



The following guidelines provide a summary of the ecclesial documentation concerning the Church's funeral liturgies. They are also intended to serve as an aid to families in the planning of funeral liturgies at St. Paul the Apostle Church.

LITURGICAL GUIDELINES FOR THE CELEBRATION OF FUNERALS

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INTRODUCTION

The Church confidently proclaims that God created each person for eternal life and that Jesus, the Son of God, by his death and resurrection, has broken the chains of sin and death that bound humanity... principally by the paschal mystery of his blessed passion, resurrection from the dead and glorious ascension.

Order of Christian Funerals, 1.

First and foremost, please know that you have our deepest condolences in the loss of your loved one. We, at the St. Paul the Apostle Church want you to know that we are here for you, not only in the planning stages, but afterwards as well. In each of the Church's liturgies, Christ's Paschal Mystery is made present by the power of the Holy Spirit. Through the sacraments of Baptism, Confirmation, and Eucharist, men and women are initiated into this Mystery and become members of Christ's Mystical Body. In the life of a Christian, the presence of the Paschal Mystery is ever renewed and sustained through the celebration of the Church's liturgies.

At the death of a Christian, the Church gathers to offer praise and thanksgiving to God for the gift of the life now returned to Him. The Church also intercedes on behalf of the deceased in the belief that death is not the end of human existence, nor does it break the bonds forged in life. Recognizing the power of Paschal Mystery, the Church asks that the deceased and all the faithful will have their sins forgiven and be raised in Christ.

In these same rites, the Church ministers to those who mourn the loss of a loved one. Through the proclamation of the saving works of Jesus Christ and the celebration of the Eucharist, the gathered community finds hope in Christ's triumph over death and calls upon the Father of mercy to receive the deceased into the kingdom of light and peace.

The following guidelines provide a summary of the ecclesial documentation concerning the Church's funeral liturgies at St. Paul the Apostle Church.



PART I: GENERAL

The *Order of Christian Funerals* recommends that family members be involved in the planning of the liturgical rites.¹ In coordination with the parish priest, the family of the deceased and the funeral director should arrange the places and times for the Vigil, the funeral Mass, and the Committal.

It is the policy of the diocese that the pastor, or his delegate, meet with the family of the deceased to plan the rituals that will take place.² The delegate may consist of another priest, a deacon, or a lay person trained to assist with such planning. Planning the liturgy should occur as soon as possible following the death. The pastor, or delegate, should explain to the family the meaning and significance of the liturgy. The set schedule for all funeral Masses in the Church is 10:30am Monday-Friday and 10:00am on Saturday.

“Eulogies” or “words of remembrance” are not permitted at funeral Masses celebrated at St. Paul the Apostle Church. Families are encouraged to make use of the Vigil the night before a funeral or the luncheon as opportunities to personally share about a loved one. The priests preparing for a funeral here are committed to making the funeral homily as personal as possible and will work with families to make sure that their loved one is properly remembered. Please know that the policy is meant to ensure the best possible funeral experience for the family in order to assist them in the journey through grief.

Family and friends may be invited to take part in various ministries during the celebration of the liturgy as readers and pallbearers unless they would find these activities too burdensome at a time of grief and loss.³

PART II: PREPARATION

It is advisable that the funeral liturgy be scheduled as soon as possible following a death. Normally, this scheduling is a coordination of the family, parish, and funeral home. The parish should make the family aware that a funeral Mass may not be celebrated on certain days in the Church’s calendar.

In preparing for the funeral liturgy, the family will choose readings that speak to them as well as the life of the deceased. It is the policy of the diocese that the family is consulted in the selection of readings for both the Vigil and the funeral liturgy.⁴ The family of the deceased is offered the privilege of naming one or two people to read the Scriptures at the Vigil and the funeral liturgy.

PART III: THE VIGIL

The Vigil is a brief service consisting of one or more Scripture readings and prayers for the deceased and the mourners. This liturgy usually takes place during the calling hours at a funeral home during the days before the funeral Mass. The purpose of this service is not only to commend the deceased to God, but also to support the mourners in their hope of eternal life.

¹ Ibid, 17

² Cf. Prot. 10/97, 2

³ Ibid, 15

⁴ Cf. Prot. 10/97, 6

The structure of the Vigil should be: Introductory Rites, Liturgy of the Word, Prayer of Intercession, and Concluding Rites. Through this Vigil, the people gathered as a community, as drawn into the presence of God.

PART IV: FUNERAL MASS

The funeral Mass (or funeral Liturgy outside Mass) is the central celebration of the Christian community on behalf of the deceased. In this 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, to commend the deceased to God's tender mercy and compassion, and to seek strength in the proclamation of the paschal mystery.⁵

It is the policy of the diocese that the funeral Mass is to be celebrated in a Church, preferably in the parish to which the deceased belonged.⁶ However, the funeral Mass may also be celebrated at another church with the pastor's consent and when the pastor of the deceased has been notified.⁷ Funeral Masses are not to be celebrated on solemnities of obligation, Holy Thursday, Good Friday, Holy Saturday, Easter Sunday, or on the Sundays of Advent, Lent, and the Easter Season.⁸ On these days or other occasions when the Funeral Mass may not take place, a funeral Liturgy outside Mass may be celebrated.

