

# PLANNING THE CATHOLIC FUNERAL

## GENERAL INTRODUCTION

*When a member of Christ's Body dies, the faithful are called to a ministry of consolation to those who have suffered the loss of one whom they love. Christian consolation is rooted in that hope that comes from faith in the saving death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. (... from the Order of Christian Funerals)*

St. Cecilia Church provides the Church's specified liturgical rites and prayers to assist in this ministry of consolation. The information provided on these pages is to clarify the nature of the Catholic funeral and to assist families in preparing for the Catholic Funeral.

The Catholic Funeral is only one piece of the variety of activities that people engage to mark the passing of a loved one from this life. Many of activities that occur after one has died are spontaneous and involve the interaction and sharing among family and friends of the one who has died. These personal activities especially focus on the person who has passed and thus celebrate their life.

The Catholic Funeral rite is 'focused on the person of Jesus Christ and our faith that He died and rose so that all who believe in Him may have eternal life. The Catholic Funeral Rite is scripted even while it does allow for options to be chosen from specific scriptural texts. The prayers and scriptures indicated for the Catholic Funeral direct our attention to the mystery of Christian death and our worship of the God who offers us eternal life. In the context of this prayer and reflection we do remember the one who has died. Their eternal rest is the primary object of our prayer, even while we pray for the consolation and well being of those who remain. The deceased are named in various prayers of the funeral liturgy. The scripture passages that remind us of the promise of eternal life can often be related to aspects of the lives of the one who has died. And the Catholic funeral does allow for one person to speak on behalf of the family in a way that might be more personal than the homily that the celebrant preaches based on the scriptures. Nevertheless, even the scripture based homily may integrate personal information about the deceased.

A fuller and more focused attention to the details of the life of the deceased person is accomplished in other ways. Activities that better accomplish the desire to celebrate the life of the deceased can be attached to the gathering for the Catholic funeral especially in the context of a reception that may follow the funeral Mass. Personal displays of pictures or mementos can be placed at the entrance of the Church. These displays can also be exhibited at the reception or luncheon. A microphone can be made available to provide an opportunity for people to offer personal recollections at the reception in the Church Hall, following the service in the Church. Even prepared video or slide presentations can be shown at a hall reception.

#### THE FUNERAL RITE

The funeral rite is normally in the context of the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, the Catholic celebration of the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. The funeral rite is celebrated in the parish church.

Typically the funeral rite is followed by a rite to accompany the committal of remains at a cemetery or columbarium.

#### THE REMAINS OF THE DECEASED

The Catholic Funeral rites presume the presence of the remains of the deceased person. While the Church has for some time permitted cremation, the Church still prefers that the body of the deceased be present for the funeral rites. The importance of body as symbol and vestige of the Christian life lived in the body is detailed in #s 411 and 412 of the Church's instruction on the funeral rite. More recently a special indult (permission) was granted to have the cremated remains present in place of the body at the funeral rites for what the instructions call "extraordinary circumstances." The pastor at St. Cecilia chooses to be as generous as possible in assessing these extraordinary circumstances. However, the Church calls for treating the cremated remains with the same reverence and respect that is accorded a body. If cremated remains are to be present for the Catholic Funeral rite, the pastor must have the assurance that the remains will be placed in a cemetery or columbarium.

In the extraordinary circumstance when remains cannot be present for the funeral rites, a Memorial Mass may be celebrated instead.

## MUSIC

It is appropriate that music be a part of the funeral rites. Music planning begins with consultation with Jennifer Cunningham, parish music director. She will assist in music selection and discuss fees based on the number of persons who will be conducting the music.

## FAMILY PARTICIPATION

Among the areas of planning which families are allowed to participate are selection of scripture readings (copies of the readings and directions for selecting the readings are provided), personal information to be shared with pastor for integration into the homily, selection of hymns and preparation of personal displays. Family members also may read the scriptures, serve as pall bearers or greeters. Several family members may bring up the bread and wine at the offertory of the Mass. One person may speak at the funeral on behalf of the family. .

## RECEPTION LUNCHEON

St. Cecilia Funeral Committee assists the family in providing a luncheon or reception following the funeral rites in Conger Hall if they wish. These generally occur immediately after the Church service, prior to the graveside committal. The Funeral Committee assists to whatever degree the family wishes, including full responsibility for all aspects of the luncheon. A member of the committee will communicate with family about their wishes and the anticipated number of attendees. If reception attendance in excess of 200 is expected, the committee will ask the family to assist in additional resources for the event.

## FEES

St. Cecilia parish no longer requires payment of specific fees for use of the Church, Conger Hall reception or

honorarium for the celebrant. Any donations of this sort are at the discretion of the family. There is a fee for altar servers who receive a \$20 honorarium. The musicians also receive payment either directly from the family or through the funeral director. The specifics of music fees are discussed with the music director and depend on the number of singers and musicians requested.