

INTRODUCTION

Christians celebrate funeral rites to offer worship, praise, and thanksgiving to God for the gift of life, which has now been returned to God, the author of life, and the hope of the just. The Mass, the memorial of Christ's death and resurrection, is the principal celebration of the Christian funeral.

The Church through its funeral rites commends the dead to God's merciful love and pleads for the forgiveness of their sins. At the funeral rites, especially at the celebration of the Eucharistic Sacrifice, the Christian community affirms and expresses the union of the Church on earth with the Church in heaven in the one great communion of saints. Though separated from the living, the dead are still at one with the community of believers on earth and benefit from their prayers and intercession. At the Rite of Final Commendation and Farewell, the community acknowledges the reality of separation and commends the deceased to God. In this way it recognizes the spiritual bond that still exists between the living and the dead and proclaims its belief that all the faithful will be raised up and reunited in the new heaven and a new earth, where death will be no more.

The priests and parishioners of Holy Family extend to you their deepest sympathy on the death of your loved one. We hope that the following guidelines will enable you to participate in the Funeral Liturgy in harmony with a true spirit of Christian hope and consolation.

I. VIGIL

When there is an evening viewing, the priest or deacon will lead a Vigil for the deceased. The vigil consists of the introductory rite, the liturgy of the word, the prayer of intercession, and a concluding rite.

II. FUNERAL MASS

1. Time: Ordinarily, the Funeral Mass is celebrated at 10:00 A.M. However, for a special reason it could be held later at 10:30 A. M.

2. Holy Communion: All Catholics are encouraged to receive Holy Communion. However, you should remind your relatives that they should be properly prepared, viz., Sacramental Confession (if necessary) and observance of the Eucharistic Fast. The best time to go to Confession is at the regularly scheduled time on Saturday. If this is not possible, the priest would be glad to hear confessions at any time.

3. Readings: Only selections from Sacred Scripture are permitted to be read at Holy Mass. The Scripture passages must be read from the approved liturgical book, the Lectionary, and not from a booklet or pamphlet.

4. Lector: The Lector is someone who reads the Scripture passages. Only Catholics may serve as lectors. Please make sure that he/she is capable of performing this function. Someone familiar with public speaking and the use of microphones will help immensely in assuring that the Scripture passages are heard. Ordinarily there are two lectors, one for the Old Testament and one for a non – gospel passage of the New Testament. A third one may be employed to read the petitions if there is no deacon present. The cantor will lead singing for the responsorial Psalm.

5. Offertory Procession: This is the procession in which the elements for the Eucharistic Sacrifice are presented to the priest at the altar. Only Catholics may participate in the offertory procession. Ordinarily there are two bearers.

6. Altar Servers: The parish will supply the altar servers. Ordinarily there are four. If you have a particular one you would like to serve or a relative or friend from another parish, please tell one of the priests at least 48 hours before the Funeral Mass.

7. Words of Remembrance: Are to express appreciation for the life of the deceased, or take the form of a prayer or other inspirational text. Only one family member or friend may speak, and he/she is to be brief, speaking no more than three minutes. The words of remembrance should be consigned to writing to ensure that their words are in harmony with the Liturgical Celebration (Mass). The script should be given to one of the priests of Holy Family 48 hours in advance so that he can make any suitable suggestions to help the "words of remembrance" convey the consolation of God's love, grace and mercy. The words are intended to particularize praise and gratitude to God for His gifts to the deceased, especially the gift of his/her Catholic faith. The Words of Remembrance should be delivered from the ambo, not the pulpit. Like the lector, the speaker should be capable of performing this function.

8. Music: Only hymns found in approved Catholic Hymnals may be sung. Popular music and show music, regardless of how much they meant to the deceased, are not permitted. The music chosen should be appropriate for the celebration of the Sacred Liturgy. A cantor will also be supplied by the parish. Guest organists are permitted. The organist and cantors are under contract with the parish to furnish all music for all our funerals. Guest organists and/or cantors must be familiar with the music for Christian Funeral Masses including the Introductory Rites and the Final Commendation. The fee for Music is \$150.00 per musician.

9. Booklets: Booklets are permitted. However, copyright laws must be observed. The duplication of copyrighted materials (music and/or text) without permission of the proper publisher is both illegal and immoral. Each publisher stipulates his own procedures and regulations for allowing copyrighted materials to be used. These regulations must be observed with accuracy in order to make a funeral booklet legal. Neither Holy Family Parish nor the Archdiocese of Philadelphia will assume responsibility, financial or otherwise, for any individual(s) or group(s) that is found to be in violation of any copyright law(s). Fee is \$150.00 for copyright permission.

If you wish to receive help in properly obtaining permission to use copyrighted materials, you may contact the Archdiocesan Office for Worship at 222 North 17 th Street, Philadelphia, PA 19103. This request must be put in writing.

III. RITE of COMMITAL

Permission can now be obtained for cremation. However, there must be sufficient reason for doing so, and in no way can the reason reflect a denial (even implicitly) of the resurrection of the body or the immortality of the soul. The cremated remains must be buried, a definite date and time must be set for the burial of the ashes.