

Guide for Catholic Funerals

Transfiguration Catholic Church

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Dear Friends in Christ,

On behalf of the Transfiguration Family, please accept our heartfelt prayers and sympathy as you remember and celebrate the life of your loved one. Please know that our Pastoral Staff is ready to assist you in preparing for and celebrating a Funeral Liturgy.

The Catholic Understanding of Death

“In the face of death, the church confidently proclaims that God has 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. Christ ‘achieved his task of redeeming humanity and giving perfect glory to God, principally by the paschal mystery of his blessed passion, resurrection from the dead, and glorious ascension’.” (Order of Christian Funerals [OCF, 1])

“At the death of a Christian, whose life of faith was begun in the waters of baptism and strengthened at the Eucharistic

table, the Church intercedes on behalf of the deceased because of her confident belief that death is not the end nor does it break the bonds forged in life. The Church also ministers to the sorrowing and consoles them in the funeral rites with the comforting Word of God and the Sacrament of the Eucharist.” (OCF, 4)

Through the celebration of the funeral rites, particularly the Vigil for the Deceased, the Funeral Liturgy, and the Rite of Committal the Church calls for the active participation of all.

In the Catholic Church, there are two forms – a Funeral Mass or a Funeral Service (Ceremony without Mass).

As you work with your Funeral Director, you may find the following information helpful. You or your Funeral Director will make arrangements with us regarding the place and time of the celebration. You may have the Funeral scheduled either in the Chapel (for more intimate/smaller gatherings) or the Church.

Normally, Funerals are scheduled for 11am or 2pm on Wednesdays, Thursdays or Fridays. We would ask that you give this serious consideration, as our schedule could at times need to allow more than one funeral on a given day.

Please contact The Liturgy Department to schedule a time to meet with you and other family members to plan the

Funeral, particularly in choosing the Scripture readings, music, and logistical elements. Please know that we encourage members of the family to consider being involved in the liturgy, so we will ask if you have some members of the family to assist with the following:

- one or two people to assist in placing the Pall on the casket or urn.
- one or two people willing to proclaim the Scripture readings (if not, we will provide a Lector to read)
- two people to bring up the offertory gifts (if you have a Mass);
- Words of Remembrance. It is preferred that the eulogy is read at the wake or during the reception, but may be done at this time if those options are not available. One person may read the Words of Remembrance prior to the beginning of the mass. It must be less than 3 minutes in length, and submitted 24 hours prior to scheduled funeral time for approval by Pastor.

The Director of Liturgy and music will arrange for all musical elements of the funeral including musicians, cantors, and/or small choir.

Fees: There is no fee for the use of the church or chapel. There are no fees for personnel (clergy, musicians, funeral coordinators)

You and your deceased loved one will be remembered in our prayers in the coming days and at our weekend Masses. In the past, you have loved others, comforted them, and shared their losses. During the hours and days ahead, it will be your turn, your time, to be loved, to be comforted, and to let others share your grief. May the God of Hope give you the fullness of peace, and may the Lord of Life always be with you! With our prayers and sympathy in the Risen Lord, The Clergy and Staff of Transfiguration Catholic Church.

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.

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 an Opening Prayer, a proclamation of Sacred Scripture, Words of Remembrance (Eulogy) and intercessions for the deceased. Sacred music may also be a part of this service. If secular music or a eulogy is

requested, these take place after the completion of the Vigil Rite. If you would like a Deacon to preside at a vigil service, please contact the Director of Liturgy to coordinate.

The Funeral 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 to be removed from the casket at the entrance of the church. Then the baptismal symbols and gestures become evident.

The casket or urn is brought to the Narthex where the family greets guest. The Paschal Candle is lit and placed at the font. The candle reminds us of the light of Christ, entrusted to us at our 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 casket recalls the “white garment” we were given at Baptism as a sign of putting on a new life in Christ. Later, the body of the deceased is incensed as a sign of respect for the body as a temple of the Holy Spirit.

The Rite of Committal at the Cemetery

In committing the body 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 body of the deceased. It may be celebrated at the grave, tomb, or mausoleum.

A Deacon is available to assist with this service. Please discuss with the Director of Liturgy to coordinate.

This Rite includes prayers offered for blessing of the ground, disposition of the body and for the consolation of those gathered. If military honors are offered, they are done following the completion of the Rite.

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 the family desires to select readings, they may choose from Scripture readings listed within the booklet given by the Director of Liturgy or from the USCCB funeral readings selection available online at:

<https://www.usccb.org/prayer-and-worship/sacraments-and-sacramentals/bereavement-and-funerals>

Flowers in the Church

Casket sprays are removed before the casket is brought into the church. They may be replaced at the end of the funeral. Flowers may be brought from the funeral home or sent directly to the church. They will be placed so as not to obscure the altar, pulpit, tabernacle, or block passage of ministers in the sanctuary. Very few flowers should be brought into the church during the Season of Lent.

