



Diocese of Worcester
Office of the Bishop
49 Elm Street
Worcester, Massachusetts 01609

Dear Pastors, Parochial Vicars, Pastoral Associates, and Deacons;

In 1969, Pope Paul VI promulgated the revised *Order of Funerals*. In 1989, the national Conference of Catholic Bishops approved and published the *Order of Christian Funerals* for use in all parishes and dioceses in the United States. In 1997 an indult was obtained from the Holy See for the celebration of the funeral liturgy in the presence of cremated remains.

In many ways the promulgation of these documents reflects how ministry to families experiencing the death of a loved one has changed. In particular the cultural shifts we see in our society and reflected in the ways the funeral industry has responded, underscores the need for a consistent approach to our Catholic understanding of the death of a Christian and the subsequent celebration of ecclesiastical funeral rites.

Catholic Funeral Rites convey the faith that “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.” (OCF #1) Funeral rites therefore, communicate the firm hope of our faith and must always be celebrated in a manner which boldly and clearly reflects these central truths.

In 2000, I promulgated a *Funeral Policy for the Diocese of Worcester*. In 2002, our Holy Father Pope John Paul II promulgated for the universal Church, the revised *General Instruction of the Roman Missal* which necessitated the revision and update of our present policy.

I hereby promulgate the *Policy for Ecclesiastical Funeral Rites* for the Diocese of Worcester. The policy will take effect Beginning on February 29, 2003, The First Sunday of Lent. I ask that you familiarize yourself with this policy and to implement it pastorally in your parish.

Anything to the contrary notwithstanding.

With gratitude for all you do and asking the Lord to Bless you, I am

Sincerely yours in Christ,

Most Reverend Daniel P. Reilly
Bishop of Worcester

January 28, 2004
Feast of St. Thomas Aquinas

POLICY FOR ECCLESIASTICAL FUNERAL RITES - DIOCESE OF WORCESTER

INTRODUCTION

This instruction on some aspects of Ecclesiastical Funeral Rites is issued as an aid for the proper implementation of the Order of Christian Funerals and is the Diocesan Policy on Ecclesiastical Funeral Rites.

100. The Authority of the Order of Christian Funerals

1. The only canonically approved liturgical rite in English is the Order of Christian Funerals (1989). The ritual of 1970 has been suppressed and its usage is not allowed.
2. The Spanish translation of the Rituel de Exsequias Cristianas is the only Spanish version of the Rite which may be used in the Diocese.
3. Liturgical books in other languages must be approved by their proper Episcopal Conferences. Ministers in ethnic communities should take care that they are using the current approved translation of the Latin Ordo Exsequiarium.

200. Entitlement to the Ministry of the Church at the Time of Death

Every Catholic, unless specifically excluded by the norms of law, is entitled to the Church's ministry at the time of death.

1. The Funeral Liturgy for Catholics should be celebrated in the deceased person's parish church. However, the funeral may be celebrated in another parish church with the permission of the proper pastor and after informing the pastor of the deceased.

As a rule, the Funeral Liturgy for religious men or women may be celebrated in their own church or oratory, or in a parish church of the diocese with the permission of the proper pastor.

The Funeral Mass may also be celebrated in the chapel of a Catholic long-term care institution. The permission of the local pastor and Bishop's Office should be attained prior to the funeral. Special circumstances should be referred to the Bishop's Office.

In coordination with the parish priest, the family of the deceased and the funeral director chosen by the family arrange the place and set the time for the wake, the Funeral Mass, and the Rite of Committal.

2. The Funeral Mass is ordinarily the central element of Catholic funerals in the Diocese of Worcester. When survivors hesitate to request a Mass, they should be reminded that church law clearly states that Catholics are to be given a Church Funeral, unless excluded by law. The Church considers it a Catholic's right by virtue of their baptism. The parish priest should encourage the celebration of Mass, explaining that the Funeral Liturgy proclaims Christ's victory over death, is a prayer for God's mercy for the deceased, and provides comfort for the living, including the entire faith community.

