

THE ORDER OF CHRISTIAN FUNERALS: CELEBRATING THE FUNERAL RITES



*"In my Father's house there are many
dwelling places*

*If there were not, would I have told you that
I am going to prepare a place for you?
And if I go and prepare a place for you,
I will come back again and take you to myself,
so that where I am you also may be. "*
(John 14:2-3)



A CATHOLIC UNDERSTANDING OF FUNERALS

CHRISTIAN HOPE IN THE FACE OF THE MYSTERY OF DEATH



In our inspired stories of faith, the Sacred Scriptures talk about death in several ways: as a result of sin and God's people not living their covenant with God; as part of our inherited, limited human nature; or as a natural end to human life. There is a mystery to death that is not fully explained in those Scriptures, but a mystery which invites people of faith to put our full trust in God. As the Catholic Church's *Order of Christian Funerals* (the ritual book used at all funerals) describes it: *"In the face of death, the Church confidently proclaims that God has created each person for eternal life...."* (#1, all references are from the *Order of Christian Funerals*).

That confidence is rooted in the central reality of our Christian faith—the saving mystery of Christ's death and resurrection. The *Order of Funerals* goes on to say, *"The mystery of the Lord's death and resurrection gives power to all of the Church's activity."* (#2) Because of our confident faith in who Jesus is and what He experienced, we have the hope of one day sharing fully in that resurrection, even as we know one day we will all face death. Our whole sacramental life as a Church is framed by this faith and leads us to never see death as the final or ultimate word. *"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 its confident belief that death is not the end nor does it break the bonds forged in life."* (#4)

Because of Jesus' death, the care and respect shown His body when taken from the cross, and the reality of His resurrection, the Church has always paid special attention to the time of death and to commending the dead to God. Our actions at such a time give expression to our Christian faith. We give respect to the body of the deceased and surround the time of death with various rituals which invite people to put their trust in God. We encourage the hope that we will one day share fully in Christ's resurrection, even as we pray for a merciful judgment for the dead. We believe that through God there is still a connection to and communion with those who have died and are in God's care.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

1. WHY DO WE PRAY FOR THE DEAD?

We pray for the dead because we have solidarity with all who have lived and died. We pray for the dead because it makes us more deeply human to do so. We pray for the dead because we do not know what happens at death, and so we commend them to God's mercy and justice. When we die we are far from perfect. To come to complete communion with God requires, through God's grace, some type of purification, or further transformation. The Catholic Church often talks about this under the idea of "purgatory." With that concept came the practice of praying that the deceased person's "time in" purgatory be as short as possible so that they might enjoy the blessed gift of heaven. However, in using such language we need to recognize the limitations of that language. When we die we go to God, and so all talk of time or space is metaphorical, not literal. We do not pray for the deceased simply to "get them out of purgatory." We pray for the deceased because of our common bonds of humanity and the connections forged in our lives demand it. We would be less than fully human if we failed to remember the dead.

2. WHAT ARE HELPFUL WAYS TO REMEMBER THE DEAD?

The Christian community's remembrance of the dead has led to various practices: a marking of the death by the first month anniversary and then the year anniversary; in some cultures a ritual of clothing; Mass intentions for the person; cemetery visits; holy cards with the person's likeness and a prayer on it prayed often; memorials made in honor of the deceased, and much more. Remembrance of the dead, in essence, is a remembrance of a piece of our own selves. Each person who dies, whether we know them or not, but especially those we have known and loved, is connected to us in some way. Our remembrance is a form of solidarity with them, witnessing to our faith that death does not have the final word. God does.

We have a "Book of Life" in which we invite anyone to record the name of someone who has died, whether buried from our parish or not. That Book is placed by the baptismal font during the month of November to remind all of us to pray for the people named in it. In addition, we have a cross for each of the people whose funeral we celebrated at our parish during the previous twelve months.

