

## **A Guide to the Catholic Funeral**



**Prince of Peace Parish**

**Lewiston, Maine**

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On behalf of Prince of Peace Parish, please accept our deepest sympathies on the occasion of the death of your loved one. The whole parish will be praying for your loved one in the coming week. It is my hope that our celebration of the funeral rites of the Church in the coming days will be a consolation to you and your entire family. Please know that you are not alone in your grief. May you feel the healing presence of the Lord Jesus during our times of prayer with you.

Since the time of the earliest Christian communities, the Catholic Church has been celebrating funeral rites in the hope of the Resurrection from the dead. Over the centuries, it has developed a number of traditions to mark the passing of a loved one from this life to the next life.

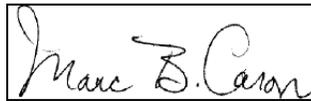
This way of praying for the deceased and for honoring the person's life is particular to us as a community of faith. The sights and sounds of the Catholic funeral rites may or may not correspond to how others in contemporary society approach death. Our perspective is taken from the Scriptures and reflects our 2,000 year history.

If you have not been to the celebration of Catholic funeral rites for some time, the signs and symbols used may be unfamiliar to you. This guide is meant to help you by explaining some of what will take place at the funeral home,

at the church, and at the cemetery. It is also meant to help you and your family make a few choices about how you wish to participate in these three stages of the funeral rites that the Church offers you.

Please know that we pray for the dead at every celebration of the Mass, day in and day out. There are special observances on Memorial Day each year at St. Peter's Cemetery and at Mount Hope Cemetery, as well as celebrations of Mass for the dead on All Soul's Day (November 2) each year. You may also wish to have Mass celebrated for the intention of your loved one in particular at other times of the year. If the parish can be of help to you in the weeks and months following the death of your loved one, please do not hesitate to contact us. We want to be near to you and your family during this difficult time. Please be assured of our prayers and our support.

In the Risen Lord,

A rectangular box containing a handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Marc B. Caron".

Msgr. Marc B. Caron  
Pastor

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*Life is changed through death*

# **CELEBRATION OF THE FUNERAL LITURGY**

The Order of Christian Funerals is celebrated in three stations: the Vigil for the Deceased, the Funeral Liturgy, and the Rite of Committal.

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## **The Vigil for the Deceased at the Funeral Home**

As its name implies, the Vigil is generally celebrated the night before the Funeral. The Vigil service is typically brief, consisting of Opening Prayers, a proclamation of Sacred Scripture, and intercessions for the deceased. If you would like secular music or a eulogy on this occasion, these take place after the completion of the Vigil Rite.

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## **The Funeral Liturgy in the Church**

At the Funeral Liturgy the community gathers with the family and friends of the deceased to give praise and thanks to God for Christ's victory over sin and death and to commend the deceased to God's tender mercy and compassion.

The funeral may take place in the context of Mass, or during a Liturgy of the Word that is not Mass. The church is the place where the community of faith gathers for worship. Therefore, it is best that the funeral rites take place in the church.

In the act of bringing the body to the church, the members of the community acknowledge the deceased as one of their own, as one who was welcomed in Baptism and who held a place in the assembly. Through the use of various baptismal symbols we show the reverence due the body, the temple of the Holy Spirit.

Any national flags or insignia of associations to which the deceased belonged are removed from the coffin at the entrance of the church, then the baptismal symbols and gestures become evident.

The Paschal Candle is lit and placed at the front of the church near the coffin or urn. The candle reminds us of the light of Christ, given to us at Baptism.

Sprinkling the body with Holy Water recalls the pouring of water in the baptismal celebration to wash away our sin.

Placing the pall over the coffin recalls the “white garment” we were given at Baptism as a sign of putting on a new life in Christ.

The body of the deceased or the cremated remains are incensed as a sign of respect.

## **The Funeral Liturgy at the Funeral Home or at the Cemetery Chapel**

Sometimes families will choose to celebrate the funeral of their loved one at the funeral home or at the cemetery. In that case, Mass is not celebrated, but a Liturgy of the Word is celebrated. Readings from the Scriptures are proclaimed, prayers are offered for the deceased, the gathered express their faith in song, and holy water is used in commemoration of baptism.

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## **The Rite of Committal at the Cemetery**

This rite takes place in the cemetery where the body or urn will be buried or entombed.