3. Catechumens should be given Ecclesiastical Funeral Rites.
4. In the Diocese of Worcester, Ecclesiastical Funeral Rites, including the Funeral Mass, are permitted for a baptized non-Catholic who might reasonably be presumed to desire or prefer the Catholic rite. Such a decision would be appropriate when non-Catholics worship regularly in the Catholic Church more than any other and their own minister is unavailable. Permission of the Diocesan Bishop, or in his absence, the Auxiliary Bishop, is required. In their absence, the matter should be referred to the Tribunal.
5. To foster and respect family bonds, non-Catholic members of Catholic families may be interred in a Catholic cemetery. Clergy of other communions, vested if they desire, may conduct the cemetery rites according to their tradition, if the family so desires or if it was the expressed wish of the deceased.
6. The Church encourages the burial of Catholics in Catholic cemeteries (canon 1180.1). Burial in the blessed ground of a Catholic cemetery is a sign of baptismal commitment and gives witness, even in death, to faith in Christ's resurrection.
7. A child who dies before baptism, or a stillborn or miscarried child, may be given ecclesiastical funeral rites if the parents intended to have the child baptized. The remains of fetuses and stillborns should always receive reverent Christian burial if this is at all possible. These remains may be placed in specific individual graves or in a common burial area.
8. The Order for Christian Funerals provides a complete funeral liturgy for children who have died (OCF #234-342). The various texts for a baptized child or a child who died before baptism makes these rites fully adaptable to various situations, and offer consolation for those suffering the extraordinary grief which comes with the death of a child.
9. There is no objection to Catholics making prior arrangements to donate their bodies or parts of them, after certain death, to advance medical science. Upon eventual disposition of the body or its parts, there should be reasonable assurance that the remains will be disposed of in a proper, reverential manner through burial or cremation. The family of such a donor should be encouraged to celebrate a Funeral Liturgy as soon as possible after death. Whatever remains of the body after an organ transplant or medical research should be given appropriate burial. The Rite of Final Committal with final commendation (OCF 224-233) offers a model for concluding prayers for the donor and the donor's family (CCC 2300- 2301).

300. Involvement of the Entire Parish Community

Since the ministry of consolation belongs to the entire Christian community, the entire community is to be involved in caring for the dying, praying for the dead, and comforting those who mourn.

1. Regular catechesis is encouraged to help parishioners understand their role in ministering to those who have suffered the loss of a loved one.
2. Parish policies, procedures, and ministerial resources are to be developed in light of these guidelines and communicated clearly to parishioners so they can take full advantage of the services available to them at time of death.
3. Funeral Directors provide an invaluable service to families and to the Church. Often

the funeral director provides the first response to a family who has experienced the death of a loved one. It is important for parish staffs and local funeral directors to cultivate an attitude of mutual respect and effective collaboration. Annual meetings with Funeral Directors within a parish or cluster are encouraged. Funeral Directors are encouraged to include study of the *Order of Christian Funerals* as part of their regular in-service study, and are invited to call upon the services of the Office for Worship.

400. Ministries in the Rites of the Order for Christian Funerals

In keeping with the norms found in the Order for Christian Funerals, priests and deacons are to share the responsibility for planning the implementation of the Order with qualified lay ministers.

