



Norms for the Order of Christian Funerals Diocese of Bridgeport

November 29, 2020
The First Sunday of Advent

INTRODUCTION

From the beginning of the Church, Christian funeral rites and burial have been an important spiritual and pastoral practice. Our Catholic faith understands death as the entrance into eternity. It expresses a hope in the resurrection of the dead won for us in Christ's Death and Resurrection. We also recognize the value of prayer for the deceased and show reverence for the body which remains.¹ Since the Christian response to death stands as a witness to Christian belief regarding life here and hereafter, our rites and ceremonies connected with Christian death and burial unite us to the paschal mystery of Christ's victory over sin and death and must remain consonant with this belief.

The events which surround death call for a community response.² While the immediate family bears the burden of sorrow, the community of relatives, friends, and parishioners comes together to provide prayerful support. The local Christian community, through the Church, commends him or her to the merciful love of the Father and offers its thanksgiving for the life of the deceased.

The *Order of Christian Funerals* has three parts: The *Vigil and Related Rites*, the *Funeral Liturgy*, and the *Rite of Committal*. Each part has its own distinct role and each must reflect the circumstances of both the deceased and the mourners. Church authority has the obligation and responsibility to determine which parts of the burial rite are appropriate to each person and what form these rites will take. It is appropriate that each priest and deacon should have his own copy of this liturgical book.

Part I of the *Order of Christian Funerals* is divided into three groups of rites that correspond to the three principal ritual moments in the funerals of Christians as noted above. The minister, in consultation with those concerned, chooses from within these three groups of rites those that correspond to the needs and customs of the mourners. This choice may be assisted by the reflections given in the *General Introduction* and in the introduction of each rite or groups of rites.³

While this document will only be referencing the *Order of Christian Funerals* for the ordinary form of the Roman Rite, there are two usages of the one Roman Rite, that is, the ordinary and

¹ Cf. *The Code of Canon Law* (hereafter, CIC), 1176

² See the *Order of Christian Funerals*, nos. 8-11.

³ OCF, no. 50.



the extraordinary form.⁴ The faithful are permitted to have a funeral Mass according to the extraordinary form of the Roman Rite in accord with the norms set down by *Summorum Pontificum*.

I. Responsibilities for those involved with the Funeral Rites

A. Clergy

At the time of death, there is need for effective, sensitive, pastoral care on the part of priests, deacons, parish staff members and those lay persons who have a distinct role in the planning or celebration of the Funeral Liturgy. The parish clergy are expected to offer support and consolation to assist families in preparing for the celebration of the funeral, since they ordinarily lead the liturgical celebrations of the wake, the funeral and the final disposition of the body. They are also to explore with family members, as best as possible, the rich theological meaning of the funeral rites, so that the experience of the death of a loved one may also become a privileged moment for evangelization. Finally, the priest or his delegate, in conjunction with the funeral director, will help the family arrange the details of the funeral rites, particularly family participation and the choice of scripture readings and music, giving special attention to questions about which there may be confusion or misunderstanding, such as cremation, words of remembrance, fees, or the procedures which are addressed in these norms.

When the death of a Catholic appears to be imminent, the parish priest should be called to provide the dying person with the Church's sacramental ministry and to give comfort to the family. Even when the person has already died, the priest is to be called in order that he might pray for the deceased and minister to the bereaved family.⁵ If the person has already died, the Sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick is not administered.

In his contact with the bereaved family, the parish priest should offer his condolences and help them to place their trust and confidence in the resurrected Lord. At the same time, the priest can conveniently counsel the family and help them to arrange the details of the funeral rites.

After the funeral rites are prayed, the priest or deacon should continue to offer pastoral care by visits and offering encouragement to other parishioners to support the bereaved family in adjusting to life without the deceased person.

⁴ Pope Benedict XVI, *Summorum Pontificum*, 1.

⁵ Prayers for this purpose are found in the *Pastoral Care of the Sick*, Chapter 7: "Prayers for the Dead," and in *OCF Part I*, Chapter 2: "Related Rites and Prayers."



B. Laity

Lay persons also exercise important roles in the Church's ministry to those who have died and to those who are mourners. Liturgical ministers and those who offer bereavement ministry to those who have lost a loved one have a unique opportunity to participate in the corporal work of mercy by assisting in the burial of the dead. They carry out this ministry along with and in cooperation with the parish clergy.

In the absence of the priest, his delegate should meet with the family to arrange the details of the funeral rites, particularly family participation and the choice of Scripture readings and music. Special attention should be given to answer questions about which there may be confusion or misunderstanding.

C. Musicians

Among the liturgical ministers, musicians exercise a very important role in the celebration of the various portions of the funeral liturgies, especially the Vigil and the Funeral Mass. Without music, the Funeral Rites can be uninspiring but with music they can bring hope and consolation to those present.

Musicians, especially the organist and cantors, should exercise their ministry as fully as possible and should see to it that those who are present fully participate in the psalms and hymns of the liturgy.

It is most appropriate that the entrance song, the responsorial psalm and the Gospel acclamation be sung during the Liturgy of the Word. The song during the preparation of the gifts, the Eucharistic prayer acclamations, the Lamb of God, the communion song and the song during the Final Commendation should be sung during the Liturgy of the Eucharist.

Whenever possible or appropriate, the parish music director should be available to meet with the family to discuss with them their preferences for the songs of the Liturgy.

D. Funeral Directors:

Funeral Directors have the vocation to assist families at the time of their grief by providing services which at one time were carried out by members of the family themselves or by neighbors and guilds. They prepare the body for the funeral rites and burial or cremation. They arrange for the transportation of the body and the mourners. In consultation with the local parish, they arrange the date and time for the wake, the Vigil Service, the Funeral Liturgy, and the burial or entombment of the body or cremated remains. They also provide support and counseling for those in grief. They do these things in a most professional manner and are valued partners with local parish clergy.