CATHOLIC FUNERAL RITES



Christian faith in the saving mystery of Jesus' death and resurrection has led the Church to structure its funeral rites in a specific way. In the *Order of Christian Funerals* we find mention of three "expected" stations, or times, for prayer in connection with the deceased person, their family and friends, and the whole faith community: 1) the Vigil Service for the Deceased; 2) the Funeral Liturgy (most often the Mass); and 3) the Rite of Committal. There is also an additional moment important for family and close friends: the Gathering in the Presence of the Body. This takes place before the body is

sent to the funeral home, or if visitation includes the presence of the body, during the family hour prior to public visitation. The Church asks that Catholics be aware of these ritual times as we plan for the funerals of our loved ones or our own, always recognizing that specific circumstances may lead to various adaptations.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

3. WHO CAN BE BURIED FROM A CATHOLIC PARISH?

All Catholics are entitled to Christian burial from a Catholic parish. This includes those active in the practice of their faith, those who have been less active and separated from the Church through illness, distance or special circumstances, and those who have been inactive in the practice of their faith, even if for many years. Catechumens who are in the process of the Rite of Christian Initiation are entitled to Christian burial, as are infants and children who have not yet been baptized if the parents intended for the child to be baptized. In addition, non-Catholic members of a parishioner's family may be buried from the Church unless it was contrary to their wishes. In other words, the Church desires that the *Order of Christian Funerals* be available to all who share in the Church's faith and hope. It is not dependent on being a contributing parish member or paying a certain fee. In the very rare case where a grave public scandal may be caused, the priest or pastoral minister will discuss the situation with the family, always trying to find a way to allow for a Christian burial.

4. WHERE CAN A FUNERAL LITURGY TAKE PLACE?

Ordinarily the Funeral Liturgy takes place in the parish church of the deceased or in the parish of a close

family member. Any parish may accept a funeral, even if the deceased person was a member of another parish or was not a member of any parish. Funeral Liturgies usually do not take place in a park or at another non-Church setting, because for Christians the funeral is part of one's connection to a community of faith. If pastoral circumstances make it appropriate to celebrate the Funeral Liturgy at a place other than a church (for example, the funeral home), it will then take the form of a Funeral Liturgy outside of Mass.

5. ON WHAT DAYS AND TIMES MAY A FUNERAL LITURGY BE SCHEDULED?

A Funeral Liturgy outside of Mass without the distribution of communion may take place on any day. However, no Funeral Mass is permitted on a Holy Day of Obligation, Holy Thursday, Good Friday, Holy Saturday, Easter and the Sundays of the Advent, Lent and Easter seasons. Given the typical parish schedule for Sundays, most parishes (including St. Regis) never schedule a Funeral Mass on any Sunday of the year.

The time for a funeral will depend on both the family situation and events and liturgies at the parish. Most often funerals are scheduled for mornings rather than afternoons or evenings, but the final determination needs to be made in consultation with the parish and family. Families need to keep in mind that St. Regis will try to accommodate the specific day and time requested but cannot always guarantee it. Every effort will be made to obtain a priest if the parish priest is not available on a given day. When no priest is available, the Funeral Liturgy outside of Mass will be led by a deacon or one of the parish's other pastoral ministers.

6. What is the difference between a Funeral Mass and a Memorial Mass?

If neither the body nor the cremains will be present the *Order of Christian Funerals* is not used. Instead a Memorial Mass or Memorial Prayer Service is prayed. This is sometimes necessary and appropriate, especially when a Funeral Liturgy has taken place in another location but a large number of family and friends could not be present. However, the church strongly discourages substituting a Memorial Mass for the full Funeral Liturgy. It is not an acceptable alternative to a Funeral Liturgy just because it will be more convenient for family and friends to schedule a Memorial Mass for a later date. Moreover, times have to remain open for potential funerals, and so a separate Memorial Mass time cannot be guaranteed until a few days prior in any case. A more appropriate use of a Memorial Mass is to gather family and friends on some significant day in remembrance of the deceased (one month after death, anniversary of death or birth, etc.) and connect the intention of the deceased to the Mass already scheduled for that day.

7. IS SUICIDE CONSIDERED TO BE A REASON TO DENY CHRISTIAN FUNERAL AND BURIAL?

No. Suicide does not stop a person from being buried through the Church. We have come a long way in understanding the mental anguish and pain of those who tragically take their own lives. The Church does not treat such funerals any differently than other deaths. We pray for the deceased, commend them to the Lord, and surround them with all the rites of a Christian funeral, including burial in consecrated ground.

8. IS CREMATION ALLOWED IN THE CATHOLIC CHURCH?

Yes. Many years ago there was a stigma attached to cremation because some who promoted the practice did so as a way to deny the Christian doctrine of the resurrection of the body. That stigma is gone. Whether the body decays naturally in the earth or is cremated does not make a difference in a Catholic understanding of funerals. The *Order of Christian Funerals* makes it clear, however, that usually crema-

tion does not take place until **after** the Funeral Liturgy. In other words, the body is present for the funeral and then is sent to be cremated. Also, once cremated, the Church expects Christians to treat the cremated remains as they would the body in a casket. That means placing the remains in a grave, mausoleum, columbarium, or consecrated place using the Rite of Committal from the *Order of Christian Funerals* when it occurs. The Church strongly discourages any separating out of ashes into various portions, or letting an urn with cremains stay in the home, or having ashes sprinkled over water or some other area. At times it is not possible for the body to be present, or a family has the body cremated before the time of the funeral. The Church's Funeral Liturgy allows for this and has adapted prayers for such situations.