1. The rite, Gathering in the Presence of the Body (OCF 109-118), may be used if a priest, deacon, or parish minister is present at the time of death, or when the family first visits the body.
2. A pastoral visit with the family by a member of the pastoral staff is an expected part of the Church's ministry of consolation. Special attention should be directed toward the needs of children and young people. The ministry of a bereavement group or ministry of consolation is never to substitute for the pastoral care of the priest.
3. Part of the priest's ministry to the grieving family may include the offer to celebrate the sacrament of reconciliation. This may be appropriate when the family has not participated in worship for some time.
4. The *Order of Christian Funerals* calls for the full complement of liturgical ministries in the celebration of the various rituals of the funeral liturgy. "In liturgical celebrations each person, minister or layman, [sic] who has an office to perform, should do all of, but only, those parts which pertain to his office by the nature of the rite and the norms of the liturgy" (*Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy*, #28). "It is important to note that Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion should not be called upon to exercise their ministry when there are a sufficient number of ordinary ministers (bishops, priests, deacons) of the Eucharist available.(bishops, priests, deacons)" (Policy for Extraordinary Ministers of the Holy Communion, Diocese of Worcester, 2003)
5. The preparation of the liturgy can provide consolation for the mourners. However, the preparation of the liturgy should never become a burden for the family.
6. Clergy of other communions, vested if they desire, may be present in the sanctuary for the Funeral Liturgy.
7. The *Order of Christian Funerals* recommends that family members be involved in some of the liturgical roles, unless they prefer not to be involved (OCF #15). Nevertheless, they might designate the persons to place the pall or appropriate symbols on the casket at the reception at the doors of the church, as well as the persons to bring gifts of bread and wine to the altar (OCF #152). Great care should be given to the preparation of those who will be exercising liturgical roles at the Funeral Liturgy.
8. An instrumentalist, a cantor, and even a choir where possible should assist the full participation of the assembly in the songs, responses, and acclamations of the Funeral Rites (OCF #33).

500. Presiding at the Vigil

1. During the wake, the Vigil for the Deceased is the principal rite celebrated by the Church in the time following death and before the Funeral Liturgy. This Vigil should be celebrated at a convenient time. The practice of scheduling a specific hour is encouraged in order for more of the faithful to participate in this liturgy. The time for the Vigil may be published in the obituary notice. Devotions such as the rosary are permitted at other times during the wake.
2. For those unable to participate in the Funeral Mass or Rite of Committal, the Vigil for the Deceased provides an opportunity to take part in the Funeral Rite. This occasion also allows individuals to share reflections and stories of the deceased.
3. Parish policy may not exclude priests from presiding at the Vigil Service. When no priest or deacon is available, it is permissible for a trained lay minister to be designated by the pastor to preside at the Vigil for the Deceased, providing the person has been formed in an understanding of the *Order of Christian Funerals*, and is also skilled at leading public prayer. The Office for Worship is charged with providing training for these lay ministers.
4. When the Vigil for the Deceased is celebrated in a church, a priest or deacon is to be vested in an alb, stole and a cope if available.
5. If the church has appropriate space, it is permissible to hold the wake in the church. This possibility is to be considered in the course of building or renovation projects. When a wake takes place in the church, the Vigil for the Deceased with Reception at the Church (OCF #82) is to be celebrated.
6. The family and funeral director should be consulted relative to having the body of the deceased remain in the church between the Vigil Service and the Funeral Liturgy especially if this is to be overnight.
7. Particular groups may be invited to celebrate a prayer service for the deceased in addition to the Vigil for the Deceased. In the case of religious communities of men and women, the customs and rituals of the community may be integrated into the Vigil for Deceased or there may be distinct times of prayer within the wake. The Liturgy of the Hours, Office for the Dead, found in the Order of Christian Funerals, Part IV, provides a form of a Vigil for the Deceased. Morning prayer from the Office might also be celebrated on the day of committal, following an evening Funeral Mass.
8. The presence of a cantor or other music minister at the Vigil for the Deceased can be helpful in leading the people in prayer, particularly in the singing of psalms and responses of the liturgy.

600. Scheduling the Funeral Liturgies

1. Each parish should develop a clear policy on funeral schedules which is shared with parishioners and local funeral directors. While local policy should take into account the daily Mass of the parish, the availability of priests, the scheduling of liturgies and other parish events, sensitivity to the grieving family should be paramount in scheduling the Funeral Mass.
2. If the Funeral Mass is celebrated in the evening, a sufficient length of time should

separate it from the celebration of the Vigil for the Deceased. The schedule for the Rite of Committal, ordinarily the next day, should be announced and the faithful invited to reconvene at that time.

