

Preparing the Funeral Liturgy

St. Columbkille Catholic Church
Papillion, Nebraska

READINGS

For the funeral mass, three readings are proclaimed:
 an Old Testament Reading
 a New Testament Reading
 a Gospel Reading

Additionally, some scripture readings are proclaimed at the wake service. These would usually consist of either an Old or New Testament reading and a Gospel.

The gospel readings will be proclaimed by the priest or deacon, but the other readings should be proclaimed by a family member or friend of the family. If none are available, the parish will provide a reader. Each reading may be proclaimed by a different person, or all may be read by one person.

OFFERTORY PROCESSION

Gifts of bread and wine (large paten of hosts and flagon of wine) are brought forward at the Offertory of the funeral mass. At least two people are needed, but more could accompany them in the procession.

PRAYER OF THE FAITHFUL (PETITIONS)

The petitions are presented at mass following the homily. Typical petitions for the funeral mass are available. They can be tailored to include the names of family members who have died, as well as other special intentions. Normally, the petitions are read by a family member or friend.

MUSIC

Music is integral to the mass. A list of some of the more common hymns/songs appropriate for the funeral mass is available. In addition to processional, offertory, communion, and recessional songs, we normally sing the responsorial psalm (Psalm 23), gospel acclamation (alleluia), Eucharistic Prayer acclamations (Holy, Memorial Acclamation, Amen, Lamb of God), and a Song of Final Commendation.

PALL

The funeral pall is draped over the casket in the entryway before the funeral mass begins. The large white pall is a reminder of the dignity of baptism, where the white garment was worn. We encourage the family to draw the pall open over the casket. In the case of cremation before the funeral liturgy, a pall is not placed over the cremated remains.

PRIEST, DEACON, SERVERS, MUSIC MINISTERS

One of our parish priests normally presides at the funeral mass. One of our deacons normally presides at the Vigil (Wake). Ministers of Music from the parish are provided, as well as servers for the mass.

TRIBUTES AND EULOGIES

The most appropriate time for tributes and eulogies is at the Vigil (Wake) service. A time is provided in that service for family members and loved ones to share brief stories. The reception (lunch) following the funeral mass provides a good opportunity for informal sharing. A display of pictures (including computer/electronically produced) could be displayed. The homily at the funeral mass is the priest's time to speak of God's Word and of practicing it in our lives.

FLOWERS

Flowers used at the funeral home for the Vigil service may be brought to the church. They are most appropriate in the main entryway along with the guest book and, possibly, some photos. The environment of the sanctuary is set for the liturgical season. The altar, ambo, priest's chair, and the congregation are the primary symbols of the liturgy. For the funeral, the casket with the draped pall is placed before the Easter Candle at the head of the center aisle. The symbols of liturgy speak loudly and boldly when additional items do not detract. The space should be simple and dignified rather than crowded, cluttered, or "busy." Flowers and photos in the entryway may also be taken to the Social Level during the lunch.

LUNCH

The parish hosts a lunch for the family and guests in the Social Level either immediately following the funeral mass (if the burial is to take place later or the body will be cremated and interred at a later time) or following the burial.

PRINTED ORDER OF SERVICE

The parish provides a printed Order of Service to guide the assembly with music and prayers, to provide brief descriptions of the special liturgical rites and symbols, and to list citations of readings. It is less a piece of memorabilia to list names or a vehicle to thank people for attending than a practical tool for the liturgy. The funeral home usually provides a book listing ministers, those involved in various tasks, and the friends who attended the services.

VIGIL (WAKE) SERVICE

Years ago an official Catholic Vigil service did not exist. Family and friends would gather and pray the rosary together. Now, the church has an official service, which includes prayers, scripture readings, and homily. The service then provides some flexibility in content. Family and friends may share some stories, letters, tributes, songs, poems, and other memories of their loved one. If praying the rosary was an important part of the deceased's life or of the family, a decade of the rosary would be appropriate at this time. One of the parish deacons normally presides at the Vigil. They are most willing to discuss options with the family and arrange a plan for the Vigil service.