Funeral Directors have the right to expect that funerals will be carried out in accord with the *Order of Christian Funerals*, including whatever valid options are permitted by that ritual book. They also have the right to expect that the norms contained herein will be observed in every parish of the Diocese of Bridgeport.

Furthermore, since the Funeral Director must coordinate many aspects of the funeral, it is a grave responsibility on the part of the parish clergy or their supporting staff that they respond to the calls of directors in a most timely manner.

Under no circumstances may funeral directors accept Mass stipends for Masses for the dead. Only the parish priest, who accepts the obligation to celebrate the Mass, may accept Mass intentions and issue Mass cards.

GENERAL NORMS:

These norms are prepared for the direction of all clergy and lay people who participate in the corporal work of mercy of burying the dead and presume a thorough knowledge of the General Introduction of the *Order of Christian Funerals, with Cremation Rite*. They have their foundation in the general law of the Church, the decrees of the Apostolic See, and liturgical law as found in the *General Introduction of the Roman Missal*, third edition and the *General Introduction of Order of Christian Funerals*.

1. The revised *Order of Christian Funerals, with Cremation Rite*, with the adaptations prepared by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops and approved by the Apostolic See, has been in effect since 1997. It is the only book currently authorized for use at funerals in the ordinary form of the Roman Rite in the United States of America and in the Diocese of Bridgeport.⁶
2. The parish clergy are responsible for determining, in accordance with the norms of Church law, the rights of the deceased to a Christian funeral and burial. They have the obligation to conduct the *Vigil and Related Rites*, the *Funeral Liturgy*, and the *Rite of Committal*. Priests and deacons must exercise their responsibilities in these matters conscientiously and according to the directives of the Church and the approved norms contained herein for the Diocese of Bridgeport.

II: The Funeral Rites

The *Order of Christian Funerals* of the Roman liturgy gives three types of funeral celebrations, corresponding to the three places in which they are conducted: *Vigil* (also known as the “Wake”), the *Funeral Mass*, and the *Committal* (“Burial”).⁷

⁶ Appendix II of the *OCF*, providing prayers and directives for Cremation, was published in 1997.

⁷ Cf. *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (CCC), 1686



These rites of the Church are in the form of *stational* liturgies, meaning that the liturgy moves from place to place as its various elements are celebrated.⁸ This special character is seen clearly as the funeral moves from the Vigil Prayers at the funeral home or home of the deceased to the celebration of the Funeral Mass at the parish church and finally to the cemetery. This movement becomes a living icon of the Christian's journey through this life to eternal life.

A. The Vigil Service and related Rites and Prayers

It has been the Church's goal in the funeral rites not only to commend the dead to God, but also to support the Christian hope of the people and to offer to those who mourn assistance in the profession of their own faith in the Resurrection and eternal life. For this reason, it has been customary, at some opportune time and place between death and burial, to have a gathering of the family and friends of the deceased. This affords the opportunity both for private and individual prayer and for a communal service in which those in attendance may join to bring the peace and consolation of Christ to the bereaved and to themselves.

The rites provided may be celebrated between the time of death and the funeral liturgy or, should there be no funeral liturgy, before the rite of committal. Two forms of the vigil are provided: *Vigil for the Deceased* and *Vigil for the Deceased with Reception at the Church*. Related Rites and Prayers include 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.⁹

These rites help to assist the family and friends of the deceased as they confront the shock and grief that accompanies the death of a loved one. They assist the minister in helping the mourners to express their sorrow and find hope and strength through faith in Christ and His resurrection.¹⁰ The minister should carefully choose the rites and prayers according to the needs of the mourners and whenever possible, in consultation with the family of the deceased.

B. Norms for the Celebration of the Vigil

1. When celebrated by a priest or deacon, the Vigil Service provides the ordained minister with the opportunity to proclaim God's comforting word and the Church's faith in eternal life. It is often an opportunity to evangelize those who have not been practicing their faith. It can also provide a priest an opportunity to celebrate the Sacrament of Reconciliation for those ready to receive it.

⁸ OCF, 42.

⁹ OCF, 51.

¹⁰ OCF, 52.



2. Traditional forms of prayer such as the recitation of the rosary, litanies or acts of piety may be used to supplement the Vigil Service but must never replace it.
3. The Vigil, according to local custom and circumstances, ordinarily takes place either in the home of the deceased or in the funeral home. The Vigil may be conducted in the local parish Church with the explicit permission of the pastor provided there is sufficient time for an adequate celebration which would not interfere with parish needs.
4. Generally, the Vigil Service will be held on the afternoon or evening preceding the funeral. It cannot immediately precede or be part of the funeral itself, lest the Funeral Liturgy be burdensome, and the Liturgy of the Word be duplicated. For legitimate pastoral reasons and with the permission of the pastor, it is also permitted to hold the Vigil Service with the family of the deceased prior to the start of the public viewing.
5. If held in a church, the celebration of the Vigil must be completed at least 30 minutes before the start of the Funeral Mass.¹¹ The viewing of the deceased person may continue, in respectful silence, following the celebration of the Vigil until a reasonable time before the start of the Funeral Mass.
6. The Vigil Service may be led by a priest or deacon or, in their absence and with the permission of the pastor, by a lay person. If the Vigil is to be led by a lay person, proper permission must be obtained by the local pastor.
7. The proper vesture for priests to conduct the Vigil includes (a) an alb and stole, (b) cassock, surplice and stole or (c) the Roman collar and suit (with or without stole). The proper vesture for deacons includes (a) an alb and stole, (b) cassock, surplice and stole or (c) a Roman Collar and suit in accordance to the norms presented in the Diaconate Manual.
8. During the celebration of the Vigil, there should always be participation by those present; and, if necessary, prayer cards or booklets should be available to assist all in joining in the service. If possible, it is also appropriate that music be part of the Vigil celebration.