3. Funeral Directors are asked to respect the correct names of the various liturgical rites in written obituary notices. Proper terms such as “Vigil for the Deceased,” “Funeral Mass,” “Funeral Liturgy outside Mass,” or “Liturgy of the Word,” and “Rite of Committal” are encouraged.
4. Morning Prayer and Evening Prayer from the Office for the Dead (OCF, Part IV) may be scheduled during the time of the wake. The Office for the Dead may be celebrated in the funeral home, church, or oratory of a religious community, or in the family home.
5. Funeral Masses cannot be celebrated on solemnities of obligation, on Holy Thursday, Good Friday, or Holy Saturday according to Church law. At a Funeral Mass celebrated on Ash Wednesday, ashes are not distributed.
6. On days when the Funeral Mass may not be celebrated, the appropriate Rite is the Funeral Liturgy outside of Mass or Liturgy of the Word. A Mass may be offered on another day.
7. Parishes with many funerals may limit the number of Funeral Masses or Funerals outside Mass on any given day. It may not always be possible to have a Funeral Liturgy on a day or hour of one’s choice.
8. If a funeral cannot be scheduled on a particular day, it ordinarily should be celebrated on the next available day.
9. If two or more families or a religious community desire it, a Funeral Mass may be celebrated for more than one person.
10. The Funeral Mass may be celebrated at one of the regularly scheduled daily Masses in the parish. Particularly in instances where the deceased does not have a large family or circle of friends, the presence of the daily Mass community is extremely consoling to the mourners. A core group of lectors, eucharistic ministers, funeral choir, and servers may emerge from the daily Mass community.
11. When a Funeral Mass is to be celebrated as the daily Mass, every effort will be made to announce this to the daily assembly well in advance. If an announced Mass has been scheduled for a daily Mass, it is not possible to substitute a Funeral Mass without the consent of the person who has requested the announced Mass.

700. Presiding at the Funeral Liturgy

1. Only a bishop, priest or deacon is allowed to preach the homily at the funeral liturgy.
2. A eulogy is not allowed where the homily is prescribed (OCF #27), although examples from the person’s life may be used in the homily. The literary genre of eulogy is not a homiletic form. Rather, the homily is to “illumine the mystery of Christian death in the light of the Risen Christ.” (*Catechism of the Catholic Church* #1687) as proclaimed in the readings.
3. Excellence in preaching is of critical importance to the evangelizing task of the Church, especially at a moment when the faithful who live apart from the regular life of the Church may yearn for a message of faith and Christian hope.
4. In the Diocese of Worcester, one speaker chosen by the family may offer a brief (no

more than five minutes) remembrance of the deceased at the Funeral Liturgy before the final commendation. The remarks are to be simple, and a prepared text should be used.

Some priests have found it helpful to see the text beforehand. Within the context of a liturgy, the tone of these remarks should remain one of faith and hope.

5. Other occasions might offer opportunities for individuals to share remembrances of the deceased for example, at the Vigil for the Deceased.

800. The Funeral Mass

In the dioceses of the United States, the principal rituals in the Order of Christian Funerals are the Vigil for the Deceased, the Funeral Mass, and the Rite of Committal. The Funeral Mass is the central liturgy of the Christian funeral in the Diocese of Worcester.

1. The Eucharist is the heart of the Paschal reality of Christian death (*Catechism of the Catholic Church* #1689). In the celebration of the Eucharist, the Church most perfectly expresses her communion with those who have died. The celebration of the Eucharist at the funeral is an opportunity for the community of the faithful, and for the family, to “learn to live in communion with the one who has ‘fallen asleep in the Lord,’ by communicating in the Body of Christ of which he is a living member and, then, by praying for him and with him.”[sic] (*Catechism of the Catholic Church* #1689)
2. The Introductory Rites of the Funeral Mass presume a greeting of the mourners who accompany the body to the doors of the church. They are greeted by the priest and liturgical ministers, and other persons who have gathered at the church to await the procession from the funeral home or family home. The ritual plan for a parish must take into account the structure of the liturgy, the size of the assembly, the architecture of the church, and the vicissitudes of climate.
3. It is not ordinarily permitted to seat the family members who accompany the body before the body is presented for blessing. Parishes are called upon to develop, in collaboration with funeral directors, policies which result in seating on both sides of the church and towards the front of the assembly area.

