

Our Lady of the Gulf Funeral Planning Guide

"Into your hands, Father of mercies, we commend our loved ones, in the sure and certain hope that, together with all who have died in Christ, they will rise with him on the last day."

Introduction:



The death of a loved one is always tragic. It is always unexpected, no matter if the death was sudden or the deceased had been sick for a period of time. A funeral is a time flooded with emotions of all kinds that may include such things as grief, sorrow, resentment, bitterness, sadness, hurt, anger, confusion, shock, loss, emptiness.

Grief can place a great burden on us, making the necessary

arrangements seem even greater. Some of these arrangements include the planning of the funeral Mass. As your loved one is entitled by his or her baptism to a Mass of Christian Burial, the perfect prayer of our Church, we thank you for offering this Mass for them.

As Christians, we celebrate the Christian funeral to offer worship, praise, and thanksgiving to God for the gift of life which has now returned to God. The celebration of the funeral rites is a way to remind us of God's mercy and to bring hope and consolation in a time of crisis.

In the hope of lightening the task of planning a funeral liturgy, this planning guide has been put together to help your family. Obviously the family is invited meet with a parish priest to assist with plans for the funeral Mass. We hope these materials will enable you to plan a liturgy which actively involves those gathered in prayer and grief to give praise to God.

We realize that family members of the deceased are more or less comfortable with the planning and participation of liturgies, especially during such a difficult time. Please feel free to do as much or as little according to your personal comfort level. If you do not wish to participate in the selection of music or family members offering the readings at Mass, please let us know. We will gladly have others assist from the parish with these roles.

On behalf of the staff and parishioners of Our Lady of the Gulf, may the peace and consolation of Christ be yours. Again, please contact your parish priest or staff member for assistance or an appointment to help with your planning.

The Order of Christian Funerals

Traditionally, full Catholic funeral rites are celebrated in three stages--the vigil service, as part of the visitation; the Funeral Mass; and the committal service at the graveside or mausoleum. Each section is an important part of the funeral liturgy of the Catholic Church.

The Vigil Service

The Vigil most often takes place at a funeral home and normally consists of a Scripture Service comprised of readings, reflections, and prayers. The vigil service is the appropriate time to share stories and eulogies about the deceased. It may be possible to incorporate favorite music, whether sacred or secular. Discuss these options with our chosen Funeral Director.

Visitation:

Usually families have two options for visitation. It may take place in the funeral home the night before or prior to the removal of the body or cremains to the church or it may take place in the church for a period of time prior to the funeral Mass.

The Funeral Mass

The planning guide, below, will assist you in planning the Funeral Mass to be celebrated in the church.

The Committal Service

Most often, the committal service takes place immediately after the Mass. (This may not be true when burial is to take place in another city, or if the body is to be cremated after the Mass.)

Cremation:

Regarding the Catholic Church's approach and guidelines for cremation, please consult our Cremation Guidelines found alongside this document on our church website (www.olgchurch.net)

Scripture Selections for a Funeral Mass

The Catholic Church offers a wide selection of Scripture readings for the funeral rites. You will likely find excellent readings from among this list,

You will need to choose 4 Scripture readings for the Mass.

- First Reading from the Old Testament (or from Acts or Revelation in Easter Season)
- Responsorial Psalm from the Book of Psalms
- Second Reading from the New Testament Epistles
- Gospel Reading

The first and second reading may be proclaimed by a family member or friend.. The readers should have a good grasp of the principles of proclaiming the Word of God in public. Be sure to give them a copy of the reading in advance, and encourage them to practice the reading at the ambo (lectern) in church to get the feel of the acoustics and microphone.

The responsorial psalm should preferably be sung by the cantor, but it can be recited if necessary.

First Reading from the Old Testament

2 Maccabees 12:43-46
Lamentations 3:17-26

Job 19:1, 23-27a
Daniel 12:1-3

Wisdoms 4:7-15

Isaiah 25:6a, 7-9

During the Easter Season (Easter to Pentecost) one of the following is used instead of a passage from the Old Testament

Acts 10:34-43 Revelation 14:13 Revelation 20:11-21:1
Revelation 21:1-5a, 6b-7

Responsorial Psalm (usually sung by the cantor)

Psalm 23:1-3, 4,5,6 Psalm 25:6 and 7b, 17-18, 20-21 Psalm 27:1,4,7, and 8b and 9a, 13-14
Psalm 42:2,3,5cdef; 43:3,4,5 Psalm 63:2, 3-4, 5-6, 8-9
Psalm 103:8 and 10, 13-14,15-16, 17-18 Psalm 116:5, 6,10-11,15-16ac
Psalm 122:1-2, 4-05, 6-7, 8-9 Psalm 130: 1-2, 3-4, 5-6ab, 6c-7, 8