C. The Funeral Mass

C.1 General Considerations

For those who have lived in and with Christ, death is the beginning of eternal beatitude with our Savior and Redeemer. Because the Eucharist is the central prayer of the faithful Catholic during his or her lifetime, it is most appropriate that the Mass be celebrated as the central part of the Funeral Liturgy. The liturgical celebration of a Christian Funeral should express

¹¹ The second form of "Vigil for the Deceased with the Reception at the Church," may be used when the Vigil is celebrated in the local parish Church.



our hope in new life which is promised to all who have loved God in this life and observed His commandments, while also acknowledging the pain and grief of the mourners.

The Funeral Mass, or *Mass of Christian Burial*, is the Church's prayer of intercession for the forgiveness of the sins of the one who has died and for that person's ultimate reconciliation with God, as well as a time to give thanks for the life of the deceased. Thus, the ministry of the Church in this instance aims at expressing efficacious communion with the deceased, at the participation in that communion of the community gathered for the funeral, and at the proclamation of eternal life to the community.¹²

Catholics are encouraged to indicate in their funeral directives that their funeral is to include the celebration of Mass and make it clear to those who have the responsibility for planning their funeral that the Funeral Mass is to be celebrated. However, in the absence of a formal preplanning of their funeral arrangements on the part of the deceased, surviving family members are often free to determine which of the Church's rites will be celebrated on behalf of the deceased. While we must make every effort to encourage the celebration of the funeral rites in their entirety, pastoral sensitivity must guide our efforts to encourage family members, even those who do not believe or share the Catholic faith, to celebrate as many of the Rites as possible on behalf of the deceased.

The liturgy itself should be planned with appropriate choices of liturgical music, the texts of prayers and readings from Sacred Scripture, and homily. These choices should take into consideration the needs and wishes of the family and of the participating community, while also following the Church's liturgical directives.

So that proper arrangements are made in advance, it is encouraged that the priest celebrant or his delegate meet with the family to offer them condolences, to talk about the deceased with them, and to assist them in choosing the scriptural readings, liturgical music, and the other prayers of the liturgy. This meeting will also assist him in preparing a homily that is appropriate to the circumstances.

NORMS:

1. The celebration of all Funeral Masses in the Diocese of Bridgeport must follow the prescribed liturgical norms that are found in the *Order of Christian Funerals*.
2. The *Mass of Christian Burial* is not celebrated on Sundays, Holy Days of Obligation, Holy Thursday, Good Friday, or Holy Saturday. On these days, at a convenient time, and separate from the liturgy of the day, the body may be brought to the church for the Liturgy of the Word and final commendation from the Funeral Mass. Mass should be celebrated on behalf of the deceased on another day, at the first convenience of the family and parish personnel. The priest may offer a private Mass as soon as possible since Mass intentions may not be available or already filled.

¹² CCC, 1684



3. “Catechumens [...] since they are of the household of Christ [...] are entitled to Christian burial should they die before the completion of their initiation.”¹³
4. “As regards children who have died without Baptism, the Church can only entrust them to the mercy of God, as she does in her funeral rites for them. Indeed, the great mercy of God who desires that all men should be saved and Jesus’ tenderness toward children which caused him to say: ‘Let them come to me, do not hinder them’ allow us to hope that there is a way of salvation for children who have died without baptism.”¹⁴ As such, funeral rites may be celebrated for a child who dies before baptism.¹⁵ Funeral Rites may also be celebrated for stillborn children.
5. Stillborn and unborn children of Catholic parents should be interred in a Catholic cemetery. The decision and procedure for the interment will be left to the parents and their pastor with the assistance of the Funeral Director.
6. It is never permitted to deny a person the celebration of the Funeral Mass based on parish registration (or lack thereof). Absent a grave moral impediment, the territorial residence of a baptized Catholic within a parish is sufficient reason to allow the funeral to be celebrated.
7. White, violet or black vestments may be worn by ordained ministers at funeral services.
8. It is left to the discretion of the priest celebrant whether to make an announcement just before communion indicating that non-Christians, non-Catholic Christians and Catholics who are not in the state of grace may not receive Holy Communion.¹⁶ A note in this regard may also be put in the participation aid or announced before the liturgy begins. For pastoral reasons, such announcements should be done in a manner that is accurate but also conveys the Church’s pastoral solicitude for those who may not be able to receive the Eucharist.¹⁷ It is never permissible to give approval for all participants to be invited to receive Holy Communion.

C.2 PLACE FOR THE FUNERAL

The parish church of the deceased is the usual place for the Funeral Liturgy. It is the House of God wherein new members of the Church are baptized and confirmed; couples are married; converts are welcomed; and here, day by day, people worship God in a community

¹³ *National Statutes for the Catechumenate*, 7. See also *CIC* 206 and 1183.

¹⁴ CCC, 1261

¹⁵ OCF, 237.

¹⁶ “[C]are should be taken lest out of ignorance non-Catholics or even non-Christians come forward for Holy Communion, without taking into account the Church’s Magisterium in matters pertaining to doctrine and discipline. It is the duty of pastors at an opportune moment to inform those present of the authenticity and the discipline that are strictly to be observed,” *Redemptionis Sacramentum*, 84.

¹⁷ Please see the USCCB suggested insert for the reception of Holy Communion.



of faith, hope, and love around the Risen Lord present in the Holy Eucharist- Body, Blood, Soul and Divinity.

