

Diocese of Greensburg

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[Slides available at www.paulturner.org]

The Order of Christian Funerals

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The deceased

- Baptized members of the community
- Catechumens
- A child who dies before an intended baptism (CCL 1183)
- Baptized member of another Church, at discretion of the Ordinary (OCF 18)

Processions

- Tradition of 2 processions joining 3 stages (home, church, grave)
- The liturgy mirrors the journey of human life
- Preference for pallbearers to carry the coffin

Vigil

- Offering reconciliation (OCF 13, 53)
- A priest or deacon at church vests in alb and stole (66)
- Music is integral (68)
- Options for structure of this service
 - liturgy of the word
 - part of the office for the dead (54)
 - the rosary is not explicitly mentioned

Vigil

- Options for location
 - Home
 - Funeral home
 - Another suitable place
 - Church, which would include reception of the body (OCF 55)

Structure and content of Vigil

- Introductory rites (OCF 58)
 - Gathering, greeting, song, prayer (69-72)
 - Optional reception at door of church with procession (82-88)
- Liturgy of the Word (73-77; 89-93)
 - The high point and central focus of the vigil
 - Reading, psalm, gospel (59)
 - Homily (61)

Structure and content of Vigil

- Intercession (78-80; 94-96)
 - Litany
 - Lord's Prayer
 - Concluding prayer
 - “a member of the family or a friend of the deceased may speak in remembrance of the deceased” (62; see 80)
- Concluding rite – blessing, song, silence (63; 81; 97)

Related Rites and Prayers

- Prayers after Death (OCF 101-108)
 - Invitation, reading, Lord's Prayer, prayer, blessing
- Gathering in Presence of the Body (109-118)
 - Sign of the cross, scripture verse, sprinkling, psalm, Lord's Prayer, concluding prayer, blessing
- Transfer of the Body to the Church or to the Place of Committal (119-127)
 - Invitation, scripture verse, litany, Lord's Prayer, concluding prayer, invitation, procession

Funeral Liturgy

- Two forms – Mass and outside Mass
 - Ordinarily, celebrate Mass
 - Possibility of celebrating Mass after committal (see OCFa 422-425 for cremation)
 - Reasons for funeral outside Mass (OCF 178)
 - When funeral Mass is not permitted, solemnities of obligation, Holy Thursday and the Easter Triduum, Sundays of Advent, Lent, and Easter (cf. OE 6, GIRM 380)

Funeral Liturgy

- When it is not possible to celebrate Mass before the committal; e.g., if a priest is not available
- When pastoral reasons suggest that this is a more suitable form of celebration
- “Pastoral reasons may on occasion require that a funeral be celebrated in the church without a Mass (which in all cases must, if possible, be celebrated on another day within a reasonable time); in that case a liturgy of the word is prescribed absolutely.” (OE 6)

Symbols (OCF 38)

- Flowers can enhance the setting
 - but not to be placed on the altar (CB 824)
- Other symbols should not be on or near coffin
- In the United States, white, violet or black vestments may be worn at funeral rites and other offices and masses for the dead (OCF 39)

Funeral Liturgy

- Entrance rites (at door)
 - Removal of flags from the coffin (132)
 - [Sign of the cross], Greeting (159)
 - Sprinkling with holy water (160)
 - Placing pall (161) (unless already there)
 - Procession (162), optional incense (163)
 - Optional placing of Christian symbols (163)
 - Opening prayer (164, 398)

Symbols (OCF 38)

- Placing of Christian Symbols (400)
 - Book of the Gospels or Bible: Christians live by the word, which leads to eternal life
 - Cross: Reminder of baptism and promise of resurrection
 - Cross for a child who died before baptism

Sample collect

O God, almighty Father,
our faith professes that your Son died and rose again;
mercifully grant, that through this mystery
your servant N., who has fallen asleep in Christ,
may rejoice to rise again through him.
Who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy
Spirit,
one God, for ever and ever.

Sample Prayer over the Offerings

As we humbly present to you these sacrificial offerings, O Lord, for the salvation of your servant N., we beseech your mercy, that he (she), who did not doubt your Son to be a loving Savior, may find in him a merciful Judge. Who lives and reigns for ever and ever.

Sample Prayer over the Offerings

Be near, O Lord, we pray, to your servant N.,
on whose funeral day
we offer you this sacrifice of conciliation,
so that, should any stain of sin have clung to him (her)
or any human fault have affected him (her),
it may, by your loving gift, be forgiven and wiped away.
Through Christ our Lord.

Sample Prayer over the Offerings

Almighty and merciful God,
by means of these sacrificial offerings,
wash away, we pray, in the Blood of Christ,
the sins of your departed servant N.,
and purify unceasingly by your merciful forgiveness
those you once cleansed in the waters of Baptism.
Through Christ our Lord.