Second Reading from the New Testament Epistles

Romans 5:5-11	Romans 5:17-21	Romans 6:3-9
Romans 8:14-23	Romans 8:31b-35, 37-39	Romans 14:7-9, 10c-12
1 Corinthians 15:20-28	1 Cor. 15:20-23)	1 Corinthians 15:51-57
2 Corinthians 4:14 – 5:1	2 Corinthians 5:1, 6-10	Philippians 3:20-21
1 Thessalonians 4:13-18	2 Timothy 2:8-13	1 John 3:1-2
1 John 3:14-16		

Gospel Reading (read by the priest or deacon only)

Matthew 5:1-1a	Matthew 11:25-30	Matthew 25:1-13
Matthew 25:31-46	Mark 15:33-39; 16:1-6	Mk 15:33-39)
Luke 7:11-17	Luke 12:35-40	Luke 23:33, 39-43
Luke 23:44-46, 50,52-53; 24:1-6a		Luke 24:13-35
John 5: 24-29	John 6:37-40	John 6:51-59
John 11:17-27	John 11:32-35	John 12:23-28
John 14:1-6	John 17:24-26	John 19:17-18, 25-39

Readers should come prepared and should bring a copy of their readings with them to the funeral Mass. They will sit with their families and will be invited forward by the priest when they are to proclaim the readings. You may choose one, two or three readers to proclaim the readings and the prayers at Mass. - one person for the Old Testament reading, one for the New Testament reading and third for the prayer of the faithful. (Prayer of the Faithful) Or optionally, the same person may proclaim multiple readings. It is strongly suggested that the readers be Catholic.

Music guidelines for Catholic Funerals

Music is an important part of Catholic funeral rites. Music allows convictions and feelings to be expressed that words alone may fail to convey. Music has the power to strengthen the faith and hope of those present. The hymns chosen should express the mystery of our salvation in Christ, namely, the saving power of the Lord's suffering, death and resurrection. Funeral music should support, console, and uplift those present and help create in them a spirit of hope in Christ's victory over death and in the Christian's share in that victory. Secular songs (popular/non-religious songs), even though they may have been meaningful

to the deceased or the family, do not capture the Gospel message of hope nor the sacred quality of Christian worship, and so secular songs are not appropriate for funeral services. Secular songs would be more appropriate for a funeral reception (or for a non-religious funeral service). Below are some hymn titles offered

for your consideration. Other appropriate selections can be made from the parish worship books. Please work with the musicians in making your selection. If there are any questions, please contact the priest or deacon assisting with the funeral services.

Suggested Hymn

Amazing Grace	Ave Maria	Be Not Afraid
Blest Are They	Bread of Life	Center of My Life
Christ, Be Our Light	Come to the Water	Death Will Be No More
Eat This Bread	Eye Has Not Seen	From All That Dwell
Below the Skies	Hail Mary: Gentle Woman	Hosea
How Great Thou Art	I Am the Bread of Life	I Know That My Redeemer Lives
Isaiah 49	Jesus, Come to Us	Precious Lord, Take My Hand
Lead Me, Lord	Like A Shepherd	Lord Of All Hopefulness
On Eagle's Wings	Only In God	Prayer Of St. Francis
Shelter Me, O God	Speak, Lord	The Lord Is My Light
The Supper Of The Lord	There Is A Longing	This Alone
Unless A Grain Of Wheat	We Will Rise Again	Yes, I Shall Arise
You Are Mine	You Are Near	

Use of Pre-Recorded Music:

The playing of pre-recorded music (CD's, tapes, DVD's etc.) may take place during the visitation, at the Vigil, or at the Committal Service. Pre-recorded music is not permitted during Mass.

Use of Secular or Popular Music:

Secular or popular music can sometimes be meaningful, and may be included at the Vigil or during the Committal Service. It may not be included at the Funeral Mass.

Homily

Provide your priest with some biographical information about your deceased loved one that will help him in preparing the funeral homily

Prayers of the Faithful

Choose or compose the general intercessions, which come after the homily. In the general intercessions we pray not only for the deceased and his or her family and friends but also for all the dead and those who mourn them, and for the needs of the wider community.. One or more family members should read the general intercessions.

Gift Bearers

Choose family members or friends of the deceased to bring the gifts of bread and wine to the altar. You should keep in mind, though, that the presentation of the gifts is not the time to carry up personal memorabilia or symbols of the life of the deceased. The best time is at the end of the Mass, during the final commendation and farewell.

Military Honors:

If there will be military honors taking place at the cemetery, your funeral director will assist with necessary arrangements.

If the casket comes to the church draped in a flag, the flag is removed before the liturgy begins and then put back on the coffin after the pall has been removed at the end of the liturgy.