The person who has died may express the desire to be buried from another parish; this is most often the parish where the deceased had previously lived. The family of the deceased may also request that a relative be buried in their parish for the sake of convenience or for economic reasons. In the Diocese of Bridgeport, such requests should be honored unless there is a grave reason not to do so. However, if there is any doubt about the appropriateness of such a request, the pastor should consult with his Dean before reaching a final determination.

C.3 TIME OF THE FUNERAL

The funeral is usually celebrated on the morning of the burial.

If the family so requests and the pastor deems it pastorally suitable, the funeral rite may take place in the afternoon or the evening before the burial. This accommodation may be granted for family needs or to provide for a greater measure of community participation. In such cases, the burial may take place at the family's convenience on the next day.

Because such arrangements may have financial implications, the family should discuss the matter with the Funeral Director before finalizing arrangements.

C.4 FUNERALS FOR CHILDREN

In its pastoral ministry to the bereaved the Christian community is challenged in a special way by the death of an infant or child. The bewilderment and pain that death causes can be overwhelming, especially for the parents and the brothers and sisters of the deceased child.¹⁸

The *Order of Christian Funerals* (Part II: *Funeral Rites for Children*) provides complete Funeral Services for Children. Its pastoral introduction is very helpful when planning the rites for a child's funeral.¹⁹ The rites chosen will depend on the needs and circumstances of the family.

In the case of the death of an infant, the *Rite of Committal for a Child* or the *Rite of Final Commendation of an Infant* might be used along with some form of informal prayer with the family.

Those involved in planning the funeral rites for a deceased child should consider the age of the child, the circumstances of death, the grief of the family, and the needs of those taking

¹⁸ OCF, 238.

¹⁹ OCF, 234-242.



part in the rites. In choosing the texts and elements of celebration, the minister should bear in mind whether the child was baptized or died before baptism.²⁰

D. Specific Considerations regarding the Funeral Mass

The following explains the various parts of the Funeral Liturgy that are common to both the Funeral Mass and the Funeral outside Mass.

D.1 OPENING RITES

In remembrance of the deceased person's Baptism, the casket is covered during the funeral rite with a funeral pall, ordinarily white in color. The pall is not to be placed over the casket prior to the sprinkling with holy water.

If the deceased was a member of a veteran or military group, the national flag should not cover the casket in church. It is removed at the entrance of the church (as are the flowers) and may be replaced on the casket before the body is taken from the church.

The Gospel Book, a Bible, or a cross may be placed on the casket over the pall. Only Christian symbols may rest on or be placed near the casket during the Funeral Liturgy.²¹

The ritual elements which constitute the remembrance of Baptism replace the Penitential Act. Once the remembrance of Baptism and the procession into the church are completed, the Mass continues with the Collect. The Penitential Act would be used only when the remembrance of Baptism has taken place at a time distinct and separate from the Funeral Mass, for example, at a *Vigil for the Deceased with Reception at the Church* on the night before the funeral.²²

D.2 COLLECTS AND PRAYERS

The *Order of Christian Funerals* provides a variety of collects and other prayers that address a great spectrum of pastoral situations and needs. The priest should choose those prayers which are most appropriate for the circumstances.

D.3 SCRIPTURE READINGS

It is appropriate to ask the family to choose the Scripture readings for the funeral. To do this, it is necessary to provide them with a copy of the *Order of Christian Funerals* or some other resource containing the readings, so that they can review the readings and make their choices.

²⁰ OCF, 241.

²¹ OCF, 38.

²² OCF, 82-97.



In the judgment of the priest celebrant, it is possible to have only one reading prior to the Gospel instead of the customary two readings, if circumstances warrant.

NORMS:

1. The Funeral Liturgy normally has three readings (as on Sunday). During the Easter Season the Old Testament reading may be replaced by a reading from the Acts of the Apostles or the Book of Revelation.
2. The Mass texts to be used are those of the Roman Missal and the Lectionary for Mass, "Masses for the Dead" (*Order of Christian Funerals*, 156). The readings to be used are to be taken from the revised *Lectionary for Mass* approved for use in the Dioceses of the United States of America in 2002, found in numbers 1011-1026 of the revised *Lectionary*, typically published in Volume IV of the series. No other readings are to be taken from any other source. (More specifically, this means the readings found in the 1989 *Order of Christian Funerals* – as well as in the 1997 *Order* containing the Appendix on funeral rites in the presence of the cremated remains of the body – pre-date the 2002 revised *Lectionary*, and therefore are not to be used.)
3. Non-biblical readings must never substitute for the Scripture readings.
4. If the family desires a non-scriptural reading to be included in the funeral services, this might be appropriately done before or after the prayers at the Wake Service or before or after the prayers at the graveside. In any case, the parish clergy must be consulted about the use and choice of such a reading.
5. Permission for a non-Catholic Christian to read during the celebration of the Funeral Mass must be obtained from the pastor or vicar general.²³ A non-baptized person may not serve as a reader at any Eucharistic celebration.²⁴

D.4 HOMILY

The homily is an essential part of the Funeral Liturgy. It may never be eulogistic in character but should primarily relate Christian death to the paschal mystery of the Lord's victorious death and resurrection and to the hope of eternal life. However, since death is an individual experience for each person, the homily should not be totally depersonalized. Rather, it may properly include an expression of praise and gratitude to God for the deceased person's Christian life and the virtues he or she showed in living or in facing death.

²³ "The reading of Scripture during a Eucharistic celebration in the Catholic Church is to be done by members of that Church. On exceptional occasions and for a just cause, the Bishop of the diocese may permit a member of another Church or ecclesial Community to take on the task of reader," Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity, *Directory for the Application of Principles and Norms on Ecumenism*, 133.

