

# **The Celebration of Christian Funerals for Saint Marcus and Saint Lawrence Catholic Parishes**

*Effective October 1, 2023*

Death is never an easy experience for human beings, but for us as Catholic Christians, death is not the end. Christ's suffering and death reveal to us the Resurrection. For those of us who grow to become his friends he promises to raise us from the dead also. What will the experience of rising from the dead be like? In this life we will never know. This belief in Christ's resurrection and our own resurrection informs how we celebrate funerals. Ultimately the funeral is about Jesus Christ and the mercy he showed toward his now deceased son or daughter. You see this in God's care for his son Jesus when after his death he moves the heart of Joseph of Arimathea to ask for Jesus' body. Pilate gives it to him and he takes it and buries it with great care (Jn 19:38-42). We commemorate this mystery of Jesus awaiting the Resurrection as he lies in death on Holy Saturday. For those who are preparing for the funeral, it is important to remember that a funeral is not a tribute to the deceased. It is the sacrifice of Christ offered for the one who has died. For those who remain, the funeral is a time of preparing the dead to rest in the tomb as together we await their resurrection in Christ. Keeping the mystery of Good Friday, Holy Saturday, and Easter Sunday in mind can be extremely fruitful in both preparing for your own death and funeral and preparing the funeral of a loved one.

As with all things on this side of eternity, there are some practical things that need to be kept in mind as we prepare funerals so that Christ's Church may provide both a dignified and spiritually fruitful funeral liturgy for you and your loved one.

## **Type of Funeral Liturgy**

1. For Catholics who die and both they and their families are in generally good standing with the Church: a Funeral Mass is the most appropriate liturgy to be celebrated. At the Funeral Mass, the faithful gather around the faithful departed and together they offer the Sacrifice of the Mass for the repose of the soul of the deceased. The faithful are comforted in their grief as they bury their loved one with the nourishment of the Holy Eucharist.
2. For Baptized Catholics in other circumstances and Baptized Non-Catholics (without violation of the norms set in Canon Law), a Funeral Liturgy of the Word is usually most appropriate. This includes reflection on the Word of God with farewell for the deceased.
3. There are other circumstances and funeral liturgies that may be more fitting due to liturgical times of year, family circumstances, age of the deceased, etc. As a result, following the guidance of the parish staff will result in the most prayerful funeral for yourself or loved one.

## Location of Funeral

1. For Baptized Catholics of Saint Marcus and Saint Lawrence, all funeral liturgies with the exception of burials and the Vigil for the Deceased (prayer service) will take place in one of the parish churches. In Baptism, we were made a child of God and were clothed in white. In death we remain child of God and are again clothed in white as our casket enters the door of the church.
2. The situation may arise where the parish church building of the deceased is unavailable due to some other scheduled event and Father and adequate personnel are available for the funeral. In this case the funeral can be moved to the sister parish. This would be at the discretion of parish staff in consultation with the family.
3. Funerals for non-Catholics and non-baptized persons may be done in the parish church depending on the circumstances. Following the recommendation of parish staff would again be best.

## Funeral and Luncheon: details and requirements

A funeral is most spiritually fruitful when celebrated generally proximate to the death of the dead. Spiritually it allows for the mourners a healthy healing process and avoids insensitivity that can come with delay.

1. Upon notification of death the first step is for the Parish, Pastor/ presiding clergy and funeral home determine availability and then present options to the family. Determining the time of the funeral involves a discussion of availability between the funeral home and the parish while taking into account the family's requests.
  - a. All funerals other than simple graveside burials require the assistance of a funeral home. Due to our limited staff and resources funeral homes specialize in coordination. Some graveside burials may require the assistance of a funeral home as well if permits or other coordinating assistance is needed. This will be determined by parish staff based on the requests of the family and friends of the deceased.
  - b. The days generally available for funerals are Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, and Saturday. Other days may be available given scheduling conflicts.
  - c. Death cannot be scheduled but funerals can be scheduled. Therefore, funerals do not necessarily trump the parish's and priest's other prior responsibilities. We will do our best to work them in.
  - d. On Saturday's if there is a wedding scheduled a funeral may not be held in the same parish on the same day. Because Priests are limited to saying 2 masses a day and the priest has a wedding Mass on Saturday a morning Funeral Mass may not

be possible. There is not to be more than one funeral in a parish on a Saturday even if another priest is available to do the funeral.

- e. Other weekdays two funerals may be possible in the same parish on the same day please see below regarding lunch in those situations
2. The parish must have adequate staff, volunteers, and facilities available to conduct a funeral and funeral luncheon. Things often need to be juggled with liturgical schedules, parish events, faith formation schedules, and youth group schedules. While we have funeral policies in place, and we try to be as flexible as possible, it is not always the case that we can accommodate everything all at one time. For our parishes Sundays, and Holy Days of Obligation, are never an option for funerals and as a general rule Good Friday, Holy Saturday, and most Fridays are not an option either. During the Easter Triduum (Holy Thursday, Good Friday, Holy Saturday) only A Funeral Liturgy of the Word may be done in keeping with the church norms. Staff and facilities availability becomes difficult during this time also.
3. If the funeral home is available, there are days of the week here where two funerals may be done in one day depending on our schedules. However, it is not the case that we are able to do two funeral lunches on the same day. As a result the first funeral scheduled trumps the second funeral. The second family would need to make outside arrangements if they desire a funeral lunch.
4. It is permissible to have cultural music played by a live music group during the funeral luncheon as a kind of dinner entertainment. Example: a family that has a connection to the Hispanic culture may have a mariachi band come and play during the funeral lunch. Any expense to having a musical group is the responsibility of the family.