900. The Funeral Liturgy outside Mass or Liturgy of the Word.

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.

1. The Funeral Liturgy outside Mass (OCF 177-203) 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 a funeral home, the home of the deceased or cemetery chapel (OCF 179). This determination is made by the parish priest in consultation with the family.
2. The family may choose to celebrate a funeral outside of Mass, and schedule a Mass at a later date, when it is determined in consultation with the parish priest that this form of the funeral liturgy is a more suitable form of celebration.

3. When the funeral liturgy is celebrated outside Mass, the community nonetheless gathers to hear the message of Easter hope proclaimed in the Liturgy of the Word and to commend the deceased to God. An invitation to a priest to “say some prayers” at a service does not constitute the liturgy of the Church.
4. The readings are chosen from those approved for Masses for the Dead.
5. Music is an essential element of this form of celebration, which includes the entrance or gathering song, the responsorial psalm, the gospel acclamation, and especially the song of farewell at the final commendation.
6. Although the *Order of Christian Funerals* includes the possibility of Holy Communion in this form of the liturgy, this practice is **not allowed** in the Diocese of Worcester.

1000. Music in the Funeral Mass

It is the pastoral responsibility of parishes to provide liturgical music at all Funeral Masses. The same liturgical norms applied to music at any Mass apply to the Funeral Mass.

1. Music selected for the Order of Christian Funerals should be appropriate for Christian prayer and conform to liturgical directives. The texts of the music should express the paschal mystery of Christ’s passion, death, and resurrection. This is especially important for the Song of Farewell. Popular non-religious songs are not to be used in the liturgy.
2. The selection of music for the funeral liturgy is often a sensitive issue for bereaved families, parish musicians, and pastoral staff. The choice of music for Christian funerals must be in accord with all the recommendations governing music in liturgy, especially those found in *Order of Christian Funerals*, *Liturgical Music Today*, and *Music in Catholic Worship*.
3. The request for “favorite songs” of the deceased often results in inappropriate performances of music incompatible with the sacred character of the liturgy. Popular songs, sentimental ethnic music, or songs from Broadway shows cannot be used in the funeral liturgy. There are three standards of judgement proposed in *Music in Catholic Worship*:
 - A. **The liturgical judgment:** Is the music’s text, form, placement and style congruent with the nature of the liturgy? (MCW 30-38)
 - B. **The musical judgment:** Is the music technically, aesthetically and expressively good irrespective of musical idiom or style? (MCW 26-29)
 - C. **The pastoral judgment:** Will it help this assembly to pray? (MCW 39-41)
 This process may not be as easy to apply as an absolute list of permitted or prohibited music, but it is more effective pastorally.
4. The principle of progressive solemnity, described in *Music in Catholic Worship*, applies to the rites found in *The Order of Christian Funerals*. A few things sung well, including the responsorial psalm, gospel acclamation, the three acclamations of the Eucharistic Prayer, the Lamb of God Litany, and the song of farewell have priority in funeral liturgies (*Liturgical Music Today* #33). Many of these may be drawn from the

repertoire of the Sunday assembly. They should not be sung by cantor, choir, or soloist alone. Rather, they belong to the assembly.

