

## PLANNING A FUNERAL

If you are faced with the difficult task of planning a funeral, we hope that the following information will be helpful.

There are three types of funeral service in the Catholic Church:

1. **A Requiem Mass.** For most Catholics the Mass is our greatest form of prayer, given to us by Jesus at the Last Supper. In a Requiem Mass we offer this prayer for the soul of the person who has died. This would be the usual service for most Catholics and especially those with a strong Catholic faith.

Or

2. **A Catholic Funeral Service without a Mass.** Some people may want a funeral in a Catholic Church but without a Mass. This sometimes happens with people who have died but have not practised their faith for many years. It normally lasts about 30 minutes and includes scripture readings and funeral prayers.

Or

3. **Catholic Service in a Crematorium.** This is similar to a Catholic Service without Mass but takes place in a Crematorium. It is usually restricted to 25 minutes maximum.



**In Church the Night Before.** Many families also ask for their loved one to be received into Church the night before. It is a traditional Catholic practise where the deceased spend that night in the Church with God before their funeral the following day. It includes a short service (15 minutes) and the parish offers tea and biscuits to those attending.

*In another attachment you will find a template for each of these services.*

### A Catholic Funeral

People sometimes call a funeral a 'Thanksgiving for the life of .....,', which is fine but Catholics believe that it is even more than this. Catholics look not just to the past to thank God for a loved one's life, we also look to the present and the future - to their next life. We pray for that person to be received into heaven. This can only happen through the mercy of God, for which we pray.

Maybe we do not like to think of someone we love needing forgiveness, but when we really love someone, we want God to make them whole, perfect, fulfilled. Isn't that what he/she would want too? It is a great gift to pray for them in this way. So, that means we need to pay attention to God. He is the One we need to turn to most in order to bring them happiness.

Here are some things you will need to decide on for a funeral:

### Readings



These are taken from the Bible. Through this God speaks to us. One reading and a Psalm may be chosen and may be read by a family member or friend. A selection of these readings can be found on this website. The Psalm may be sung if you wish (e.g. The Lord's My Shepherd). Look at the section on 'Hymns' for some ideas. There is also a short Gospel Acclamation before the Gospel; the Alleluia can be sung if you wish. The Gospel is read by the priest and is chosen from a selection given. You can choose all of these readings but when you meet your Priest/Deacon he can help you decide.

## The Homily



After the Gospel, the priest / or deacon will, if you wish, include a reflection on the life of the deceased in the form of a short Eulogy. You can shape this reflection by writing down some ideas or speaking to your Priest/Deacon. If a family member or friend wishes to add a short Eulogy themselves this can be done, but please, **no more than three minutes** – which is less than one side of A4. This would take place before the final commendation.

## Prayers of the Faithful

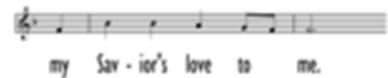
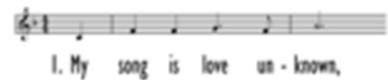
After the Homily there is a time for bidding prayers. You can choose someone to read these or we can do that for you. You can also use our prayers or adapt them. You will find some on this website.

## Hymns

In choosing hymns it is important to bear in mind the type of funeral service that has been chosen.

1. For a Requiem Mass – 4 hymns would be usual:

- Opening hymn
- *Some people choose a psalm that can be sung as well*
- Offertory hymn
- Communion hymn (or quiet organ music can be played)
- End of Mass / Recessional hymn



2. For a funeral service without Mass, two hymns are usually sufficient – one at the beginning and one at the end of the service but there can be a third if you wish.

3. In a service at a Crematorium, there is usually a hymn at the beginning and the end. Time restrictions at the crematorium make it difficult to have any more (25 minutes limit).

## Additional Music



As the deceased is brought into and out of church, music is usually played by the organist / musician. If you wish to select music some suggestions are made below, but provided that music is available and by prior arrangement there are many options for this.

Occasionally families ask about using CD music of a favourite track. Although it is formally not advised this may be permitted **at the entrance or exit** of the funeral. Please check with the priest / deacon about the suitability of such tracks. If using a CD, **originals**

**must be used** and handed in to the funeral directors.

*Please note, our equipment does have problems playing music that has been downloaded/copied.*