²⁴ Pontifical Council on Ecumenism and Interreligious Dialogue, "Directory for the Application of Principles and Norms of Ecumenism," 133.



D.5 MUSIC

Music is an integral part of the Funeral Liturgy. The family should be encouraged to discuss choices for the liturgical music of the Funeral Liturgy with the parish music director, staff member of the parish and/ or the priest celebrant.

NORMS:

1. The music selected for the Funeral Mass should be appropriate to its use in the liturgy. It must be sacred in nature or convey without error the mystery of Christian faith.
2. Chant holds preference by the Church as the music proper for the Sacred Liturgy. Whenever possible, chant may be incorporated in some capacity into the celebration of a Funeral Mass.²⁵
3. Purely secular music is never appropriate for the celebration of a Funeral Mass. Such music may be used to accompany the wake, the grave or during the gathering following the funeral.
4. As at a Sunday liturgy, it is most appropriate to have a cantor who can lead the assembly in the songs of the liturgy. If possible, the cantor should not also be the organist so that the cantor can properly lead the people in singing.
5. In the choice of music for the Funeral Mass, preference should be given to the singing of the acclamations, the responsorial psalm, the entrance and communion songs, and especially the song of farewell at the final commendations (cf., OCF, 157).
6. The use of bagpipers, military honors or police honors are not permitted to be part of the celebration of the Funeral Mass. Such honors or music can accompany the deceased outside of Church, either at the start or the conclusion of the Funeral Mass.

D.6 PARTICIPATION BY FAMILY MEMBERS AND FRIENDS

Members of the family and friends are to be encouraged to participate actively in the prayers, songs, and actions of the liturgy. This is most effectively done when the people have a service leaflet that indicates the order of the service, postures of the congregation, and the congregation's responses.

Family members may serve as readers at the Funeral Mass in accordance with the diocesan norms established for this ministry. They may participate in the presentation of the gifts (bread and wine) for the Holy Eucharist. Anyone may serve as pallbearer at the funeral of a Catholic.

²⁵ "The Church acknowledges Gregorian chant as especially suited to the Roman liturgy; therefore, other things being equal, it should be given pride of place in liturgical services," *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, 116a.



D.7 FLOWERS

Flowers, as symbols of resurrection and hope, have a part in the funeral rite. However, they should not be placed on or around the casket during the funeral lest they obscure the baptismal symbolism of the pall. In addition, they are not to be placed upon the altar.

Flowers on top of the casket are removed at the entrance of the church and may be replaced before the body is taken from the church.

D.8 HOLY WATER AND INCENSE

It is a part of the Church's tradition to use holy water as a reminder of Baptism during the Funeral Liturgy and incense as a means of honoring the body of the deceased person.

Holy water is normally used as part of the rites for the reception of the body at the church door. It is ordinarily not used again during the Mass, nor is the casket ordinarily sprinkled before it is taken from the church.

Incense is usually used during the offertory for the incensing of the gifts, the altar, attending clergy and the members of the congregation, but the body is not incensed at this time. The body is incensed during the final commendation while the song of farewell is sung. The altar may also be incensed at the start of the Funeral Mass, at the discretion of the priest celebrant.

D.9 STIPENDS

NORMS:

1. With the promulgation of these norms, a standard parish offering for the celebration of funerals has been established whose amount cannot be less than \$200 nor greater than \$300 for the celebration of a Funeral Mass. The exact offering for each parish will be determined by the respective pastor.
 - a. If the faithful, of their own free will, desire to give more than the parish offering, it can be accepted. If the faithful, of their own free will, are restricted in making the suggested parish offering or, of their own free will, give less than the suggested offering, it is also to be accepted.
 - b. Under no circumstance can an offering greater than \$300 be requested from the faithful for the celebration of any funeral, in either the Ordinary or Extraordinary Form of the Mass.
2. Due to tax considerations, a separate fee may be requested for the services of a musician and/or cantor. Those fees will be established by each pastor and the check will be made directly to the respective musicians.
3. Both the stipend and music fees ordinarily are communicated to the family by the funeral director.



4. Under no circumstance can the funeral rites be denied anyone because of financial considerations. When a family has limited financial resources, pastors should do whatever possible to provide at least basic music for the funeral Mass. Pastoral musicians are likewise encouraged in their charity to extend whatever consideration they can to families in such need.
5. A family is always free to offer a personal stipend to the priest who celebrates the funeral, and he is free to accept it.
6. All policies governing the use of parish facilities after a burial by the family of the deceased will be established by each respective pastor, accounting for the unique circumstances of his parish and its facilities.

D.10 WORDS OF REMEMBRANCE

Given the difficulties that many celebrants have encountered with the use of words of remembrance during the Funeral Mass, such words are best offered by family members or friends of the deceased either during the Vigil Service after the Concluding Prayer and before the Blessing or at the cemetery, before or after the Committal.²⁶ The use of words of remembrance should be strongly discouraged during the celebration of the Funeral Mass.

However, it is the decision of each pastor whether to permit words of remembrance during the celebration of Funeral Masses celebrated in his parish. Regardless of the decision he makes in this regard, the pastor is asked to compose a written policy that explains his rationale, publish it on his parish's website and inform the local funeral directors of his decision.

If words of remembrance are to be permitted in conjunction with a Funeral Mass, such words can be offered at one of two times:

1. They can be offered immediately before the final commendation begins, that is, immediately after the Prayer after Communion;
2. They can also be provided before the start of the Funeral Mass after the family has taken their seats in Church.

In either case, the following norms are to be observed as completely as possible:²⁷

NORMS:

1. Words of remembrance are not a eulogy. They are to provide the opportunity for the family to speak in loving remembrance of the deceased person's characteristics which manifested their faith in God and how they attempted to live the Christian vocation to love God and neighbor as Christ taught us.