9. IS THERE ANY FEE REQUIRED BY THE CHURCH FOR A FUNERAL LITURGY?

No fee is required for a Funeral Liturgy. The funeral director should not include any St. Regis-related fees when talking of funeral costs. It is customary to offer a parish a donation at the time of a funeral, and people have been very generous in such donations. Such donations are always appreciated but never required, nor do they affect any decisions about the funeral. The donation goes to the parish not the priest. Some families may also choose to offer an honorarium to the music minister for the Funeral Mass. Again, this is gratefully accepted, but never required.

GATHERING IN THE PRESENCE OF THE BODY



For many families one of the key times for prayer is when they gather together shortly after the death of a person and the body is present. This might take place at the house, hospital or nursing care facility where the death has occurred; or, it might take place at the funeral home once the body has been prepared and is ready for visitation and viewing. This is not a time for lengthy prayer, but it is time to remember the person, to commend him or her into God's care, and to connect all present to the hope of sharing not just in a death like Christ, but in a resurrection like His. The *Order of Christian Funerals* has a rite for Gathering in the Presence of the Body, led by the priest or other pastoral minister, which includes a greeting, sprinkling of the body with holy water, a psalm, the Lord's Prayer, a Concluding Prayer, and a Blessing. This time of prayer does not have to be led by the Church's minister; often it will just be the family present with someone leading a simple prayer, perhaps asking people to join hands. It would also be appropriate to pray the Lord's Prayer, the Hail Mary, and the Glory Be. Or, if the family prays the Rosary, to say one decade of the Rosary together, focused on either the mystery of Jesus' crucifixion and death and/or the mystery of His Resurrection.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

10. WHY DOES THE CHURCH PUT SUCH EMPHASIS ON THE PRESENCE OF THE DECEASED PERSON'S BODY AT THE TIME OF A FUNERAL LITURGY?

The Church has a decided preference for the deceased person's body to be present for the Funeral Lit-

urgy, if at all possible. The presence of the body allows the deepest connection to the person who has died, a visual symbol of all that a person has lived and experienced. The Church's Funeral Liturgy is structured with that reality in mind: gathering in the presence of the body, the final blessing of the body before the casket is closed, the clothing of the casket with the white cloth which symbolizes Baptism, the incensing of the body before sending it to its final committal. Not every situation would fit this, but in general, the ability of people to remember, to express sorrow, and to grieve well is helped when the body is present throughout the funeral rites.

11. IS THERE STILL SOMETHING CALLED *LAST RITES*? WILL THE PRIEST ANOINT THE BODY OF THE DECEASED PERSON?

When someone dies the priest or pastoral minister, when available and the situation allows, will want to come to where the deceased person is and offer prayers and a blessing. Often this will be the prayers for Gathering in the Presence of the Body or some variation of them. However, a deceased person is not anointed with the oil of the Sacrament of Anointing. When the situation demands it, a person may be anointed when they are unconscious or near death, but not after death. Anointing ordinarily takes place when the person is conscious and can actively participate in the prayer of anointing. That means that the parish should be contacted as reasonably soon as possible once a situation of serious illness is known. The practice of waiting until near death is to be discouraged. Nor does anointing have to be only one time. A person might be anointed several times during the course of their illness, depending on progressive developments. There is in that sense no "last rites." The Church desires to accompany the ill person throughout their illness with the sacraments: Eucharist (Communion to the sick), Reconciliation, and Anointing of the Sick. There is a tradition in the Catholic Church of having Holy Communion, when possible, be the final sacrament, which is called at that time *Viaticum*, or "accompanying you along the way."

12. WHEN, HOW, AND WHOM DO YOU CONTACT WHEN SOMEONE HAS DIED?

If a person dies unexpectedly at home, the local public safety department must be called first. If a person is under hospice care, the hospice nurse should be called first and they will then help you with the subsequent procedures. Funeral directors specialize in serving the needs of families at the time of death and will also assist in the notification of the pertinent people or agencies. The local parish may be called by the family or the funeral director. In either case, before everything is finalized with the funeral director the parish needs to confirm the date and time of the funeral, whether the body will lie in-state before the funeral service and other details.