## **The Funeral Liturgy**

### *Personnel:*

1. One lector/reader who regularly reads at Mass.
2. Two servers are needed. The servers must be regular Mass servers
3. At least one Extra-ordinary Minister of Holy Communion to help Father distribute Holy Communion. They must be a commissioned EOM in the parish in which they are members. This is not needed if other priests are going to be present to con-celebrate
4. If the family does not know of anyone for these ministries, parish staff can assist in seeking out parishioners to help.

### *Music:*

1. All music for the funeral liturgy is to be live music.
2. Musicians must play regularly at Catholic Funerals.

3. At least one organist/pianist and one Cantor are necessary.
4. All music for the funeral liturgy must be liturgical music. As a general rule it should be in the hymnal.
5. If deceased may have had a favorite secular song or recording, and the family would like it played in their honor, an appropriate time during visitation may be agreed upon with consultation of the funeral home.
6. If the visitation happens to be in the church, a recording may be played at the visitation provided the musical selection is of a Christian nature. This *determination* shall be made by the pastor or in his absence the an appropriately trained theological minded staff member.

*Readings:*

1. The General Introduction of Christian Funerals (GICF#22) points out that readings should be carefully selected so that in this time of mourning the family and the community have the opportunity to hear God speak to them in this difficult time.
2. The readings must only come from the Bible.
3. The first reading generally comes from the Old Testament. Except during the Easter Season, then a New Testament reading from the Acts of the Apostles or the Book of Revelation is to be used.
4. The second reading always comes from the New Testament.
5. The selection of the Gospel reading is reserved to the priest/deacon presiding.
6. While the family is to be consulted as to the choice of the readings, if the presiding priest has ideas and the deceased has no prior wishes listed, then the priest's ideas should be seriously considered. He will be the one to compose a homily about the paschal mystery in the life of your loved one.

*Procession of Gifts:*

1. At the offertory, family members may bring up the bread and the wine.
2. The family members may also bring up gifts for the poor or gifts for the church in keeping with GIRM #22 for the celebration of Holy Mass.
3. Items that symbolize or honor the deceased may not be brought forward.
4. An example of something that may be brought up: Grandma crocheted afghans and the family wants to donate some of them to the needy. The afghans may be brought forward in front of the bread and wine. After the funeral mass, the parish would distribute them to worthy individuals or organizations. Any of these such gifts must be pre-approved by the pastor, or in his absence, the presiding priest or another theologically minded staff member.

*Eulogies:*

1. The General Instruction of the Roman Missal #382 and the General Instruction for Christian Funerals # 141 both clearly state that while a homily is to be given at a Funeral Mass any eulogy is to be excluded.

2. The staff here at Saint Marcus and Saint Lawrence clearly recognize the need for some to publicly honor their loved one and the healing it can bring to family and friends. As a result of the above stated prohibition, eulogies or memories be shared at an appropriate time during the visitation. The time for memories or Eulogy may be advertised by the funeral home if the family desires to inform others as to when this will happen
3. If the Eulogy is to be done at the Church during the visitation the following guidelines must be adhered to:
  - Eulogies are *optional*. Situations have arisen whereby the deceased or other family members do not want a eulogy at the Funeral. These wishes should be respected.
  - The eulogy should be brief: no more than 5 minutes (normally two typed pages).
  - The eulogy must be prepared beforehand, (written word for word) and must be approved by the priest or deacon beforehand, to avoid undue length or inappropriate situations. The priest or deacon has both complete veto power and line item veto power to ensure that the eulogy remain appropriate and that nothing anti-Christian is stated.
  - Please get the eulogy to the clergy no later than one day before.
  - If found necessary for any violation of the above guidelines or other inappropriate situations that may come up during the giving of the eulogy, clergy may bring the eulogy to a close.

*Color Guard, Military, Police, Fire Personnel.*

Our Lord Jesus Christ had great love and respect for those who were soldiers and who gave their life in public service for the good of their neighbors like he did. As a result, it is fitting that for fallen civil servants that the public nature of their sacrifice be duly recognized by the presence of flags, color guard, and uniformed personnel, provided the following norms are observed.

1. All processions of flag and uniformed personnel not directly assisting as pallbearers take place before the opening rites with the casket at the front doors. An appropriate number flags for the liturgical space may be carried in procession before the opening rites and may be posted near the sanctuary toward the sides so as not to obscure the primary liturgical places. Appropriate number and places for posting flags will be determined by the pastor or in his absence the presiding clergy.
2. Adequate seating may be reserved for service personnel however sufficient space for the general public must be maintained. This means that some service personnel may need to stand in favor of the general public.
3. Caskets may be draped with the flag when brought into the entrance of the Church. The flag then is to be removed according to civil procedures and with due respect for the nation it signifies. This is so that the baptismal pall, which is white and signifies the fallen service person's baptismal dignity, may be placed on the casket for the Funeral Liturgy.
4. The funeral liturgy the proceeds in normal fashion in accord with the norms laid out in the GIRM and GICF.

5. The funeral liturgy concludes with the final procession. The casket follows the priest pallbearers follow the casket. Flags and uniformed civil servants are permitted to process out following the pallbearers with the family following.
6. Upon reaching the entrance of the church in the final procession all civil servants process by the casket once the family reaches the casket, the casket may again be draped with a flag after the baptismal pall has been removed.