²⁶ OCF, 80.

²⁷ OCF, 170.



2. If the family desires to have words of remembrance offered during the Funeral Mass, the following norms must be observed:
 - a. The words of remembrance must be written out.
 - b. They cannot exceed three to four minutes in length.
 - c. If possible, they must be submitted to the priest celebrant or the funeral director at least one day in advance of the Funeral Mass. It is requested that the funeral director facilitate the transmittal of the text to the priest celebrant before the required deadline.
3. It is never permitted to have more than one person offer such words of remembrance. Rather, the family must have one person speak on behalf of all.

A diocesan instructional sheet has been made available for use by the family members of the deceased to help guide them in the creation and delivery of their words of remembrance.

D.11 FINAL COMMENDATION

The final commendation is a final farewell by the members of the community, an act of respect for one of their members, whom they entrust to the tender and merciful embrace of God. This act of last farewell also acknowledges the reality of separation and affirms that the community and the deceased, baptized into the one Body, share the same destiny which is the resurrection on the last day. On that day the one Shepherd will call each by name and gather the faithful together in the new and eternal Jerusalem.²⁸

The priest celebrant first indicates to the people that this is now our last farewell to the one who has died and calls them to pray for the deceased, a brief period of silence then follows. He may use the words given in place or his own words for this invitation.²⁹

The song of farewell is the climax of the rite of final commendation. It should be sung to a melody simple enough for all to sing. It can take the form of a responsory sung by the cantor and people, or even a hymn. When singing is not possible, and this should be a rare occurrence, invocations may be recited by the assembly (cf., OCF, 147).

The casket may then be sprinkled with holy water as a reminder of baptism. However, if it was sprinkled at the beginning of Mass during the reception of the body, the sprinkling is ordinarily omitted in the Rite of Final Commendation. This avoids repetition and respects the fact that the casket is covered with the funeral pall at this time.

The casket is then incensed as a sign of respect for the body as a temple of the Holy Spirit. The incensing ordinarily takes place during the song of farewell, but it may also be done before or after the song.

The song of farewell is followed by a concluding prayer of the priest.

The Funeral Mass concludes with an invitation to begin the procession from the church by the deacon, if present, or by the priest. If the burial will not take place immediately, the Mass

²⁸ OCF, 146.

²⁹ OCF, 147.



may conclude with the Solemn Blessing (no. 20) for celebrations for the dead in the *Roman Missal*. The priest and other ministers precede the casket and the family and mourners follow behind, while a suitable song or instrumental music is played. The funeral pall is removed from the casket before it is taken from the church. The casket is not sprinkled again.

E. The Funeral Liturgy Outside Mass

The second form of the funeral liturgy is the *Funeral Liturgy Outside Mass*. It is the same as the Funeral Mass but omits the entire Liturgy of the Eucharist. Provision is also made for the distribution of Holy Communion when pastorally appropriate.³⁰

This rite may be used for various reasons:

- a. When the Funeral Mass is not permitted, namely, on solemnities of obligation, on Holy Thursday and the Easter Triduum, and on the Sundays of Advent, Lent, and Easter;
- b. When in some places or circumstances it is not possible to celebrate the Funeral Mass before the committal, for example, if a priest is not available;
- c. When for pastoral reasons the pastor and the family judge that the *Funeral Liturgy Outside Mass* is a more suitable form of celebration (See, *OCF*, no. 178).
- d. The *Funeral Liturgy Outside Mass* may be used for those persons who are not entitled to a Funeral Mass according to the law of the Church, or for those who have rejected the Church and have shown no change of heart prior to death.

NORMS:

1. *Funeral Liturgy Outside Mass* is ordinarily celebrated in the parish church, but may also be celebrated in a funeral home, cemetery chapel, or even in the home of the deceased.³¹
2. A Priest or Deacon may wear (a) an alb and stole, with or without a cope or (b) a cassock, surplice and stole.
3. When the Funeral Mass is not celebrated, Masses may still be offered at other times for the repose of the soul of the deceased.
4. Burial in a Catholic cemetery may be permitted for those whose funeral is celebrated by this rite.
5. Regarding the possible denial of a Catholic funeral and burial:
 - a. Any priest confronted with a case of denial of Church burial should ordinarily lean toward leniency and mercy. Should he seriously believe that Christian burial

³⁰ Part V: Additional Texts, Section 21: Holy Communion outside Mass.

³¹ *OCF*, no. 179.



- should be denied, he must first consult with his local Dean before making a final decision.
- b. A person who has committed suicide should not be deprived of the full burial rites of the Church. The culpability of those who take their own lives is seriously questionable given the psychological duress that may have caused the suicide. The *OCF* recognizes this reality by providing special prayers for this situation.³²
 - c. The continued neglect of Mass and the sacraments, even when generally known, is not sufficient cause for the denial of funeral rites.
 - d. Those who have incurred excommunication, but who have had no formal sentence of excommunication passed on them, are not to be deprived of ecclesiastical burial simply because of their excommunication.
 - e. Invalidly married Catholics and those who have attempted marriage while bound by a previous union should not be denied burial, provided that no public scandal has been or will be given to the faithful. In planning funeral rites for those involved in such marriages, a distinction may be made between those who have tried to practice their faith to the full possible extent and those who have neglected it. In the first instance, Mass would usually be celebrated when requested by the family. In the second instance, a Liturgy of the Word might be considered more appropriate either in the church or at the funeral home.
 - f. When the Catholic relative of a person who is not Catholic requests that a priest offer a service for a deceased non-Catholic Christian, he may do so. When it is considered appropriate, the body may be brought to the church for the Funeral Mass.
6. Out of friendship for the deceased or for their family, a priest may attend the funeral of non-Catholics in their places of worship and may participate in an appropriate manner when invited by their clergy. For similar reasons clergy of other faiths and communions may participate in the funerals of Catholics, following the appropriate norms established by the Church. Clergy of other faiths are never permitted to offer the homily in place of the priest celebrant or deacon assisting at the Mass.
 7. A Catholic priest may not concelebrate or receive communion in a non-Catholic church, nor may a non-Catholic priest, minister or bishop be permitted to concelebrate or receive communion in a Catholic Church.
 8. A Latin Rite Catholic Priest may concelebrate at a Funeral, if invited by an Eastern Rite Catholic Priest, and an Eastern Rite Catholic Priest may be invited to concelebrate at a funeral celebrated in a Latin Rite church. In either case the priest should wear the eucharistic vestments of his own rite.
 9. The priest celebrant or attending deacon may never give a general invitation to non-Catholic Christians to receive Holy Communion at a Funeral Mass. In all cases, the *Directory for the Application of Principles and Norms on Ecumenism* should be followed.

