

Funeral Guidelines

Saint John Paul II Catholic Parish

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1. *A Message to the Family*

As Catholics, we find bright rays of hope even in the midst of our darkest times. We believe that death is not only an end, but also a beginning. Our loved one has passed from this present, temporary life to a perfect, permanent one. He or she who knows God in faith on earth now sees the Lord face-to-face in heaven. While death separates us, we will one day be reunited with all those we love in a “dwelling provided for us by God, a dwelling in the heavens, not made by hands but to last forever.”(2 Corinthians 5:1)

When a Catholic dies, the Church celebrates a particular set of liturgical rites to help us through the immediate days of our grieving, to express our belief in eternal life, and to help us pray for the one who has died. These rites are organized into what is called the *Order of Christian Funerals*, which contains all the liturgical prayers, scripture readings, and blessing for use immediately following the death of a member of the Church.

We understand that right now you likely feel confused, sad, stunned, or perhaps even overwhelmed by your loss. In the past you have loved others, comforted them, and shared their losses. During the hours and days just ahead it will be your turn – your time to be loved, to be comforted, and to let others help you bear the pain of your grief. We pray you are able to open your heart and receive these rich blessings.

These guidelines are offered to help you bring order to these days of hard transition and deep sorrow by explaining the process of planning the funeral for your loved one.

2. *Overview of a Catholic Funeral Mass*

2.1 Introductory Rites

A Catholic funeral begins at the door of the Church, where the body of the deceased is received and mourners are welcomed (see Section 5.1 if cremated remains will be present). The priest and assisting deacon meet the family and other loved ones at the entrance of the Church, where the coffin is brought inside. The priest greets them and sprinkles the coffin with holy water, recalling the water of baptism through which the deceased entered the Church and was claimed for Christ. Family, friends, or parish representatives then drape the coffin with the pall, a white cloth that recalls the white garment in which the deceased was clothed at baptism.

The entrance procession then begins, usually accompanied by the opening hymn. Once all have reached their places, a crucifix may be placed on the coffin, to symbolize Christian life. The presider then goes to his chair and prays aloud the Collect or Opening Prayer.

2.2 Liturgy of the Word

The *Order of Christian Funerals* calls for either one or two readings before the Gospel reading. When two readings are used, it is preferred for each to be proclaimed by a different reader. The reader may be a family member and must be a Catholic in good standing with the Church. A Responsorial Psalm is sung as a prayerful response to the first reading and an Alleluia or Gospel Acclamation is sung to prepare all gathered for receiving Christ present in the proclamation of the Gospel. A brief homily and the General Intercessions conclude this part of the funeral.





2.3 Liturgy of the Eucharist

When a funeral is celebrated outside Mass, the liturgy continues with the Final Commendation and Farewell as described in 2.4. This is known as a funeral service (see Section 3 below).

When the Funeral Mass is celebrated, the Liturgy of the Eucharist follows. It begins with the family members or friends of the deceased bringing forward the offerings of bread and wine. The priest or deacon receives the offerings and prepares them and the altar for the great Eucharistic Prayer that follows. This prayer offers to God our praise and thanksgiving by recalling what Jesus did on the night before he died while at supper with his disciples. The priest consecrates the bread and wine, which become for us the body and blood of Christ.

The Communion Rite then begins with the Lord’s Prayer, which is followed by the exchange of a sign of peace and the Lamb of God. Those present who are free to receive Holy Communion then come forward to do so as an appropriate hymn is sung. Those who will not be receiving Holy Communion can approach the priest with their arms crossed over their chest (the right hand on the left shoulder, the left hand on the right shoulder) to receive a blessing.

2.4 Final Commendation and Farewell

This is often the most difficult time for mourners during the funeral liturgy, since its purpose is to help them say a final farewell and entrust their loved one to the tender mercy of our God. A member of the family or another loved one may speak briefly after communion about the one who has died. The final commendation then follows with a few words of explanation from the priest, a song of farewell that all sing together, and a prayer of commendation.