The bereavement ministry might vary slightly at each parish. Either through an appointment with the priest or pastoral minister at the parish, or a meeting at the funeral home, the parish will assist the family in planning the funeral, the Vigil service and Committal, inviting family participation where possible.

THE VIGIL FOR THE DECEASED



"The Vigil for the deceased is the principal rite celebrated by the Christian community in the time following death and before the Funeral Liturgy, or if there is no Funeral Liturgy, before the Rite of Committal." (54)

There is great flexibility in the structure of the Vigil Service, but it always includes some form of a Liturgy of the Word. It may take place in a home, a funeral parlor or chapel, or in the church. The Vigil's purpose is described thus: *"In this time of loss the family and community turn to God's Word as the source of faith and hope, as light and life in the face of darkness and death. Consoled by the redeeming Word of God and by the abiding presence of Christ and His Spirit, the assembly at the Vigil calls upon the Father of mercy to receive the deceased into the kingdom of light and peace."* (#56)

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

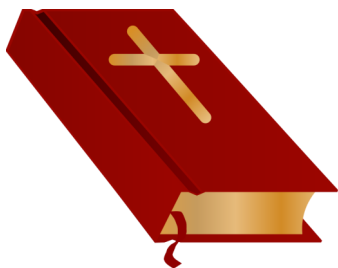
13. IS THE VIGIL THE TIME FOR EULOGIES? WHAT CAN BE DONE AT VIGIL SERVICES WHICH CANNOT BE DONE DURING THE FUNERAL LITURGY ITSELF? NON-SCRIPTURE READINGS? NON-RELIGIOUS MUSIC?

As mentioned, there is great flexibility in the structure of Vigil service. The core of such a service will usually be some sort of Liturgy of the Word (Scripture, brief reflection, intercessions, concluding prayer and blessing), but other elements can be added to the core. This makes the Vigil service the preferred time for any eulogies, poems, other non-Scripture readings, favorite songs, and other personal touches which may not be able to be incorporated into the Funeral Liturgy itself. As long as the focus stays on the Christian meaning of death and resurrection, the Vigil for the Deceased is able to adapt to almost anything. That is why it is important to discuss the details with the priest or pastoral minister of the parish so that everything can be accommodated in an appropriate manner.

14. ISN'T THE ROSARY THE TRADITIONAL FORM FOR THE VIGIL? CAN A ROSARY BE PRAYED?

The Rosary is not an official part of the *Order of Christian Funerals*, and ordinarily would not be done in the place of the Vigil service. For families where the Rosary is a cherished prayer form and is prayed by them, it would make a wonderful prayer together as family before the open public visitation begins. Alternatively, some parishes have guilds or groups who will lead a Rosary at the funeral home. This does not take the place of the Vigil for the deceased, but may be done in addition to the Vigil. In some situations a portion of the Rosary or a form of the Rosary can be adapted into the Vigil service's Liturgy of the Word. All this can be discussed with the priest or pastoral minister.

THE FUNERAL LITURGY



The Funeral Liturgy is the central liturgical celebration of the Christian community for the deceased. 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, to commend the deceased to God's tender mercy and compassion, and to seek strength in the proclamation of the paschal mystery." (#128-129)

The funeral liturgy for Catholics will ordinarily take the form of the Funeral Mass. This is especially true when the deceased person was actively connected to the Church's life and practice, but is so even for those less active. The family of the deceased, even if many of them are not Catholic or active in the Church, should be encouraged to consider a Funeral Mass for the deceased. In certain circumstances however, it is necessary or is more pastorally appropriate to celebrate the Funeral Liturgy outside Mass; for example, there are a few days on which a Funeral Mass is never allowed (see question #6); at times a priest is unavailable; or the family and pastor judge it to be more suitable in a specific case.