5. The responsorial form of psalm singing, in which the psalmist or choir sings the verses and the assembly responds with a brief antiphon, is well suited to the funeral liturgy. The practice of substituting metrical hymns based on psalm texts for the responsorial psalm is not allowed since this form affects and alters the ritual pattern of responsorial singing (*Liturgical Music Today* #40).
6. In the *Order of Christian Funerals*, as in all the reformed liturgical books, the cantor/leader of song has an important task. The task of the cantor is to animate and direct the singing of the assembly. With the exception of the responsorial psalm, which is done from the ambo, the cantor ordinarily leads the assembly from a lectern. The Office for Worship is charged with providing regular opportunities for cantor development and enrichment.
7. A choir has proven of great worth in many parishes. Members of a funeral choir are often recruited from parishioners who are retired, self-employed, or whose work gives them freedom of schedule.
7. Music is preeminent among the signs expressed by the participants in any liturgy. Therefore, recorded music is not to be used within the liturgy to replace the congregation, the choir, the organist, cantor, or other musicians. (*Liturgical Music Today* #60).
8. Some form of hymnal or worship program is called for at funerals. The program might be a computer-generated document with the words and music for the liturgy. Copyright licenses and permissions are necessary, and many parishes have found annual licenses to be both convenient and inexpensive. Some liturgical publishers have offered participation cards and booklets for the liturgy which have proven very useful. A separate sheet might be prepared for the participation of the faithful in the committal at the cemetery.

1100. The Rite of Committal

The Rite of Committal is celebrated at the place of burial or interment and never in the church.

1. The Rite of Committal, whether at an interment chapel, at a mausoleum or at a grave side, is a gathering of the faithful for prayer.
2. Military services and certain cultural or social rites are permissible at the cemetery. These other services should be arranged in advance with the local priest and coordinated in such a way that they do not disrupt or distract from the integrity of the liturgical committal service. Funeral Directors are called upon to assist in the coordination of these elements, and to safeguard the integrity of the Church's liturgy at the Rite of Committal.
9. If a lengthy time has passed since the celebration of the Funeral Mass, or if the funeral has been conducted overseas or in a distant state, the Rite of Committal with Final Commendation (OCF 224-233) is appropriate.
4. In those circumstances when immediate interment is not possible due to seasonal or

other extraordinary circumstances, the Rite of Committal may not take place in the parish church but rather should be scheduled when interment occurs.

5. It is a worthy custom that the Rite of Committal be celebrated at the grave side. However, mitigating circumstances such as, adverse weather conditions or safety considerations may necessitate the Rite of Committal being celebrated at another location in the cemetery.
6. The Order of Christian Funerals encourages the inclusion of music as part of the Rite of Committal when it is pastorally possible.

1200. Cremation

While the Church recommends that the pious custom of burying the bodies of the dead be observed, cremation is permitted as long as it has not been chosen for reasons contrary to Catholic teaching (Canon 1176.3, Catechism of the Catholic Church #2301).

1. It is preferred that the Funeral Mass or the Funeral Liturgy outside Mass be celebrated in the presence of the body of the deceased prior to its cremation.
10. The significance of having the body of the deceased present for the funeral liturgy is indicated throughout the Mass texts and ritual actions. Therefore, when arrangements involving cremation are being made, the parish priest is to recommend that:
 - a) following a wake, or a time of visitation, a Funeral Mass be celebrated in the presence of the body of the deceased person. Following the Funeral Mass, the body of the deceased may be cremated.
 - b) The Funeral Mass concludes with the final commendation in the church.
 - c) At an appropriate time, usually some days later, the family gathers at the cemetery for the burial of the cremated remains. The Rite of Committal takes place at this time with the inclusion of the proper prayers for the committal of ashes (OCF 406.3).
3. If cremation has already taken place before the Funeral Mass, the parish priest may permit the celebration of the Funeral Mass in the presence of the cremated remains of the deceased person. Burial of the cremated remains should take place following the Funeral Mass.
4. Special circumstances, such as health concerns or out-of-state or overseas transport, may occur which prompt families to arrange for cremation before making funeral arrangements. If a cremation has taken place, the parish priest is to recommend:
 - a) gathering with family and friends for prayer a Liturgy and remembrance of the deceased;
 - b) celebration of a Funeral Mass;
 - c) gathering with family and friends for the interment of cremated remains at the cemetery in the Rite of Committal.
5. Cremated remains should be treated with the same respect given to the remains of a human body, and should be buried or entombed. “Burial of the body both imitates the manner of Jesus’ own burial and stands as a powerful witness to the resurrection” (Appendix II, OCF). The scattering of cremated remains on the sea or on the ground or keeping them in the home is not the reverent final disposition that the Church requires.
6. If the Funeral Liturgy in the presence of Cremated Remains is to take place Appendix II of the Order of Christian Funerals is to be consulted and utilized. It contains the appropriate guidelines and texts for The Funeral Liturgy.