The coffin (or urn) is incensed to express profound respect for the body as a dwelling place of the Holy Spirit. A procession to the place of committal concludes the funeral liturgy. “This final procession of the funeral rite mirrors the journey of human life as a pilgrimage to God’s kingdom of peace and light, the new and eternal Jerusalem”. (*Order of Christian Funerals*, 148)

If the family has requested a gravesite service, the deacon will accompany them to the cemetery.

3. *Funeral Service*

At times it isn’t practical or possible to have a Funeral Mass, and in these instances a second form of the funeral liturgy is used. This second form has the same basic structure and contains many of the same elements as a Funeral Mass, but does not include the Liturgy of the Eucharist (2.3 above).





4. *Cremation*

The Catholic Church holds the bodies of its deceased members in the highest regard. Great reverence is due the human body in all stages, from conception through death and on to its final resting place. We have traditionally buried our dead in the ground or in tombs as Christ was buried. In earlier centuries, the practice was upheld over the pagan practice of cremation in certain places.

Burial continues to be the Church's preference and our funeral rites for the most part assume the presence of the body. While we no longer have need to distinguish ourselves from people of other faiths or no faith, the presence of the body during the funeral rites heightens our focus on the hope of the resurrection and our being reunited with our loved one in the world to come.

The Church permits cremation so long as it is not chosen because of a denial of belief in the resurrection or denial of any other Catholic teaching. Certainly cremation is becoming more and more common, especially in places where burial ground is scarce, where environmental stewardship suggests it is a prudent choice, or where financial concerns warrant it. When cremation is chosen, the *Order of Christian Funerals* urges that the body be present in Church for the funeral when at all possible, with cremation taking place afterward. This helps the loved ones of the deceased to make their final farewell within the gathered community of faith, supported by the prayers, blessings, and ceremonies of the Church's liturgy.

When it is not possible or practical to have the body present for the funeral, liturgical norms allow the Funeral Mass to be celebrated in the presence of the cremated remains. Whether cremation occurs prior to or following the funeral, cremated remains are to be treated with the same respect as is given to the human body. They should be buried in a grave or entombed in a mausoleum or columbarium. The Church does not permit the scattering of cremated remains nor the keeping of these in homes.

The funeral liturgy in the presence of cremated remains varies only slightly from that of a funeral where the body is present.

To learn more about cremation in the Catholic Church, consider reading the short document *Reflections on the Body, Cremation, and Catholic Funeral Rites* published in 1997 by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops.





5. *Funeral Mass at Saint John Paul II Parish*

5.1 Cremated Remains

During the Introductory Rites (2.1), the urn containing the cremated remains will be placed on the table at the entrance to the Church. The priest will sprinkle the urn with holy water and then process to the front of the Church, with a family member of the deceased carrying the urn. The urn will be placed on a small table. The family may choose to place a small, framed picture (no larger than 8x10) and one vase of flowers on the table with the urn.

The remainder of the Funeral Mass will be the same as outlined in Section 2.

5.2. Music

Music is an essential part of all liturgical celebrations and is especially important for a funeral. It can offer great comfort and express profound faith. The Director of Music Ministry at Saint John Paul II will contact the family members directly to discuss music selections.

5.3. Flowers

Flowers are welcome at the Churches during Funeral Masses. They can be placed on the floor in front of the altar and the ambo (podium). They cannot be placed on the altar. The family is welcome to take the flowers home or move them to the Hall for the luncheon (if a luncheon has been arranged). The flowers can also be left in the Church as a memorial. They will remain in the body of the Church until they are no longer viable.

It is important to note the Churches are not staffed during the day. We strongly advise against having flowers delivered to the Church and left unattended (unfortunately, many flowers have been stolen).