Eulogies:

The Rite of Christian Funerals does not include the addition of personal eulogies at a funeral Mass. The rite actually reads, "A brief homily based on the readings is always given after the gospel reading at the funeral liturgy and may also be given after the readings at the vigil service; but there is never to be an eulogy." (Order of Christian Funerals # 141) The custom of the eulogy comes from Protestant funeral services that may not have the rich ritual and prayers that are ours. Nevertheless, it has indeed become a custom in some places to allow words of remembrance to be said at a Catholic liturgy.

For pastoral reasons, many pastors have decided to allow a brief personal reflection to be given. The preference would be that it be done at the Vigil Service, a time when people gather to remember, tell stories, and celebrate the life of the one who has died. In cases where it is not possible to have the eulogy at the vigil service, it may take place at the committal service at the cemetery.

Please remember the following:

- The remembrance must be brief: no more than 5 minutes.
- The remembrance should be well prepared in advance so that it is focused and stays within the 5-minute time limit.
- These guidelines are not meant to squelch remembrance or tribute, but past experience had taught that eulogies are the "wild card" most prone to disaster, with some rambling on for 45 minutes or more, some nearly unintelligible through tears or mumbling, and others used more as a soap box for cult theology than a remembrance of the dead.

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The Funeral Liturgy Outside Mass

The body is taken to its final resting place. There we take our leave of our deceased loved one. The rite of committal is simple: the priest leads a short scripture reading, and blesses the grave. There is a prayer of committal

It is the custom in the United States for a priest or deacon to preside at the funeral liturgy when it is celebrated outside of Mass.

The Funeral Liturgy outside Mass is celebrated when a Mass is not possible or not deemed appropriate. It is ordinarily celebrated in the parish church, but it may also be celebrated in the funeral home, cemetery.

The family may choose to celebrate a funeral outside of Mass, and schedule a memorial Mass at a later date.

Some families may opt for a Graveside Service where the pastor or deacon conducts a brief prayer service of Committal before the body is placed in the ground or in the mausoleum.

Some important symbols are used during the funeral liturgies.

The Paschal Candle is placed close to the coffin when it is received at the church. It reminds us of Christ's presence among us and of his victory over death, a victory in which we share through our baptism.

Holy water is used to sprinkle the coffin when it is received at the church, and during the final commendation at the end of the funeral Mass. It may also be used on other occasions during the wake and funeral: at the gathering in the presence of the body, during the vigil service, when the coffin is being closed, and at the time of committal or burial. The holy water reminds us of our baptism and the baptism of our deceased loved one.

A Pall may be placed on the coffin by family members or friends when it is received at the church. The pall is a large white cloth that covers the coffin during the liturgy. It is a reminder of the white robe that is put on the newly baptized to symbolize his or her new life in Christ. It is also a reminder that all are equal in the eyes of God.

A Bible or cross may be placed on the coffin. The Bible reminds us that Christians are called to live by the Word of God, and that it is by being faithful to that word that we gain eternal life. The cross reminds us that Christians are marked by the sign of the cross in baptism, and that it was through his suffering on the cross that Jesus won for us the promise of resurrection.

Incense is used to honor the body of the deceased, who through baptism became a living temple of God's presence. It is also a sign of the community's prayers for the deceased rising up to heaven, and a sign of farewell.

Offerings for Funeral

It is customary for the family to make a financial offering to the priest or deacon who performs the Funeral Mass/Services for them.

The offering on the occasion of a funeral does not include the professional fees for an organist and/or cantor. Organists and Cantors usually set their own professional fees for funerals as well as weddings.

Rabboni Ministry of Our Lady of the Gulf Catholic Church

The purpose of Rabboni is to console and comfort. When a death occurs in the parish, this ministry prepares and delivers a meal to the bereaving family; demonstrating the love and support of their parish. Also, Rabboni organizes an annual Spring Mass of Resurrection which is celebrated for the families who have lost a loved one during the previous year. We continue the evening with a dinner prepared by our ministers.

The name Rabboni comes from the Gospel of John 20:15-17...Jesus said to Mary, "Woman, why are you weeping? Who are you looking for?" Supposing him to be the gardener, she said to him, "Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have laid him, and I will take him away." Jesus said to her, "Mary!" (Recognizing Him to be the Risen Lord) She turned and said to him in Hebrew "Rabboni" (which means Teacher---also spelled Rabbuni).

A NOTE TO NON-CATHOLICS

In our society, it sometimes happens that the surviving family members of a deceased Catholic are not Catholics themselves or practice no religion at all. Our experience is that sometimes these non-Catholics come to us assuming they are free to "create" their own funeral service. When this is the case, family members need to understand some basic things about what a Catholic funeral is and how a Catholic funeral must proceed.

A Catholic funeral is an act of worship offered by the local Catholic community in union with the universal Church. Catholic funerals normally take place within a Catholic church building, since it is a place set aside for prayer and worship.