FUNERAL LITURGY OUTSIDE OF MASS

A funeral liturgy outside Mass is ordinarily celebrated on those days when a funeral Mass is not permitted. The funeral Liturgy outside Mass should not be substituted for the funeral Mass when the celebration of a Mass is possible unless, for pastoral reasons, the pastor and family judge this to be a more suitable form of celebration.⁹

A funeral liturgy outside Mass may take place at a parish church, a funeral home, the home of the deceased, or a cemetery chapel. The celebration of this liturgy should include Scriptural readings, the use of music, and, if appropriate, the participation of family and friends.

LITURGY OF THE WORD

Readings

Depending on pastoral circumstances, there may be one or two readings before the reading of the Gospel.¹⁰ Family members should visit the links to choose the [First Reading](#), [Second Reading](#), and [Gospel](#) prior to the meeting with the priest. Family members or friends of the deceased may be invited to proclaim these readings. Readers should ordinarily have prior experience as lectors and be able to proclaim the Word of God with clarity and dignity. In this way, their ministry can serve as an effective aid in bringing the wisdom and hope of God's Word to those who mourn. If there are no qualified lectors among family or friends, the readings may be proclaimed by a parish

⁵ Ibid, 129

⁶ Cf, Prot. 10/93

⁷ CIC, 1177

⁸ OCF, 178

⁹ Ibid, 154; 178

¹⁰ OCF, 165

lector, a deacon, a concelebrant, or, if necessary, the celebrant. The directions for the readers are as follows:

When the priest prays the opening prayer at the altar and then sits down, the entire congregation will sit down for the first time in the Mass. That is the cue for the first reader to come forward. It is better if the readers are seated near the end of the pew, somewhere on the left side of the main section of the Church, toward the front. The reader walks around to the side of the altar where the readings are read (as you face the altar, the left side). The reader bows slightly to the altar at the base of the steps and then walks up the steps along the handrail. When the reader reaches the top of the steps, the reader turns and walks toward the ambo. When the reader has walked up the steps of the ambo, the reader adjusts the microphone by pointing the microphone to his or her mouth by pinching the microphone stand at the “neck” (just underneath the microphone) and adjusting it. The readings will be on the ambo. However, if the reader comes early, it is always good to double check. The reader should read more slowly than one usually speaks and should project their voice loud enough that the reader can hear the reading. When the reading is ended, the reader reverses the steps that they had used to come forward. The reader bows again to the altar at the base of the steps and returns to the pews. Then the Psalm is sung. When the Psalm is completed, the second reader follows the same instructions as the first reader.

Responsorial Psalm

The Responsorial Psalm should ordinarily be sung, if possible, with a cantor leading the congregation in the sung response. Songs or hymns may not be used in place of the Responsorial Psalm.¹¹

Universal Prayer

The petitions of the Universal Prayer may be recited by a family member or friend of the deceased at the discretion of the celebrant. The Universal Prayer should be recited from a prepared text. The formulas provided in the *Order of Christian Funerals* may be adapted to the circumstances of a particular funeral, or other petitions may be composed.¹² Deceased members of the family may be added to the Universal Prayer. Please have names ready when you meet with the priest.

LITURGY OF THE EUCHARIST

Preparation of the Gifts

During the Preparation of the Gifts, family members and friends may be invited to present the bread and wine. It is customary to perform an incensation of the gifts and the altar during the Preparation of the Gifts within the funeral Mass.

PART V: RITE OF COMMITTAL

The Rite of Committal, the conclusion of the funeral rites, is the final act of the community of faith in caring for the body of its deceased member. It should normally be celebrated at the place of committal, that is beside the open grave or place of interment. However, it may also take place at a cemetery chapel, if necessary.¹³ In committing the body to its resting place, the community

¹¹ *GIRM*, 61

¹² *OCF*, 142.

¹³ *OCF*, 204.

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 an expression of the communion that exists between the Church on earth and the Church in heaven: the deceased passes with the farewell prayers of the community of believers into the welcoming company of those who need faith no longer but see God face-to-face.

PART VI: CREMATION

While cremation is permitted, burial of the body is always preferred as it is a better sign of our faith that we will experience the Resurrection of the body on the last day. In addition, it is a safeguard against the mishandling of the cremains. For those who choose cremation, please plan on the complete and permanent internment of the cremains. It is forbidden for Catholics to “spread ashes”, or divide ashes, or include ashes in jewelry, etc. The same respect that is owed to a body after death is to be given to the cremains of a loved one. Please refer to the 2016 Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith instruction *[Ad resurgendum cum Christo](#)* regarding the burial of the deceased and the conservation of the ashes in the case of cremation.

PART VII: LIVESTREAMING

With the possibility of family and friends not being able to attend the funeral rites for their loved one, St. Paul the Apostle Church offers livestreaming. Please feel free to pass the links to anyone who may not be able to attend. Livestreaming can be found on [Facebook](#) and [YouTube](#).

We understand that planning a funeral liturgy for your loved one is a very difficult thing to do. While you are going through this process please know that we are here for you. If you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to reach out to us.