In committing the body or urn to its resting place, the community expresses the hope that, with “all those who have gone before us marked with the sign of faith,” the deceased awaits the glory of the resurrection. The Rite of Committal is the final act of the community of faith in caring for the remains of the deceased.

If military honors are offered, they are done following the completion of the Rite.

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## **Scheduling a Funeral Mass**

Funeral Masses are NOT permitted on:

- Sundays at any time
- Saturdays after 1pm
- Holy Days of Obligation
- Holy Thursday, Good Friday, Holy Saturday

Funeral services apart from Mass can be scheduled on most days of the year.

## **Sacred Scripture in the Funeral Rites**

At the Vigil, Funeral Liturgy, and Rite of Committal, scriptural passages are read. The Catholic Church does not permit substituting other sources of literature for these readings. Poetry or excerpts from literature are appropriately read at the funeral home following the Vigil or at a later time when the family is gathered.

If they so desire, the family may choose a New Testament reading from those listed at the end of this booklet.

## **Cremation in the Catholic Funeral Rite**

The Church prefers and urges that the body of the deceased be present for the funeral rites. The long-standing practice of burying the body in a grave or tomb in imitation of the burial of Jesus' body is encouraged as a sign of our Christian faith. When the choice has been made to cremate a body, it is recommended that the cremation take place after the Funeral Rite.

The cremated remains of a body should be treated with the same respect given to the human body from which they came. This includes the use of a worthy vessel to contain the ashes, the manner in which they are carried, and the final disposition. The cremated remains should be buried in a grave or entombed in a mausoleum or columbarium. The practice of scattering the ashes is not the reverent disposition the Church requires.

## **Other Considerations**

**Placing of the Pall:** A funeral pall, reminding us of the white garment given at Baptism and therefore symbolizing our life in Christ, may be draped over the casket at the beginning of the Funeral in the Church. Family members or friends are welcome to do this, though it may also be done by the priest or deacon.

**Presentation of Offertory Gifts:** Two persons (family members or friends who are Catholics in good standing) may bring forward the bread and wine at the Offertory Procession during the funeral Mass in the Church.

**Holy Communion:** The Orthodox Churches and the Catholic Church do not practice inter-communion with other Christians like some denominations do. Therefore, we are not in a position to offer Communion to our visitors who do not share the Catholic faith. When distribution of Communion begins, please remain in your seat and join us in prayer and in song for the deceased.

It is also the tradition of the Church that Catholics who are conscious of grave sin refrain from Communion as well. Please join us in song and prayer for the deceased during that time from your seat.

**The Sacrament of Reconciliation:** Those who are alienated from the Church, from God, or from family members or friends, may wish to become reconciled. The priest will be happy to make the Sacrament of Reconciliation available to those who request it.

**Music for the Funeral Rites:** Music in the Funeral Rites allows the community to express its Christian faith. Secular, national, or ethnic songs are not permitted during the Funeral. Their proper place is after the Vigil service or at a family celebration.

## PLANNING THE FUNERAL TO BE HELD AT THE CHURCH

- 1) At the beginning of the funeral in the church, **one** of the following may be placed on the casket by family members or friends, if you wish. It is not required to place any of the following symbols on the casket. The baptismal pall recalls the white garment worn by Catholic Christians at their baptism. Ideally, the Bible or cross would be one which held some significance to the deceased.

You may circle **one**:

Baptismal Pall    **OR**    Bible    **OR**    Cross

This will be placed by:

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- 2) A Catholic funeral can take place during the celebration of the Mass (readings and the Eucharist) **or** during a Liturgy of the Word (readings from scripture).

Please circle one:

Mass    **OR**    Liturgy of the Word

- 3) If you wish, you may select **one** Scripture reading from those listed on pages 13 & 14. You are not required to choose a reading.

Please circle **one** letter which corresponds to the reading of your choice.

A    B    C    D    E

This reading will be read by:

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- 4) If you wish, the Prayers of the Faithful at the funeral may be read by a family member or a friend. You are not required to choose someone for this task. The text for these Prayers is found on page 15.

The Prayers of the Faithful will be read by:

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- 5) If the funeral takes place during Mass, if you wish the bread and wine may be presented to the priest by two persons who normally receive communion. You do not have to choose anyone for this ministry.

