial at sea is allowed. Cremated remains should be submerged in a container--not scattered.*
- *A priest or parish minister should not preside or lead prayers in a committal service during which the cremated remains are scattered, rather than interred.*

Topic 6: The Selection of Rites from the *Order of Christian Funerals*

43 ***The Order of Christian Funerals* makes provision for the minister, in consultation with the family, to choose those rites and texts that are most suitable to the situation: those that most closely apply to the needs of the mourners, the circumstances of the death, and the customs of the local Christian community. The minister and family may be assisted in the choice of a rite or rites by the reflections preceding each rite or group of rites.**

44 Part 1, “Funeral Rites,” of the *Order of Christian Funerals* provides those rites that may be used in the funerals of Christians and is divided into three groups of rites that correspond in general to the three principal ritual moments in Christian funerals: “Vigil and Related Rites and Prayers,” “Funeral Liturgy,” and “Rite of Committal.”

45 The section entitled “Vigil and Related Rites and Prayers” includes rites that may be celebrated between the time of death and the funeral liturgy or, should there be no funeral liturgy, before the rite of committal. The vigil is the principal celebration of the Christian community during the time before the funeral liturgy. It may take the form of a Liturgy of the Word (see nos. 54-97) or of some part of the office for the dead (see Part IV, nos. 348-395). Two vigil services are provided: “Vigil for the Deceased” and “Vigil for the Deceased with Reception at the Church.” The second service is used when the vigil is celebrated in the church and the body is to be received at this time. “Related Rites and Prayers” includes three brief rites that may be used on occasions of prayer with the family: “Prayers after Death,” “Gathering in the Presence of the Body,” and “Transfer of the Body to the Church or to the Place of Committal.” These rites are examples or models of what can be done and should be adapted to the circumstances.

46 The section entitled “Funeral Liturgy” provides two forms of the funeral liturgy, the central celebration of the Christian community for the deceased: “Funeral Mass” and “Funeral Liturgy outside Mass.” When one of its members dies, the Church especially encourages the celebration of the Mass. When Mass cannot be celebrated (see no. 178), the second form of the funeral liturgy may be used and a Mass for the deceased should be celebrated, if possible, at a later time.

47 The section entitled “Rite of Committal” includes two forms of the rite of committal, the concluding rite of the funeral: “Rite of Committal” and “Rite of Committal with Final Commendation.” The first form is used when the final commendation is celebrated as part of the conclusion of the funeral liturgy. The second form is used when the final commendation does not take place during the funeral liturgy or when no funeral liturgy precedes the committal.

48 Part II, “Funeral Rites for Children,” provides an adaptation of the principal rites in Part I: “Vigil for a Deceased Child,” “Funeral Liturgy,” and “Rite of Committal.” These rites may be used in the funerals of infants and young children, including those of

early school age. The rites in Part II include texts for use in the case of a baptized child and in the case of a child who died before baptism.

In some instances, for example, the death of an infant, the vigil and funeral liturgy may not be appropriate. Only the rite of committal and perhaps one of the forms of prayer with the family as provided in “Related Rites and Prayers” may be desirable. Part II does not contain “Related Rites and Prayers,” but the rites from Part I may be adapted.

49 Part III, “Texts from Sacred Scripture,” includes the Scripture readings and psalms for the celebration of the funeral rites. Part IV, “Office for the Dead,” includes “Morning Prayer,” “Evening Prayer,” and “Additional Hymns.” Part V, “Additional Texts,” contains “Prayers and Texts in Particular Circumstances” and “Holy Communion outside Mass.” The texts that appear in the various rites in Parts I, II, and IV may be replaced by corresponding readings and psalms given in Part III and by corresponding prayers and texts given in Part V.

Funeral Rites

Vigil:

The vigil for the deceased is the principal rite celebrated by the Christian community in the time following death and at a time well before the funeral liturgy (so that the funeral liturgy will not be lengthy and the Liturgy of the Word repetitious). It may take the form of either--

Liturgy of the Word
Some part of the Office for the Dead.

Two vigil services are provided in the ritual:

Vigil for the Deceased
Vigil for the Deceased with Reception at the Church

The structure of the vigil in the form of the Liturgy of the Word consists of the introductory rites, the Liturgy of the Word, the prayer of intercession and a concluding rite.

In the vigil for the deceased with reception at the church, the rite begins at the entrance of the church. The body is sprinkled with holy water, the pall is placed on the coffin (if it is the custom), and the entrance procession may be concluded by the placing of a symbol of the Christian life on the coffin.

The proclamation of the Word of God is the high point and central focus of the vigil. The purpose of the readings is to proclaim the paschal mystery, teach remembrance of the dead, convey the hope of being gathered together in God’s kingdom, and encourage the witness of Christian life.

The full participation by all present is to be encouraged. Besides the presiding minister, other available ministers (a reader, a cantor, an acolyte) should exercise their ministries. Family members may assume some of these liturgical roles, unless their grief prevents them from doing so.