5.4 Access to the Church

The Church will be open 45 minutes prior to the scheduled funeral time. The family is welcome to enter the Church at this time to place flowers, a signature book, one or two small, framed pictures, etc.

5.5 Lectors (family members or friends that read during the Liturgy of the Word)

The *Order of Christian Funerals* calls for either one or two readings before the Gospel reading. Funerals at Saint John Paul II Parish contain two readings and it is preferred for each to be proclaimed by a different reader. The reader must be a Catholic and may be a family member. After the priest finishes the homily, the Prayers of the Faithful (General Intercessions) will be read. This person can be one of the two that read earlier.

If the family is unable to provide Lectors, please let the Parish Office know other arrangements will be made.

The readings used at Funeral Masses at Saint John Paul II Parish can be found in Appendix 1 and Appendix 2. The Prayers of the Faithful can be found in Appendix 3. Please have the lectors review the readings/prayers prior to Mass and ask them to take a copy up to the ambo with them.





5.6 Gift Bearers (family members or friends that take up the offerings for the Eucharist)

The Liturgy of the Eucharist (2.3) begins with the family members or friends of the deceased bringing forward the offerings (gifts) of bread and wine. The offerings will begin at the entrance to the Church. Two people will move to the back of the Church, pick up the bread and wine and walk up the center aisle when the priest or deacon beckons them. These two people should be Catholics.

Please inform the priest or deacon before Mass if the family is unable to bring forward the gifts.

6. *Planning a Funeral*

To make the process of planning the funeral as easy as possible on the family, we suggest contacting the funeral home first. The funeral home will walk you through the planning process, and, depending on the services requested by the family, the funeral home will then contact the Parish Office on your behalf to coordinate the Funeral Mass or Funeral Service.

6.1 Rosary

If a Rosary is requested by the family, it is generally held at the funeral home the evening before the funeral and may be combined with a viewing. If a Rosary will be said, it will be presided over by a deacon or lay minister from the parish.

6.2 Interment

If interment is to occur after the Funeral Mass or Funeral Service, a deacon will accompany the family to the gravesite.

6.3 Luncheon

If the deceased was a member of Saint John Paul II Parish, the Parish will provide a luncheon for up to 50 people free of charge. There will be a \$2 charge for every plate over 50. Please let the parish office know as soon as possible if a luncheon will be requested and an estimate of how many people will attend.

Note: The luncheon is a courtesy provided by the parish and is based on availability of the hall and the people that volunteer for this ministry. A funeral luncheon is not guaranteed as the church and the hall are reserved independently and the hall may not be available.

The family may wish to designate a person to say the Blessing before the luncheon.





6.4 Services generally provided by a funeral home

Below is a list of the services generally provided by a funeral home. This is meant for informational purposes only – each funeral home is different:

- † Act as a liaison between the family and the Parish Office
- † Choosing a casket, or cremation, based on the family's wishes
- † Help with writing and posting an obituary
- † Printing the programs with the Order of Service
- † Planning a Life Sketch of the deceased, to be shared during the Final Commendation and Farewell (2.4)
- † Filing the Death Certificate with the Office of Vital Records
- † Dispensing the stole fee to the priest or deacon, and the honorariums to the musicians

6.5 Services provided by the Parish Office

Below is a list of services the Parish Office provides:

- † Confirming the availability of the desired Church
- † The Director of Music Ministry will personally contact the family regarding music selections
- † Preparing the Order of Service for the funeral home
- † Adding the deceased to the Prayers of the Faithful, to be read at the following weekend Masses
- † Contacting the funeral luncheon coordinator, if the family requests a luncheon
- † Preparing and printing the Liturgy for the priest or deacon
- † Liaising with the funeral home to communicate the details required for the funeral
- † Record the death in the Parish Records, update the Parish data-base to stop contribution envelopes and mailings

It is important to note that if the family chooses not to use all the services provided by the funeral home, the family becomes responsible for completing those items. For example, if the family asks the funeral home for cremation services only, the family then becomes responsible for filing the Death Certificate, the obituary, printing funeral programs, etc. The Parish Office will not be able to provide any services beyond those listed above.