The bread and wine will be presented by:

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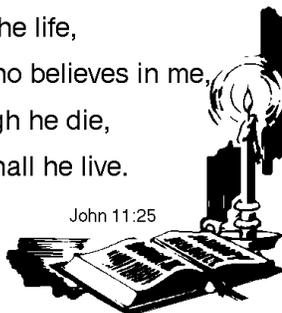
- 6) If you wish, you may select **one or two** songs from those listed on page 16. You are not required to choose any songs.

We would like the following song(s) to be sung at the funeral:

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"I am the Resurrection  
and the life,  
he who believes in me,  
though he die,  
yet shall he live.

John 11:25



**PLANNING THE FUNERAL TO BE HELD  
AT THE FUNERAL HOME OR AT THE  
CEMETERY CHAPEL**

- 1) If you wish, you may select **one** Scripture reading from those listed on pages 13 & 14. You are not required to choose a reading.

Please circle **one** letter which corresponds to the reading of your choice.

A      B      C      D      E

This reading will be read by:

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- 2) If you wish, the Prayers of the Faithful at the funeral may be read by a family member or a friend. You are not required to choose someone for this task. The text for these Prayers is found on page 15.

The Prayers of the Faithful will be read by:

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- 3) If you wish, you may select **one or two** songs from those listed on page 16. You are not required to choose any songs.

We would like the following song to be sung at the funeral:

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## OPTIONS FOR SACRED SCRIPTURE

If you wish, you may choose one of the following readings.

### READING A: Romans 8:31b-35,37-39

Brothers and sisters: If God is for us, who can be against us? He did not spare his own Son but handed him over for us all, will he not also give us everything else along with him? Who will bring a charge against God's chosen ones? It is God who acquits us. Who will condemn? It is Christ Jesus who died, rather, was raised, who also is at the right hand of God, who indeed intercedes for us. What will separate us from the love of Christ? Will anguish, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or the sword?

No, in all these things, we conquer overwhelmingly through him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor present things, nor future things, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

### READING B: Romans 14:7-9,10c-12

Brothers and sisters: No one lives for oneself, and no one dies for oneself. For if we live, we live for the Lord, and if we die, we die for the Lord; so then, whether we live or die, we are the Lord's. For this is why Christ died and came to life, that he might be Lord of both the dead and the living. Why then do you judge your brother? Or you, why do you look down on your brother? For we shall all stand before the judgment seat of God; for it is written: *As I live, says the Lord, every knee shall bend before me, and every tongue shall give praise to God.* So then each of us shall give an accounting of himself to God.

**READING C:** 1 John 3:1-2

Beloved: See what love the Father has bestowed on us that we may be called the children of God. Yet so we are. The reason the world does not know us is that it does not know him.

Beloved, we are God's children now; what we shall be has not yet been revealed. We do know that when it is revealed we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is.

**READING D:** 2 Corinthians 5:1,6-10

Brothers and sisters: We know that if our earthly dwelling, a tent, should be destroyed, we have a building from God, a dwelling not made with hands, eternal in heaven.

We are always courageous, although we know that while we are at home in the body we are away from the Lord, for we walk by faith, not by sight. Yet we are courageous, and we would rather leave the body and go home to the Lord. Therefore, we aspire to please him, whether we are at home or away. For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each may receive recompense, according to what he did in the body, whether good or evil.

**READING E:** 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18

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.

## **PRAYERS OF THE FAITHFUL**

### **Funeral at the Church or at the Funeral Home or at the Cemetery Chapel**

That \_\_\_\_\_ and all who have died enjoy the vision of God with those in heaven, we pray to the Lord.

That the family and friends of \_\_\_\_\_ experience the strength that comes from faith in the Resurrection of Jesus, we pray to the Lord.

That all who mourn find consolation and peace through those around them, we pray to the Lord.

That we may look forward in hope to the endless joy promised in baptism, we pray to the Lord.

## **FUNERAL MUSIC SELECTIONS**

If you wish, you may choose **one or two** of the following songs to be sung at the funeral. The music director will choose the remaining songs.

**Amazing Grace**

**Ave Maria**

**Be Not Afraid**

**How Great Thou Art**

**Prayer of St. Francis**

**I Am the Bread of Life**

**Panis Angelicus**

**J'irai La Voir Un Jour**



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... Absent from the body ...  
Present with the Lord

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