Music is integral to any vigil, especially the vigil for the deceased. Preference should be given to the singing of the opening song and the responsorial psalm.

The OCF contains no reference to the Rosary.

Funeral Mass:

With body present: This celebration includes welcoming the body at the church entrance (unless this was done at the vigil) and the Final Commendation followed by the Committal Rite at the place of interment. This is the fundamental ritual for a deceased member of the Catholic faithful

With cremated remains present: A recent indult and directives in the "Appendix" of the OCF allow parts of the above rite to be celebrated around the cremated remains of the deceased. The pall however is not placed on the cremated remains.

With neither: When a Mass is celebrated without the body present, the ritual for welcoming the body of the deceased and the Final Commendation are not celebrated.

Funeral Liturgy outside Mass: *The Liturgy of the Word without the celebration of the Eucharist is provided for those days when a Funeral Mass may not be celebrated. This rite may also be more appropriate for non-Catholics, some non-practicing Catholics, and funerals for public figures at which many non-Catholics are participating.*

With body present: As above.

With cremated remains present: As above.

With neither: As above.

With Communion: The Ritual makes provision for the Distribution of Holy Communion (without a Eucharistic Prayer). This should only be offered when no priest is available to celebrate a funeral Mass.

Committal: *This rite follows the Funeral Liturgy; it may be celebrated at a different time or on a different day. The Final Commendation may be celebrated at the Committal rather than at the Funeral Liturgy. In some situations it may be repeated. The Committal is intended to be celebrated at the grave or tomb where the body will be buried. If the body is to be cremated after the Funeral Liturgy, the Committal may be celebrated at the crematory. This rite may also be used or repeated when the cremated remains are interred.*

Without Funeral Mass or Funeral Liturgy outside Mass: The Committal Rite may also be augmented with elements from the other Funeral Rites in those situations where there is no Church/chapel liturgy.

Archdiocese of Portland:

- *The Vigil may be celebrated in Church, in a funeral director's chapel, in the home of the deceased, or other suitable place. When the Vigil is celebrated in Church and the body remains in church until the Funeral Liturgy, the rite of welcoming the body should be celebrated before the Vigil (cf. OCF #58). It is not repeated at the Funeral Mass.*
- *It is recommended that the priest, deacon, or parish minister meet with the family of the deceased to initiate the planning for the funeral before making funeral arrangements with the funeral director.*

Topic 7: Specific Ritual Issues:

[Citations refer to the "General Introduction" of the *Order of Christian Funerals*:]

Flags and other non-religious symbols:

“Only Christian symbols may rest on or be placed near the coffin during the funeral liturgy. Any other symbols, for example, national flags, or flags or insignia of associations, have no place in the funeral liturgy.” #38

“Any national flags or the flags or insignia of associations to which the deceased belonged are to be removed from the coffin at the entrance of the church. They may be replaced after the coffin has been taken from the church.” # 132

When should the casket be open?

Although nothing specific is mentioned as to whether the casket could be open before or during the funeral liturgy, the introduction seems to imply that the casket remains closed once the casket is brought to the church: “[A] pall may be placed over the coffin when it is received at the church. . . .A book of the Gospels or a Bible may be placed on the coffin. . . .A cross may be placed on the coffin . . .” # 38. This seems to imply that the coffin arrives closed and remains closed. The alternative is never mentioned as an option.

Music for the Liturgy

It is the pastoral responsibility of parishes to provide liturgical music at all Funeral Masses. “Music is integral to the funeral rites. . . .The texts of the songs chosen for a particular celebration should express the paschal mystery of the Lord’s suffering, death, and triumph over death and should be related to the readings from Scripture.” #30

“ . . . music should be chosen with great care. The music at funerals should support, console, and uplift the participants . . .” #31

The directive is to choose music that fits with Christian and scriptural themes. There seems to be no specific mention about secular music during funeral liturgies. However, such “personal” songs of the deceased or the family may be more appropriate before or after the liturgy is begun or ended.

In response to an inquiry regarding a family's request to include secular songs that hold special significance for the deceased, Secretariat for USCCB's Committee on the Liturgy responded: "The introduction to the *Order of Christian Funerals* devotes four paragraphs to the question of Music in the Funeral liturgy (#30-34). . . . Thus, while funeral music may express 'convictions and feelings,' its subject must always be the paschal mystery and it must be related to the readings from Scripture."

Rather than adopting popular secular songs which are inappropriate to a liturgical setting, we should seek out good liturgical music on a paschal theme which can "support, console, and uplift participants and help to create in them a spirit of hope in Christ's victory over death and in the Christian's share in that victory" #31.

Eulogies

"A brief homily on the readings is always given after the gospel reading at the funeral liturgy and may also be given after the readings at the vigil service; *but there is never a eulogy*. . . The homilist should dwell on God's compassionate love and on the paschal mystery of the Lord, as proclaimed in the Scripture readings. The homilist should also help the members of the assembly to understand that the mystery of God's love and the mystery of Jesus' victorious death and resurrection were present in the life and death of the deceased . . ." #27

From the Vigil for the Deceased: [After the concluding prayer] "A member or a friend of the family may speak in remembrance of the deceased." #96

From the Funeral Liturgy outside of Mass and during Mass: "A member or friend of the family may speak in remembrance of the deceased before the final commendation begins." # 170

The words of remembrance come after the communion rite. There is no mention as to whether more than one member or friend of the family may speak or the length of their comments. This would be a local pastoral decision.