Liturgy of the Word

- “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 a eulogy.” It is based on God’s compassionate love and the paschal mystery, even in the mourners; a lay presider gives an instruction (OCF 27)

Funeral Liturgy

- Liturgy of the Eucharist (143-144)
 - Members of the family or friends of the deceased should bring the gifts
 - Incense may be used during preparation of gifts
 - Eucharistic Prayers II & III have additional texts (see CB 832)
- After communion prayer, no greeting, blessing or dismissal

Funeral Liturgy

- Final Commendation and Farewell (OCF 145-46)
 - Formerly called “absolution”, but “the rite does not signify a kind of purification of the deceased; that is what the eucharistic sacrifice accomplishes. Rather, it stands as a farewell by which the Christian community together pays respect to one of its members before the body is removed or buried.” (OE 10)
 - May be celebrated later at place of committal (e.g. if burial is in the church CB 833), but must happen in presence of body (OE 10)

Funeral Liturgy

- Placement of ministers – deacon and servers next to presider (OCF 170; CB 833)
- A member or a friend of the family may speak in remembrance of the deceased (170)
 - From the Latin: “An Episcopal Conference may permit that, according to the custom of the place, after a period of silence, words of greeting, offered by the relatives of the deceased, may be delivered.”

Funeral Liturgy

- Opening words and silent prayer (171-172)
- The coffin may be sprinkled and incensed – during or after song of farewell, but recommends omitting sprinkling here if done at beginning (173) [this recommendation not in OE 10]

Funeral Liturgy

- Song of farewell (174, 403)
 - “Not only is it useful for all to sing this song, composed of a pertinent text set to a suitable melody, but all should have the sense of its being the high point of the entire rite.” (OE 10)
- Prayer of commendation (175)

Funeral Liturgy

- Procession to place of committal (OCF 148-149)
 - Invitation by deacon or priest (176)
 - May the angels (w/ Ps. 25) or May choirs (w/ Ps. 116)
 - Other psalms and metered text (396E)
 - Procession and singing encouraged

Rite of Committal (OCF 204-215)

- Adaptation permitted to lengthen the service if appropriate (211)
- If the body is donated to science, the committal may be celebrated whenever interment takes place (212)
- Music may help (214)
- In absence of parish minister, friend or family should lead the committal (215)

Rite of Committal (OCF 216-223)

- Invitation
- Scripture verse (possible reader)
- Prayer over place – options
 - If it is to be blessed
 - If already blessed
 - When final disposition of the body takes place later
 - Words for cremation (OCFa 438)
- [optional commendation 227-231]

Rite of committal (OCF 216-223)

- Committal (219)
 - At this time or at conclusion of rite
 - “The act of committal expresses the full significance of this rite. Through this act the community of faith proclaims that the grave or place of interment, once a sign of futility and despair, has been transformed by means of Christ’s own death and resurrection into a sign of hope and promise.” (209)

Rite of committal (OCF 216-223)

- Intercessions (assisting minister)
- [Lord's Prayer - Concluding Prayer if rite of commendation not included]
- Prayer over people (and dismissal)
- Song and/or gesture of leave-taking

Cremation

Appendix from US

Cremation

- Burial or entombment is the ancient Christian custom, but cremation is permitted (OCF 19)
- The Church reverences the body that received the sacraments and whose resurrection is awaited (OCFa 412)
- Cremation “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 the funeral rites.” (OCFa 413)

Cremation

- Phil 3:21: “[The Lord Jesus Christ] will change our lowly body to conform with his glorified body.”
- I Cor 15:49 “Just as we have borne the image of the earthly one, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly one.”

Cremation

- “extraordinary circumstances” may make cremation “the only feasible choice” (OCFa 414)
- “The Church earnestly recommends that the pious custom of burying the bodies of the deceased be observed; nevertheless, the Church does not prohibit cremation unless it was chosen for reasons contrary to Christian doctrine.” (CCL I 176/3)

The body OCFa 411-412

- It confronts the Christian faithful with the mystery of life and death
- It naturally recalls the personal story of faith, family bonds, friendship, words and deeds
- The body was washed in baptism, anointed with oil, fed with Bread of Life
- It is destined for future glory at the resurrection
- People experience the person through the body
- Care for the body expresses dignity of the person
- Burial imitates the burial of Jesus' body

Cremation

- Treat cremated remains with the same respect given the human body
 - the vessel
 - carrying, placement and transport
 - final disposition including a plaque or stone with the name of the deceased (OCFa 417)

Cremation

- “The cremated remains should be buried in a grave or entombed in a mausoleum or columbarium. The practice of 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 are not the reverent disposition that the Church requires.” (OCFa 417)

1st of 3 options

- Cremation after the funeral
 - Preferred by the Church
 - Final commendation and farewell at the funeral mass with the dismissal (see OCFa 437-438)

2nd of 3 options

- Cremation and committal take place before the mass
 - OCFa 423-424 start with cremation, then committal and commendation
 - Later: prayers after death, vigil, funeral liturgy (not “memorial mass”) – no prayers of commendation
 - Avoid prayers such as 164C, “whose body we honor with Christian burial.”

3rd of 3 options

- Funeral liturgy in presence of cremated remains
 - Use decorum (OCFa 427)
 - worthy vessel
 - small table for place normally occupied by coffin
 - vessel may be carried in or placed there beforehand
 - OCFa 435 paschal candle may be in place

3rd of 3 options

- Use holy water at the door, but not pall
- Priest and ministers precede bearer of cremated remains and mourners
- Use texts that do not refer to honoring or bearing the body
- Conclude with commendation

3rd of 3 options

- OCFa 430 committal at cemetery or columbarium
 - as soon as possible following liturgy
 - Columbaria not permitted in parish churches

Discussion topics

- Families deciding against 3 stations
- Liturgical structure of the vigil
- Words of remembrance
- Song of farewell
- Rite of Committal
- Cremation