When the church is decorated for Christmas or Easter, other flowers may seem redundant. You may wish not to bring them to the church during these times.

Scheduling a Funeral Mass

Funeral Masses are NOT permitted on:

- Sundays at any time

- Saturdays after 2pm
 - Holy Days of Obligation
 - Holy Thursday, Good Friday, Holy Saturday
- Funeral services apart from Mass can be scheduled on most days of the year.

Music: The hymns and songs chosen for the Funeral must be appropriate for Catholic worship and not of a secular nature. Any secular music should be reserved for the reception where it is more suitable. Music to be chosen by the family with the assistance of the Director of Liturgy and Music would include (Processional, Offertory, Communion, and Recessional).

Psalm 23 (The Lord is My Shepherd) is traditionally sung at funerals between the first and second readings, however, another suitable Psalm setting may be chosen.

To help guide you with your music selections, a list of songs is available at: www.transfiguration.com under the Liturgy/Funerals tab.

Programs: Funeral Programs will be provided by the Liturgy department to aid in following the mass or service. Please provide a digital picture and the obituary to the Director of Liturgy for inclusion in the program.

Military Tributes:

If not available to be handled at the interment service, a military tribute may be done after the mass or service at the church prior to leaving. Please let us know in advance so that we may assist in setting up appropriate tables in the mall area directly in front of the main doors to Narthex.

Receptions:

A reception may be scheduled (pending availability of facilities) after the Funeral Mass or Service. A luncheon with sandwiches and light desert, coffee, and tea is provided by the Funeral Ministry. The Adult Lounge is used for smaller groups for a more intimate setting, or the Social Hall for larger groups.

II. Special Pastoral Concerns

1. Cremation

Respect for the human body is envisioned in the funeral rites of the Church.

“The body of the deceased Catholic Christian is also the body once washed in Baptism, anointed with the oil of salvation, and fed with the Bread of Life. Thus, the Church’s reverence of the sacredness of the human body grows out of a reverence and concern both natural and supernatural for the human person. The body of the deceased brings forcefully to mind the

Church's conviction that the human body is in Christ a temple of the Holy Spirit and is destined for future glory at the resurrection of the dead." (OCF, 412)

"Although cremation is now permitted by the Church, it does not enjoy the same value as burial of the body. The Church clearly prefers and urges that the body of the deceased be present for funeral rites, since the presence of the human body better expresses the values which the Church affirms in those rites." (OCF, 413)

"When extraordinary circumstances make the cremation of the body the only feasible choice, pastoral sensitivity must be exercised by priests, deacons, and others who minister to the family of the deceased." (OCF, 415)

"The cremated remains of a body must be treated with the same respect given to the human body from which they come. This includes the use of a worthy vessel to contain the cremated remains, the manner in which they are carried, the care and attention to appropriate placement and transport, and the final disposition. The cremated remains should be buried in a grave or entombed in a mausoleum or columbarium. The practices of dividing, commingling and scattering cremated remains on the sea, from the air, or on the ground, or keeping cremated

remains in the home of a relative or friend of the deceased is not permitted. Whenever possible, appropriate means for recording with dignity the memory of the deceased should be adopted, such as a plaque or stone which records the name of the deceased.” (OCF, 417)

- When the choice has been made to cremate a body, it is strongly recommended that the cremation take place after the Funeral Liturgy followed by the proper disposition of the remains according to the norms of the Church, that is, burial in a grave, or entombment in a mausoleum or columbarium. The Rite of Committal is conducted at the time of burial or entombment.

- If cremation takes place before the Funeral Liturgy the following protocols are in order during the Celebration of the Funeral Mass:

- The introductory rites are held including the blessing of the urn. The celebrant greets the family at the font. The urn is then brought to the front of the church and placed on a table at its customary place in front of the Altar of sacrifice. Placing cremated remains within a casket to give the false impression of a full body is strictly prohibited.

- The final commendation is held including the incensing of the urn.
- The cremated remains are then taken to the cemetery for the committal service.
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It is strongly urged that the committal of the cremated remains takes place immediately following Mass, as is the custom for the corporal remains of a human body. In rare instances the committal may be delayed because of extenuating circumstances such as the deceased being buried at an out of state cemetery.

Before granting permission for the cremated remains to be present for

the Mass of Christian Burial, the priest should have assurance from the funeral service provider and the family that the cremated remains will be properly interred or entombed within a reasonable amount of time. If this fact cannot be properly ascertained, it is a legitimate reason to disallow the Funeral Mass.

Reception: We will provide a reception upon request and availability. We offer light sandwiches, sides, tea, water, and coffee. Catering is not permitted, however, family and friends may bring desserts to share.