Liturgical Ministers

"Presiding Minister: *Priests*, as teachers of faith and ministers of comfort, preside at the funeral rites, especially the Mass; the celebration of the funeral liturgy is especially entrusted to *pastors and associate pastors*. When no priest is available, *deacons* ... preside at funeral rites. When no priest or deacon is available for the vigil and related rites or the rite of committal, a *layperson presides*." # 14

Other Liturgical Ministers

. . . laymen and laywomen may serve as readers, musicians, ushers, pallbearers, and according to existing norms, as special ministers of the Eucharist . . . *Family members* should be encouraged to take an active part in these ministries, but they should not be asked to assume any role that their grief or sense of loss may make too burdensome. # 15

"Whenever possible, ministers should involve the family in planning the funeral rites: the choice of texts and rites provided in the ritual, in the selection of music for the rites, and in the designation of liturgical ministers." # 17

Fees: The *Archdiocesan Clergy Personnel Manual* states, "[in] accordance with Canon Law, offerings given in conjunction with the celebration of the sacraments or funerals belong to the parish unless the donors clearly state they wish the gift to go to the priest. The priest is entitled to take a Mass stipend if he has not already received a stipend for another Mass that day. . . . Funeral parlors should be instructed that offerings on the occasion of funerals should be made out to the parish and not the individual priest."

Archdiocese of Portland:

- Viewing the deceased: *The casket may be opened for viewing before and/or after the vigil. The casket should be closed before the Funeral Liturgy begins and would not normally be opened again. When viewing of the deceased is permitted in church before the Funeral Liturgy a member/representative of the family should be present and candle(s) lit near the casket. An unattended casket should not be open in church.*
- Recitation of the Rosary: *Faithful enjoy the right to pray the rosary on most occasions. If the recitation of the rosary takes the place of a Vigil, it would be well to include readings from Scripture and prayers from the vigil. The "scriptural" rosary may also be recited. A lay person or a member of the family may lead the rosary.*

If a rosary is prayed in church before the funeral, it should be scheduled to end at least 15 minutes before the beginning of the Funeral Liturgy. Normally, the priest, deacon, or minister who presides at the Funeral Liturgy would not lead the recitation of the rosary when it occurs immediately before the funeral.

- Eulogies: *When "eulogies" are incorporated in the Final Commendation they should be limited in number and duration. As a rule one to three and less than fifteen minutes total.*

Topic 8: Cremation Issues

Summary: The *Order of Christian Funerals* reflects a theology and tradition in which burial (interment or entombment) of the body has been the principle manner of the body's final disposition. Catholic teaching and practice continue to encourage the preference for burial or entombment of the deceased, although those who have chosen cremation may receive a Christian Funeral Rite. OCF #19

In 1997 the American bishops received an indult to allow the presence of the cremated remains of a body at the Funeral Liturgy. The ritual for celebration of funeral rites in the presence of cremated remains was published and promulgated as an appendix to the *Order of Christian Funerals*.

The Church prefers the presence of the body at the funeral liturgy, and recommends that cremation take place following the funeral liturgy. *Appendix #413*

When circumstances prevent the presence of the body at the funeral liturgy, it is appropriate that the cremated remains be present for the full course of the funeral rites, including the Vigil for the Deceased, the funeral liturgy, and the Rite of Committal. *Appendix #426-431*

The cremated remains are to be treated with the same respect given to the corporeal remains of the body. The cremated remains should be entombed in a mausoleum or columbarium; they may also be buried in a grave in a cemetery. The practice of scattering cremated remains on the sea, from the air, or on the ground, or of keeping them in the home, or of forming them into any type of object or decoration are not the reverent disposition required by the Church. "Whenever possible, appropriate means for memorializing the deceased should be utilized, such as a plaque or stone the records the name of the deceased." *Appendix #417.*

Archdiocese of Portland:

- *An appropriate container or vessel for the cremated remains should be used during the Funeral Liturgy. A pall is not used with the cremated remains (cf. Appendix #434).*

Resolutions:

- The Archdiocese should develop guidelines for Funeral Directors regarding Catholic Funerals.
- The Archdiocese should adopt or develop a brochure regarding Catholic Funerals for use in parishes.
- The Archdiocese should develop a plan for the celebration of priests' funerals that reflect the recommended practices regarding Catholic Funerals with particular regard for the homily and "eulogies."
- We should consider developing a common terminology with regard to the funeral rites.

Mass of Christian Burial

Mass of Resurrection

Funeral Mass

Funeral Liturgy outside Mass

Vigil

Memorial Mass

Mass for the Dead

Rite of Committal *or* Committal