

HOLY FAMILY CATHOLIC CHURCH, WHARTON, TX
SAINT JOSEPH CATHOLIC MISSION, BOLING, TX

FUNERAL GUIDELINES

Introduction

The Order of Christian Funerals was canonically approved by Rome and the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops in April 1987. *The Order of Christian Funerals* offers a variety of prayers to be offered for the deceased. The three main parts of the Funeral Rites are the Wake Service, the Funeral Mass and the Rite of Committal.

It is important that the death of faithful Catholics be honored with the proper respect and prayers that are rightfully theirs. The Church has the responsibility to assure that these important rites are carried out with decorum and dignity.

What follows is a short explanation of the various steps that should be taken upon the death of a loved one. The pastor and funeral director work together to provide the services that you desire so that with a firm Christian faith, we may bring our brother or sister to eternal rest in Christ.

Writing Obituaries for Catholics

The language or words to be used in writing an obituary notice for the news media referring to a church funeral should be written as: "a Funeral Mass will be celebrated..." or "A Mass of Christian Burial will be celebrated...". The act of burial or entombment of the remains in a cemetery should be worded as "the Rite of Committal and burial will be..." The term "Memorial Mass" is used where the body or cremated remains are not present for the Mass.

The Vigil—Wake—Calling Hours

The Vigil Service for the deceased is an important part of the funeral rite and should not be eliminated. A priest, deacon or lay person may preside at this rite. At times this rite takes place before calling hours begin. At other times, the family may choose to include the time of this service in the obituary. In either case, the opportunity is given to those who want to join with the family for prayer. The ritual consists of scripture, intercessory prayer and a brief homily or reflection. **This is the time for family members and friends to share stories or to give a eulogy.** Parish organizations/service clubs should make arrangements with the funeral director to schedule another appropriate time for their service. The Vigil Service is held at the funeral home or in the family home. **Only under very rare and exceptional circumstances may it be held in the church.**

The Funeral Mass

The heart of the Funeral Rites is the Funeral Mass. The Funeral Mass focuses, not on earthly life, but eternal life. This Mass celebrated for the deceased commends the soul to the love and mercy of our Heavenly Father. The prayers of the Church entrust the individual to the care of God who has called our loved one to Himself. Our prayers to God entreat Him to be gracious and merciful, not looking upon the sins of the past but to the glory they are to share with Christ. "Having been baptized into his death, we hope to share a resurrection like his." (Romans 4)

This liturgy also offers comfort and consolation to those who mourn. The Mass lifts our hearts to God who will strengthen us in the days ahead and give us the grace of His comfort as we continue our journey of faith.

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Eulogies

Since the Funeral Mass leads us to reflect on eternal life, **eulogies are not allowed**. The Vigil Service or at the conclusion of the Rite of Committal or at the reception following the funeral rites is the time for family and friends to offer stories and reflections on the life of the deceased.

Music for the Funeral Mass

As in all liturgies, music is sung prayer and plays an integral role in the Funeral Mass. It allows us to express our faith, love and hope, drawing us closer in unity to our faith. **While favorite songs that are popular or secular may hold special meaning to the deceased and the family, this type of music is not appropriate for the Mass nor is the use of recorded music.**

The Mass lifts our hearts to God who will strengthen us in the days ahead and give us the grace of His comfort as we continue our journey of faith.

The parish musician, priest, or those assisting in the preparation of the funeral Mass, can be helpful in assisting in the choice of suitable hymns and the placement of music selections.

Rite of Committal

The last of the rites in the *Order of Christian Funerals* is the Rite of Committal which includes a verse from the scriptures, a prayer of committal, intercessions, the Lord's Prayer and a blessing.

This rite should take place directly after the Funeral Mass at the time of burial. A priest, deacon or lay person may preside at this rite.

Cremation

The cremation guidelines of the Diocese of Victoria in Texas will be observed. The funeral director has been given a copy of these guidelines or they may be downloaded at www.hfwharton.org.

Flowers

Flowers/plants or other remembrances should not be brought to the church. They may be delivered to the family home, the funeral home, or the reception venue. Photographs of the deceased and/or his/her family may not be displayed in the church.

Contact Fr. Bob Knippenberg, Pastor, with any questions at (979) 532-3593 or pastor@hfwharton.org.