Our non-Catholic friends should be aware of the following: Since a Catholic funeral is an act of worship, God is always the central focus of our actions. We always listen to God's word in the Bible. We always pray to God through his Son, Jesus Christ, who is Lord and Savior. We always use sacred music. We always try to use musicians and singers (rather than CD players), because the funeral, like all forms of Catholic worship, is a "work" of the Catholic community. The service is always lead by a priest or a deacon. We always pray for God's help and blessing. We always pray for the deceased person. These actions and dispositions are proper marks of true worship.

Since a Catholic funeral is an act of worship, it goes without saying that the funeral is not meant to be a form of entertainment. It is not meant to be a vehicle for the expression of personal interests. It is not meant to provide a "stage" for friends and family members. It is not meant to be a vehicle for the expression of personalized religious beliefs.

The Catholic Church has a two-thousand year history. Truth, wisdom, and tradition are aspects of the great treasure of the Catholic Faith. From her great storehouse of wisdom and experience, the Church provides directions about how funerals are to be conducted. The Church directs what is to take place during a funeral service. The Church provides the texts and prayers that are to be used. These directives and texts are mandatory. It is always the duty of the priest or deacon to see to it that the Church's norms are followed. For Catholic funerals, the priest or deacon has authority to determine what is acceptable and what is not, and he will be happy to offer guidance and suggestions.

One more thing should be noted. Catholics know that there are Christians who are not Catholic. We view baptized Christians as our brothers and sisters, and we respect them as such, but we have not yet achieved the unity of faith that all Christians hope for. Non-Catholic Christians have beliefs and practices that differ from those of Catholic Christians. It is important to understand that at Catholic funerals, it is the Catholic faith that will be celebrated, expressed, and vocalized. Of course, non-Catholics are always welcome at Catholic funeral services. They simply need to be aware that the funeral will take place in a Catholic setting and follow a ritual that is based on Catholic beliefs.

When Catholic clergy are called upon to provide funeral services, they will assume that the person making the request seeks to have a funeral that is celebrated according to Catholic beliefs and norms. They will also assume that, even if friends and family members of the deceased do not hold the Catholic Faith, they are willing to give due respect to Catholic practices and authority.

Can non-Catholics receive Communion at a Catholic Mass?

Answer: No.

As Catholics, we believe that the celebration of the Eucharist is a sign of our oneness in faith, life and worship. Members of churches with whom we are not yet fully united are therefore not ordinarily invited to participate in Holy Communion....

We welcome our fellow Christians to the celebration of the Eucharist as our brothers and sisters. We pray that our common baptism and the action of the Holy Spirit in this Eucharist will draw us closer to one another and begin to dispel the sad divisions which separate us. We pray that these will lessen and finally disappear, in keeping with Christ's prayer for us "that they may all be one" (Jn 17:21).

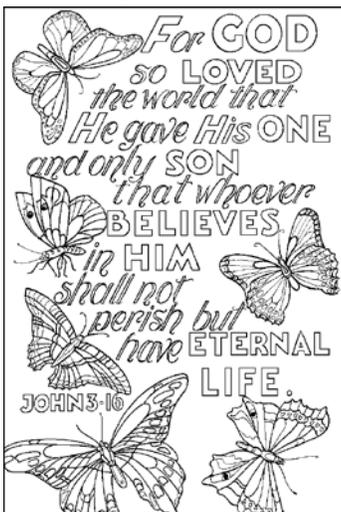
Because Catholics believe that the celebration of the Eucharist is a sign of the reality of the oneness of faith, life, and worship, members of those churches [e.g., Protestants] with whom we are not yet fully united are ordinarily not admitted to Holy Communion. Eucharistic sharing in exceptional circumstances by other Christians requires permission according to the directives of the diocesan bishop and the provisions of canon law (canon 844 § 4).

All who are not receiving Holy Communion are encouraged to express in their hearts a prayerful desire for unity with the Lord Jesus and with one another.

We also welcome to this celebration those who do not share our faith in Jesus Christ. While we cannot admit them to Holy Communion, we ask them to offer their prayers for the peace and the unity of the human family. (USCCB Statement)

Non-Catholics and all unable to receive Communion may come forward during Communion, with the hands crossed in front of their chest, to the priest. This indicates that they are coming forward for a blessing, and not for Communion.

Summary



The Catholic Church has over two thousand years' experience escorting the deceased into the Kingdom of Heaven, and just as much experience consoling those who remain by leading through prayer and ritual to a deeper grounding in God's merciful, embracing and infinite love as He leads from life to eternal life. Prayerful preparations and planning of the funeral liturgy will help you and you loved ones deal successfully and gracefully with the ultimate rite of passage through death to life.

We do hope that this booklet helps you, not only celebrate the life of your loved one who has died but also helps bring you, his or her loved ones, the comfort, strength, healing and hope the Catholic Church offers through its Funeral Mass and funeral rituals.