

## PROTOCOLS FOR CATHOLIC FUNERAL RITES

This document provides more detailed information about eulogies, the church of the funeral, the responsibilities of pastors, and other parish protocols. For more information about these matters, please kindly speak to the priest at the parish where you regularly attend Mass on Sundays. Especially as we observe the Eucharistic Revival in our country, the proper celebration of the sacred rites of the Catholic Church provides more reverent, solemn, and dignified liturgies. It also serves as a forum for the new evangelization, and thus it promotes the supreme law of the Church, which is the salvation of souls. Thank you for requesting the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass in the Roman Catholic Church for the repose of the soul of your departed loved one. May they rest in peace!

### Church Laws regarding Eulogies

In 1989, the Vatican published the revised Order of Christian Funerals (OCF) for the United States. The long-standing prohibition of eulogies at Catholic funerals was stated this way: **“A brief homily based on the readings should always be given at the funeral liturgy, but never any kind of eulogy”** [OCF 141]. In the revised General Instruction of the Roman Missal (GIRM) promulgated by Pope Saint John Paul II in 2000, this prohibition of eulogies was restated even more clearly: **“At Funeral Masses there should usually be a short Homily, but to the exclusion of a funeral eulogy of any kind”** [GIRM 382]. There are indeed appropriate times and places for eulogies, especially at the funeral home and at the funeral luncheon, but not in the church itself.

### Church Laws regarding Funerals

Canon 1176. §1. **Deceased members of the Christian faithful must be given ecclesiastical funerals according to the norm of law.** §2. **Ecclesiastical funerals, by which the Church seeks spiritual support for the deceased, honors their bodies, and at the same time brings the solace of hope to the living, must be celebrated according to the norm of the liturgical laws.** §3. 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.

Canon 1177. §1. **A funeral for any deceased member of the faithful must generally be celebrated in his or her parish church.** §2. Any member of the faithful or those competent to take care of the funeral of a deceased member of the faithful are **permitted to choose another church for the funeral rite with the consent of the person who governs it and after notification of the proper pastor of the deceased.** §3. If a death occurred outside the person's own parish, and the body was not transferred to it nor another church legitimately chosen for the funeral rite, the funeral is to be celebrated in the church of the parish where the death occurred unless particular law has designated another church.

## Church Laws Regarding Pastors

Canon 530. **The following functions are especially entrusted to a pastor:** 1/ the administration of baptism; 2/ the administration of the sacrament of confirmation to those who are in danger of death, according to the norm of canon 883, n. 3; 3/ the administration of Viaticum and the anointing of the sick, without prejudice to the prescript of canon 1003, §§ 2 and 3, and the imparting of the apostolic blessing; 4/ the assistance of marriages and the nuptial blessing; 5/ **the performance of funeral rites**; 6/ the blessing of the baptismal font at Easter time, the leading of processions outside the church, and solemn blessings outside the church; 7/ the more solemn eucharistic celebration on Sundays and holy days of obligation.

**Papal Decree.** In regard to the celebration of the Liturgy by all priests, Pope Francis states, in paragraph 23 of his Apostolic Letter, [Desiderio Desideravi](#), that “Every aspect of the celebration must be carefully tended to, and every rubric must be observed” (published by the Vatican on June 29, 2022).

## Parish Protocols for Funerals

Thank you for prayerfully coming to church to celebrate the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass for the repose of the soul of your departed loved one. As Saint Ambrose expressed the faith of the Church many centuries ago: “We loved them in life, let us not forget them in death until, by our prayers, we bring them to the very gates of heaven itself.”

Since “it is a holy and wholesome thought to pray for the dead, that they may be freed from their sins” (II Maccabees 12:46), let us remember all the souls in purgatory as well, for it is a corporal work of mercy to bury the dead, and a spiritual work of mercy to pray for the living and the dead. Please contact the pastor to make religious funeral arrangements for your departed loved one. May they rest in peace! Amen.

## Some Closing Reflections

A Catholic Funeral is not *about* the person who died. Instead, it is *for* the person who died. We pray for them as they enter into the presence of God for judgment and continue their journey beyond this life towards their eternal destiny. One day, we shall depart this world for the next life as well!

A Catholic Funeral is not a celebration of *life*. Instead, it is a celebration of *eternal life* in Jesus Christ! As we celebrate our new life in Christ that began at Baptism, we also celebrate the joy of eternal life for all who have died in the peace of Christ, and who look forward to the glory of the resurrection.

A Catholic Funeral is also for those who mourn the death of their loved one. Our faith is our consolation, and eternal life is our hope. In Christ we are comforted by the assurance that death is not the end but a new beginning in our journey of faith. Let us then lead lives that are worthy of heaven!