

## ***Words of Remembrance***

### ***A Guide for Speakers at the Funeral Liturgy***

You have been invited to offer words of remembrance at the Funeral Liturgy for a person dear to you. This is a great honor and responsibility. This guide is offered to help you plan your remembrance and to deliver it well.

In our faith tradition, the Funeral Liturgy is primarily about our faith in the life, saving death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. During the Funeral Liturgy, we pray for our deceased and commit them to God's mercy. Of course, we remember the life of our loved one during the Funeral Liturgy, but we do so specifically in the context of faith – marking the end of the deceased's faith journey, which began at Baptism. Because everything that is said during the Funeral Liturgy is said in the context of faith, any remembrance offered during the Funeral Liturgy must be about the deceased's life with God, and the ways the person was faithful to Baptism by loving God and loving neighbor.

The word of God contained in Holy Scripture, and explained in the priest's or deacon's homily, is a central part of the Funeral Liturgy. Before you prepare your remembrance, ask what scriptural readings will be used at the funeral, and read them thoughtfully in a quiet place. Your reading may bring to mind a specific quality of the deceased, or an incident or deed which symbolizes his/her faith and character. The remembrance is not the place to list accomplishments or summarize the deceased's life story. Rather, if you share a single blessed memory that indicates the deceased's faith and character, your hearers will be moved in their own hearts to offer thanks to God. Keep in mind that the purpose of the Funeral Liturgy is to offer thanks to God for the resurrection of Jesus, and to pray that the deceased may share in this resurrection! Your task is to speak within this tradition, and to speak simply, from your heart. The following guidelines have proven to be helpful.

- ❖ Words of remembrance should be three- five minutes. *It is very important that you respect this policy.*
- ❖ Prepare your remembrance in writing. One page of text should correspond to a remembrance that lasts no longer than five minutes.
- ❖ Use your own words. Speak from your own experience.
- ❖ Avoid using “inside jokes” or forms of humor which may be misunderstood, or sharing incidents not widely known, which may cause confusion or hurt.
- ❖ Choose one trusted advisor who also knew the deceased, and use this person as a “sounding board” when you prepare your remembrance.
- ❖ Show your written remembrance to the priest the night before the funeral, at the latest. He may offer helpful comments on the text.
- ❖ On the morning of the funeral, arrive at the church early enough to speak with the priest. Practice speaking the remembrance in the church, using the microphone. Review with the priest exactly when you will speak.
- ❖ Leave the text of your remembrance on the lectern before the Mass, and leave it behind when you walk away from the lectern.
- ❖ During the preparation and delivery of your remembrance, pray.
- ❖ Pray that you will do honor to your loved one’s memory, and that your words will be a witness to faith, and a blessing to your family and friends.
- ❖ If you have been asked to offer a remembrance, but are unaccustomed to public speaking, or are concerned that your emotions may hinder your ability to speak, do not hesitate to respectfully decline this task.