The Funeral Liturgy includes a reception at the church for the body (or ashes), to symbolize the community

of faith's solidarity with both the deceased person and the family and friends who have experienced the loss. We never walk alone when we walk in faith. Symbols which represent our new life in Baptism and the hope of one day sharing fully in the resurrection to eternal life are used or are placed nearby: sprinkling with water from the baptismal font, the Paschal (Easter) Candle, the white cloth (pall) to cover the casket, a cross or Bible. The Liturgy of the Word follows and is essential to any Funeral Liturgy, using readings from Scripture which "proclaim the paschal mystery, teach remembrance of the dead, convey the hope of being gathered together again in God's kingdom, and encourage the witness of Christian life." (#137)

At Mass the Funeral Liturgy continues with the Liturgy of the Eucharist: *"The community with the priest offers to the Father the sacrifice of the New Covenant and shares in the one bread and one cup. In partaking of the body of Christ, all are given a foretaste of eternal life in Christ and are united with Christ, with each other, and with all the faithful, living and dead."* (#143) A Final Commendation and Farewell concludes the liturgy or transitions the people to a procession to the place of committal. Through the use of incense (and holy water) the body (or ashes) is prepared to be sent for its final committal. The community "calls upon God's mercy, commends the deceased into God's hands, and affirms its belief that those who have died in Christ will share in Christ's victory over death." (#147)

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

15. WHAT PARTS OF THE FUNERAL LITURGY SHOULD THE FAMILY BE PREPARED TO HELP PLAN AND PARTICIPATE IN? WHO MAY READ AND PARTICIPATE IN THE MINISTRIES AT A FUNERAL MASS? WHAT IF SOMEONE IS NOT CATHOLIC?

As mentioned in question #12, one of the pastoral leaders of the parish will meet with the family to help prepare for the Funeral Liturgy. Options for the readings will be discussed (usually one reading from the Old Testament, one from the New Testament and a Gospel reading), and a decision will be made as to who will be reading. The *Order of Christian Funerals* has a variety of selections for each of the readings which open up the theme of death, hope in the face of death, and sharing in Christ's victory over death. However, any Scripture reading important to the person or family may be used, following the same pattern as above. Typically there is a separate reader for the Old Testament and New Testament readings. The family members planning the Funeral Liturgy may also create Prayers of the Faithful (intercessions) and choose a reader for these prayers. Examples are provided during the planning process.

Options for hymns are discussed as well. When possible, music is to be selected from the parish hymnal so that all might easily participate at the time of the Funeral Liturgy. Alternatively, a special funeral worship aid may be created by the family. The funeral home may assist with this.

Family and friends are also able to participate in the liturgy by helping to place the funeral pall on the casket, bringing up the gifts of bread and wine, serving as extraordinary ministers at Communion, serving as altar servers, and serving as pall bearers. Ministers of Communion must be active Catholics. Where possible, readers should be Catholic as well—family members or friends who are lectors at their own Catholic parish are ideal for this role—but, if pastorally appropriate, other family members or friends who are Christian may read. Copies of the Scripture should be given ahead of time to any who will be reading so they have a chance to prepare before the Funeral Liturgy. At St. Regis we have a funeral ministry team on hand to assist at the time of the funeral. If the family prefers, lectors from that team may read the readings chosen by the family, and Communion ministers from the team will help with Communion.

16. CAN READINGS OTHER THAN FROM SCRIPTURE BE USED? MAY EULOGIES BE GIVEN AT THE FUNERAL LITURGY? MAY A FAVORITE SONG, WHICH IS NOT A CHURCH HYMN BE INCORPORATED INTO THE FUNERAL LITURGY?

The Funeral Liturgy, whether a Mass or outside of a Mass, is centered on the Christian meaning of death and resurrection. No readings other than Scripture are used at the Funeral Liturgy. All songs are to reflect the Christian understanding of death and resurrection. Technically a eulogy is not permitted at the actual Funeral Liturgy itself, but someone may share some words about the person on behalf of the family. At St. Regis, any such personal reflections take place a few minutes before the start of the opening hymn. This is not a time of open-ended reflections, and so it is best if one or at most two do the sharing of remarks they have prepared ahead of time. As mentioned in question #13, the Vigil Service has much more flexibility and is usually the best time for eulogies, more personal readings, and songs. Alternatively, the Committal Rite may also incorporate such elements.

17. IS THERE A PROCESSION FROM THE FUNERAL HOME TO THE CHURCH? DOES THE BODY LIE “IN-STATE” ON THE DAY OF THE FUNERAL AT THE CHURCH?

Processions to and from the church are becoming much less common but can be arranged with the funeral director. Many families prefer to have a time for the body to lie “in-state” in the church (usually one half hour before the Funeral Liturgy). In that case, family and friends go directly to the church rather than in procession from the funeral home.