7. *Idaho Falls Funeral Homes*

Many parishioners of Saint John Paul II Parish have asked for recommendations on funeral homes. The contact details below are for the three funeral homes in Idaho Falls that have the most experience dealing with Catholic funerals. These are provided solely for informational purposes – Saint John Paul II Parish does not endorse any funeral home and will work with whomever the family chooses.

Woods Funeral Home West

273 N Ridge

Idaho Falls, ID 83402

208-522-2751

Woods Funeral Home East

963 S Ammon Rd

Ammon, ID 83406

208-522-2992

Buck Miller Hahn

825 E 17th St

Idaho Falls, ID 83402

208-522-7424

8. *Additional Guidelines for Homebound Ministers:*

Ministers to the homebound may help those unable to attend Mass feel that they are still an important part of the Body of Christ. Ministers may outline the funeral process at Saint John Paul II, which may include guiding families of a deceased loved one to a funeral home. Homebound Ministers may also be asked to participate in the Funeral Mass as Lectors or Gift Bearers. A family member; however, must contact the funeral home or Parish Office. May God bless all those who participate in the Homebound Ministry for providing such a beautiful ministry to God's beloved children.





Appendix 1 First Reading

A Reading from the first letter of St. Paul to the Thessalonians

We do not want you to be unaware, brothers and sisters, about those who have fallen asleep so that you may not grieve like the rest, who have no hope.

For if we believe that Jesus died and rose, so too will God, through Jesus, bring with him those who have fallen asleep. Indeed, we tell you this, on the word of the Lord, that we who are alive, who are left until the coming of the Lord, will surely not precede those who have fallen asleep.

For the Lord Himself, with a word of command, with the voice of an archangel and with the trumpet of God, will come down from heaven, and the dead in Christ will rise first.

Then we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. Thus we shall always be with the Lord. Therefore, console one another with these words.

The Word of the Lord.





Appendix 2 Second Reading

A Reading from the Book of Revelation

I, John, saw new heavens and a new earth. The former heavens and the former earth had passed away, and the sea was no longer. I also saw a new Jerusalem, The Holy City, coming down out of Heaven from God, beautiful as a Bride prepared to meet her husband.

I heard a loud voice from the throne cry out: “This is God’s dwelling among men. He shall dwell with them and they shall be his people, and he shall be their God who is always with them. He shall wipe every tear from their eyes, and there shall be no more death or mourning, crying out or pain, for the former world has passed away.”

The one who sat on the throne said to me, “See, I make all things new!” I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End. To anyone who thirsts, I will give drink without cost from the spring of life-giving water. He who wins the victory shall inherit these gifts; I will be his God and he shall be my Son.”

The Word of the Lord.





Appendix 3 Prayers of the Faithful

For the Church of God: that in the midst of her earthly journey she may announce the hope of the eternal kingdom to all men.

We pray to the Lord.

R: Lord, have mercy.

For peace among all nations and that all peoples may progress in justice and freedom.

We pray to the Lord.

R: Lord, have mercy.

For the victims of war, violence and injustice: that all strife and hatred will vanish from the earth.

We pray to the Lord.

R: Lord, have mercy.

For our brother/sister Deceased's Name that he/she may come before the throne of God completely pardoned.

We pray to the Lord.

R: Lord, have mercy.

That the Lord will take him/her to Paradise, the reward promised to his faithful servants.

We pray to the Lord.

R: Lord, have mercy.

For all of us who still remain here on earth, that we may be consoled by God's Word and strengthened by the bread of the Eucharist.

We pray to the Lord.

R: Lord, have mercy.





Appendix 4 Resources

The following resources were used when creating Sections 1-4 of these guidelines.

- † United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (usccb.org)
- † *Through Death to Life* by Joseph M. Champlin