³² *OCF* Part V, Chapter 20, 44-45; *CCC*, 2280-2283.



F. The Rite of Committal

The rite of committal, the conclusion of the funeral rites, is the final act of the community of faith in caring for the body of the deceased member. It may be celebrated at the grave, tomb, or crematorium and may be used for burial at sea. Whenever possible, the rite of committal is to be celebrated at the site of the committal, that is, beside the open grave or place of interment. Local circumstances may require that at times the committal may have to be celebrated at a cemetery chapel, especially when the weather is inclement.

Two forms of the committal are given in the *Order of Christian Funerals*: (1) the *Rite of Committal* and (2) the *Rite of Committal with Final Commendation*.

NORMS:

1. In most circumstances in the Diocese of Bridgeport, the *Rite of Committal* will be used since our cemeteries are usually some distance from the parish church.
2. The *Rite of Committal* is normally celebrated by a priest or deacon. If neither is available, a layperson delegated by the local pastor, a friend or member of the family, or the funeral director may lead the service.³³
3. If a longer service is desired, longer Scripture readings may be used and appropriate psalms and songs may be included.

F.1 THE PLACE OF BURIAL

Catholics are normally buried in the consecrated ground provided in Catholic cemeteries. The community of those who shared the same faith in life is maintained in death in the Church cemetery which reflects the doctrine and liturgy of the Catholic faith. The Catholic cemetery is also protected by the Church's law and thus provides the assurance of permanence, reverence, and respect for the remains of the deceased. It is a place of prayer for and devotion to the souls of the faithful departed.

Funeral and burial practices should reflect Christian simplicity. Pre-arranged plans for one's funeral and cemetery needs can help to insure this simplicity.

In any situation in which a Catholic is to be interred in a cemetery which is not Catholic, the priest or deacon, after the Funeral Liturgy, should conduct the Rite of Committal at the graveside. After the brief Scripture is read, the individual grave is blessed using option A in the Prayer over the Place of Committal; the remainder of the Rite of Committal then follows.

NORMS:

1. The conditions or circumstances recognized as acceptable for a requested burial in non-Catholic cemetery are:

³³ OCF, no. 215.



- a. a desire to be buried with family members who are interred in the cemetery;
 - b. a convert whose family is interred in a cemetery which is not Catholic;
 - c. a request to be buried in a national cemetery as part of a military community;
 - d. a request to be buried in a plot which the family already owns in a cemetery which is not Catholic
2. Non-Catholics may be buried in a Catholic cemetery if requested:
 - a. On these occasions the ordained minister of the Church in which the deceased shared belief or communion may conduct the burial rite;
 - b. If requested, a patriotic service may also be conducted for the burial of a non-Catholic in a Catholic cemetery;
 - c. If the family requests a Catholic priest or deacon to conduct the service, he should provide a rite which in his judgment is appropriate for the circumstances and the beliefs of those present and is sensitive to the desires and needs of the family.
 3. Catholic cemeteries make every effort to keep their charges reasonable and within reach of the varied financial means of the Catholic people they are meant to serve. Inability to meet the cost of burial is never to be a deterrent to burial in a Catholic cemetery. In the face of financial hardship and absence of sources of public or other funds, the parish priest should initiate with the cemetery action for a charity burial.

F.2 ADDITIONAL CONSIDERATIONS REGARDING BURIAL

1. **DISPOSAL OF AMPUTATED LIMBS:** It is recommended that amputated limbs be buried in the cemetery. However, hospital personnel may need to dispose of portions of bodies in a manner they deem most suitable and hygienic. Cremation is not excluded, but the preference of the person and his or her family should not be disregarded.
2. **ORGAN TRANSPLANTS AND DONATIONS OF BODIES FOR MEDICAL SCIENCE:** Because of the achievements of science and medicine particularly in the matter of organ transplants, occasionally people wish to donate individual organs or their entire body to science. Such donations are legitimate and not contrary to Christian principles. However, in keeping with Christian respect for the body, when it is possible and practical, there should be reasonable assurance that the remains will be disposed of in a proper, reverent, and dignified manner upon completion of the scientific research. In these donations, when the body is not embalmed, a wake or funeral Mass with the body present is usually impossible. The family should be urged to schedule the celebration of a Mass as soon after the death as is practicable. The liturgical texts to be used are to be those of the Funeral Mass. If and when the remains are returned to the family, the burial service may be conducted as usual at the cemetery.
3. **REMOVAL OF A BODY:** Removal of a body from its place of burial may at times become necessary or be deemed appropriate. An example of legal necessity is the state's



exercise of eminent domain. Examples of appropriateness would be the wish of family members to be joined together in a common plot; preferred burial facilities, previously not available, now ready (including the establishment of a Catholic cemetery where none previously existed) or the relocation of a family. For whatever reason, in addition to obtaining the required permission of the civil authorities, the permission of the Cemetery Office of the Diocese must also be obtained to disinter a body from a Catholic cemetery. Reburial should be in an approved cemetery.