18. WHEN IS THE CASKET KEPT OPENED OR CLOSED?

An open casket is not required, but in most cases an open casket at the time of visitation seems to help the grief process for many people. In that sense it can be encouraged where possible. It also allows for the blessing of the body and the sprinkling with holy water to have a more concrete focus. In specific situations, it makes sense to have a closed casket. The decision for an opened or closed casket is ultimately the family’s choice.

19. MAY WE INVITE ANOTHER PRIEST TO LEAD THE CELEBRATION? OUR OWN MUSICIANS?

If a family has a relationship with a priest who is willing to lead the Vigil service, Funeral Liturgy, or Rite of Committal, they are welcome to invite him and have him call the parish and talk with the pastor. Ordinarily the parish priest will join that priest in leading the Funeral Liturgy. Because a Funeral Mass has many musical elements that need to be coordinated, the parish’s music minister will coordinate the music and be present for the Funeral Liturgy, working with any other musicians invited by the family.

20. WHEN AND HOW CAN THE FLAG OR INSIGNIA FROM ASSOCIATIONS BE USED AT A FUNERAL LITURGY?

Many deceased have served in an honored way for the armed services and/or other associations who have their own insignia or rituals at the time of a funeral. The nation’s flag or other insignia may cover the casket in procession to and from the church, as well as at the Rite of Committal. All such insignia are removed prior to the Funeral Liturgy so that the Church’s own symbols of faith may be used. An honor guard may be present outside the church at the end of the Funeral Liturgy or at the Rite of Committal, along with a chaplain, and the proper rituals and prayers will be incorporated into that time; however, the Church’s prayer always begins and ends any such times.

21. WHAT IS THE BOOK OF LIFE?

During the month of November we invite families to write the name of deceased family members and friends in our “Book of Life.” The book is placed near the baptismal font during the month of November as a reminder to the parish to pray for all who have died.

THE RITE OF COMMITTAL



The Rite of Committal is “the final act of the community of faith in caring for the body of its deceased member. It may be celebrated at the grave, tomb or crematorium and may be used for burial at sea. Whenever possible, the Rite of Committal is to be celebrated at the site of the committal, that is, beside the open grave or place of internment, rather than at a cemetery chapel.” (#204)

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

22. IS THERE A PROCESSION FROM THE CHURCH TO THE CEMETERY? DOES SUCH A COMMITTAL SERVICE HAVE TO TAKE PLACE IMMEDIATELY AFTER THE FUNERAL LITURGY?

A procession can take place from the church to the cemetery or place of committal. More and more people are choosing to forego the procession and simply meet at the designated place following the Liturgy, in order to lessen the possibility of accidents. If a body is to be cremated or sent elsewhere for final repose, the Rite of Committal can take place whenever the family is ready to make a final disposition of the body or ashes.

23. IS IT ACCEPTABLE TO HAVE FINAL PRAYERS NOT AT THE GRAVESIDE OR ENTOMBMENT SETTING BUT IN A CEMETERY CHAPEL?

It has become common to meet at the cemetery chapel for the Rite of Committal. At times, due to weather, this makes sense, but the Church’s *Order of Christian Funerals* strongly encourages, when possible, that the Rite of Committal take place at the actual place for the committal—graveside, mausoleum niche, or consecrated place.

24. DOES THE PARISH PROVIDE A FUNERAL LUNCH AFTER THE FUNERAL AND/OR COMMITTAL SERVICE?

Due to space limitations, we do not have an active funeral lunch ministry. One of our long-term goals is to create a social hall attached to the church so that a full funeral ministry will be possible.

CONCLUSION

Each of us will grieve in our own way the loss of someone we know and love. The Catholic approach to the reality of death and mourning tries to surround whatever else we are doing at the time of someone’s death with structured moments of prayer, allowing the faith of the community, its rituals and support to help us during those early moments of grief. The Catholic community’s practice has a great deal of wisdom behind it. There is a profound respect for the person who has died, for the body which is a visible symbol of all that the person has experienced, and for the powerful reality of grief and its effect on us. The Church’s funeral rites connect us through words, symbols and actions to the faith community’s unshakeable trust that God is a God of life; and that death, even when it is unexpected and unwanted, never has the final say; our loving God does.

We invite you to use this booklet in thinking through how you might structure a funeral for yourself or a loved one. Please do not hesitate to call us to clarify any issue or question.

*“May the angels lead you into paradise;
may the martyrs come to welcome you
and take you to the holy city, the new
and eternal Jerusalem.”*



(Hymn of Farewell from the Order of Christian Funerals)

These guidelines (revised August 2016) are prepared for those planning funerals at
St. Regis Parish

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