1300. The Bishop in the Order of Christian Funerals

1. It is fitting when a bishop is present at a Funeral Mass that he be the Principal Celebrant. If he is not the Principal Celebrant at a Funeral Mass, in the Diocese of Worcester he usually leads the Rite of Commendation (*Ceremonial of Bishops*, #175).

1400. Customary Offerings

1. In accordance with ordinary practice, offerings may be accepted by the parish on the occasion of a funeral. The offerings which are given are to be placed in the parish account.
2. The offering on the occasion of a funeral includes the stipend for the priest and professional fees for an organist, cantor, and other support services. Fees for musicians are established by the Diocese of Worcester.
3. Each parish should have a plan for assisting families with financial hardship. Priests and deacons whose responsibilities include the spiritual care of patients or residents at various institutions and hospitals may want to initiate action for charity burials when the deceased has no relative to do this. Funeral Directors should be informed that no offering is expected from the poor or those unable to afford an offering.

1500. Ministry of Consolation

The establishment of a bereavement ministry is encouraged for every parish of the diocese.

11. A bereavement ministry is a part of the ministry of the Church. “Those who are baptized into Christ and nourished at the same table of the Lord are to be responsible for each other” (OCF #8). This ministry of mutual charity, caring for others in sickness, death, and mourning, is a call to every believer - priest, deacon, religious, layperson. The responsibility of the bereavement ministry rests with the community, which is to be instructed in this care by the parish priests and other ministers.
2. The ministry of bereavement extends beyond the time of the funeral to include the days and weeks after Christian burial.

1600. Concelebration at the Funeral Mass

Frequently, the decision is made that a Funeral Mass be concelebrated by several priests. Priests who are invited to concelebrate should be aware of the prescriptions of Canon 905: “For a just cause, a priest is permitted to celebrate Mass twice on any given day.” The norms set forth in the General Instruction on the Roman Missal #153-208 are to be followed carefully, as well as the USCCB document “Guidelines for the Concelebration of the Eucharist” (1987).

1. Concelebration is a sign and a strengthening of the fraternal bond of priests and of the Funeral Policy– Diocese of Worcester

whole community, and is “the preeminent manifestation of the Church in the unity of sacrifice and priesthood and in the single giving of thanks around the one altar.” (*In Celebrationae Missae*, August 1973, #1).

2. Families planning to invite priests to concelebrate at the funeral liturgy, or to fulfill other roles in the course of the funeral rites are encouraged to communicate these plans to the parish priest. As a courtesy to liturgical planners, priests who expect to participate in this way should contact the parish or religious community in advance.
3. Concelebrants should be seated together as a group. They should not be intermingled with the assembly, nor should anyone be seated between the concelebrants and the altar. Concelebrants must not be placed in such a way as to form a barrier between the altar and the Faithful, who kneel during the Eucharistic Prayer. Their position should not obscure the fact that only one bishop or presbyter presides over the entire action. Care is to be taken that the concelebrants neither usurp the place, nor limit the functions of other liturgical ministers.
12. The chasubles worn by all the concelebrants should be simpler in their decoration than that of the principal celebrant. If sufficient chasubles are not available, it may be preferable for all the concelebrants to vest in albs and stoles of the same liturgical color, without prejudice to the custom of having designated concelebrants.

This policy is in effect for all places of worship in the Diocese of Worcester.

The effective date of this revised instruction is February 29, 2004

Anything to the contrary notwithstanding.

+Daniel P. Reilly

Bishop of Worcester

Thomas J. Sullivan

Chancellor

Date: January 28, 2004

Feast of St. Thomas Aquinas