G. CREMATION

Through the centuries, the Church has followed the practice of burial or entombment after the manner of Christ's own burial, out of respect for the human person as a member of the Body of Christ, and because of faith in the resurrection of the body. It is still the expressed will of the Church that this hallowed and traditional practice be maintained. “[Cremation] does not enjoy the same value as the 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.”³⁴

However, recognizing circumstances and varying cultures and customs in different parts of the world, the Church, in 1963, issued an *Instruction on Cremation* which gave permission, under certain circumstances, to those Catholics who request that their bodies be cremated.

The 1989 edition of the *Order of Christian Funerals* did not make any special liturgical provision for the presence of the cremated remains of a body at the Funeral Liturgy. In 1996, the members of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops requested that the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments allow the cremated remains to be present in the church for the Funeral Mass or Liturgy and to permit several ritual adaptations when the cremated remains are present. This request was granted in 1997.

Among the reasons why cremation may be chosen by the deceased or the family of the deceased are:

- a. Cremation may be requested for hygienic, economic, or other reasons of a public or private nature. Some examples would be: transfer of remains to a distant place; possible avoidance of considerable expense; national tradition or custom; a severe psychological or pathological fear of burial in the ground or tomb; etc.

³⁴ *OCF*, 413-414.



- b. Usually, the selection of cremation generally is the specific choice of the individual before death. The faithful who choose cremation are presumed to have the proper motives and good intentions.

Norms:

1. In the Diocese of Bridgeport, Catholics may elect to have their body or the bodies of family members cremated at the time of death, provided that cremation is not a protest against the Church's belief in the resurrection of the dead.
2. The body may be brought to the church for the Funeral Liturgy and then be cremated. At a suitable time, the cremated remains are to be buried or entombed.
3. The body may be cremated before the Funeral and the cremated remains may be brought to the church for the Funeral Liturgy.
4. Cremated remains must be treated with great respect as they are the remains of a human body. It is the expectation that the cremated remains will be buried or entombed in consecrated ground, as is true of the burial of the body. The remains must not be divided up, put into jewelry, mixed into paintings or scattered. It is also inappropriate that the cremated remains be retained in a private home.
5. Any decision of the part of the family to forgo the interment of the cremated remains should not automatically serve as grounds to deny the celebration of a Funeral Mass for the deceased. However, if the family is notoriously and openly requesting cremation to scatter the ashes as a gesture opposing Catholic faith, the recent CDF Instruction *Ad Resurgendum cum Cristo* (2016) instructs pastors to deny the celebration of a funeral Mass.³⁵
6. When cremation has been chosen, the various elements of the Funeral Liturgy remain the same as if the body was present with the necessary adaptations as given Appendix 2 of the *Order of Christian Funerals*.³⁶
7. The cremated remains should be contained in a worthy vessel. A small table or stand is to be prepared for them at the place normally occupied by the casket. The vessel containing the cremated remains may be carried to its place in the entrance procession or may be placed on this table or stand sometime before the liturgy begins. The alternative prayer for the sprinkling of holy water is used.³⁷ The covering with the pall is omitted. However, if the vessel containing the cremated remains is not suitable for public display, it may be covered with a white chalice veil or some other appropriate cloth. The decision whether to veil the vessel is at the discretion of the priest celebrant.

³⁵ *Ad Resurgendum cum Cristo*, 8.

³⁶ OCF, nos.411-438.

³⁷ OCF, no. 433.



8. Prayers that do not reference the honoring or burying of the body of the deceased should be chosen. Following the prayer after communion, the Rite of Final Commendation takes place. The alternate form of dismissal is used.³⁸
9. At the committal, the alternative text in no. 438 is used.
10. The rites ordinarily performed at the grave or cemetery chapel may be celebrated in the crematory building.

H. Pastoral Care following the Funeral Rites

Once the funeral rituals have been celebrated, daily life quickly returns to normal – for most everyone except the bereaved family. For them, the days of the death, the wake, the funeral and its associated gatherings likely have been filled with unfamiliar tasks, sights, sounds and intense emotions, especially if the death came unexpectedly. The days following, in stark contrast, often seem empty and confusing for the newly bereaved. They must now face the lingering and unanswered questions, the conflicting emotions and still more unforeseen legal and practical tasks in the aftermath of the death. They must adjust to a new way of day-to-day living in the absence of one who used to be an intimate and necessary part of that life. During this time of transition, their parish community must continue to be a source of strength and comfort on which they can rely.

Simple gestures that can provide a ministry of support and consolation for the grieving include:

- a. A telephone call or a brief written note to assure the bereaved of your continuing awareness of their sorrow and your continuing prayer for them and their beloved departed.
- b. A monthly Mass on the parish calendar to pray for all who have died in that past month and perhaps a coffee hour afterward for their families to visit with one another.
- c. An occasional prayer service and other such gathering to bring together in prayer and fellowship those who mourn.
- d. An annual “Bereavement Mass” near the Commemoration of All Souls to remember those who have died in the past year.
- e. The celebration of the Office of the Dead at Vespers each year on or around All Souls Day.
- f. A “Book of the Dead,” in which the names of the deceased are inscribed at the time of the death or funeral and placed in a prominent place in the church. This book could also be displayed during the month of November for all in the parish to inscribe the names of loved ones who have died.

³⁸ OCF, no.437.