

SECTION 12: FUNERALS

The following policies shall be followed in regard to funerals.

12.1 CELEBRATION OF FUNERALS

As a rule, funerals for any of the faithful departed should be celebrated in his or her own church.

However, any member of the Christian faithful or those commissioned to arrange for the funeral may choose another church or chapel for the funeral rite with consent of its pastor and after informing the departed person's pastor.

12.2 TIME OF FUNERALS

12.2.1 Funerals, with or without Mass, are not to be celebrated on Sundays.

12.2.2 Wake services may be held on a Sunday.

12.2.3 Funerals may be celebrated on holy days of obligation, but not within the context of Mass. The Eucharist may not be celebrated or distributed at a funeral on a holy day of obligation.

12.2.4 Funerals may be celebrated on Holy Thursday, Good Friday and Holy Saturday, but not within the context of Mass. The Eucharist may not be celebrated or distributed at a funeral on these days.

12.3 THOSE TO WHOM FUNERAL RITES ARE TO BE GRANTED/DENIED

12.3.1 In regard to funerals, catechumens are considered members of the Christian faithful and, therefore, may be granted funeral rites.

12.3.2 Unbaptized children are likewise to be granted funeral rites if the parents intended to baptize the child.

12.3.3 Baptized non-Catholics may also be granted funeral rites unless it would be contrary to the will of the deceased, and provided the deceased's minister is unavailable.

12.3.4 Unbaptized spouses of Catholics may also be granted funeral rites unless it would be contrary to the will of the deceased, and provided the deceased's minister, if any, is unavailable.

12.3.5 For all other cases, the Archbishop is to be consulted.

12.3.6 No Catholic is to be denied funeral rites without first consulting the Archbishop. See article 12.4 for guidance regarding Cremation.

12.3.7 Although Catholics are not to join the Masons, Catholic clergy may celebrate funerals of Catholics who have nonetheless joined the Masons. No Catholic clergy, however, may be present when any Masonic rites are celebrated.

12.4 CREMATION

12.4.1 The Church earnestly recommends that the pious custom of burying the bodies of the dead be observed; it does not, however, forbid cremation unless cremation has been chosen for reasons which are contrary to Christian teaching, such as a denial of life after death.

12.4.2 While the Church teaches and has always preferred that the body of the deceased be present for funeral services, by indult granted in March 1997, the cremated remains are permitted to be present at the rites celebrated in and governed by the Order of Christian Funerals.

12.4.3 “The cremated remains of a body should be treated with the same respect given to the human body from which they come. This includes the use of a worthy vessel to contain the ashes, the manner in which they are carried, the care and attention to appropriate placement and transport and the final disposition. The cremated remains should be buried in a grave or entombed in a mausoleum or columbarium. The practice of scattering the remains on the sea, from the air, or in the ground, or keeping cremated remains in the home of a relative or friend of the deceased are not the reverent disposition the Church requires” (Order of Christian Funerals, 417). Likewise, it is not appropriate for the cremated remains to be divided into several urns or for only a portion of the remains to be buried or entombed.

12.4.4 “When, for legitimate motives, cremation of the body has been chosen, the ashes of the faithful *must* be laid to rest in a sacred place, that is, in a cemetery or, in certain cases, in a church or an area, which has been set aside for this purpose, and so dedicated by the competent ecclesial authority ... The reservation of the ashes of the departed in a sacred place ensures that they are not excluded from the prayers and remembrance of their family or the Christian community. It prevents the faithful departed from being forgotten, or their remains from being shown a lack of respect, which eventuality is possible, most especially once the immediately subsequent generation has too passed away. Also it prevents any unfitting or superstitious practices.” (*Ad resurgendum cum Christo*, 5).

12.4.5 In those cases in which the cremated remains will not be buried or entombed, the liturgical celebration should not include the following:

- sprinkling of the casket/urn;
- placing of pall (Note: A funeral pall is never used when cremated remains are present)
- placing of Christian symbol
- Rite of Commendation

12.4.6 Instead of the funeral rites, when cremated remains will not be committed to an appropriate place, one of the Masses for the Dead from the Roman Missal may be celebrated for the deceased person at either a church or funeral home chapel. The body, before cremation, or cremated remains may be present at this Mass.

12.4.7 Priests or deacons may preside at the interment of the remains of a cremated body at the tomb, grave, columbarium or mausoleum. They are not allowed to be present for any other type of disposal of the remains of the cremated body, such as a scattering or sprinkling of the remains, with the exception of a burial at sea.

12.6 FUNERALS CELEBRATED OUTSIDE OF A CHURCH

In the Archdiocese of New Orleans, funerals are permitted in parish churches, chapels, and funeral home chapels. It is strongly encouraged that the priest or deacon celebrating the funeral liturgy outside of a parish church, contact the pastor of the deceased. If there is any question of who this proper pastor is, the dean may be consulted.

12.7 WORDS OF REMEMBRANCE

12.7.1 Eulogies are not to be given at funerals celebrated in the Archdiocese. Rather, Words of Remembrance, which focus solely on the faith life of the deceased and not on other anecdotal memories, may be read.

12.7.2 In the Archdiocese of New Orleans, it is preferred that Words of Remembrance, if included, are offered at one of the following times:

- During the Vigil Service (Wake Service) following the Concluding Prayer and before the Blessing and Dismissal.
- Before the Funeral Mass following the prayers for the Transfer of the Body to the Church or Chapel, if these prayers are offered at the funeral home.
- At the conclusion of the time of visitation and before the beginning of Mass, if all is done at the parish church.

12.7.3 As Catholics, we say each day at Mass that "we wait in joyful hope" for the time of our return to the Lord. In reflecting on the faith life of the deceased, we prepare ourselves to say our farewell filled with that same joyful hope. "Because our loved one

lived this life, we therefore with joyful hope entrust him/her to the Lord." This is the spirit of Words of Remembrance. Reflecting on manifestations of a loved one's life of care and nurturing, of prayer and fidelity to the sacraments, of service to Christ's Church family, of fidelity to relationships and commitments made in faith: these are all that need be included in Words of Remembrance, for this is how Christian faith is lived.

12.7.4 It is recommended that Words of Remembrance are offered only by one person on behalf of the family. Therefore, the one chosen for this should consult with the family to make certain that the remembrances of all are represented in the remarks. If more than one person is offering words of remembrance, care is to be taken to ensure that the words do not extend past the scheduled time for the funeral.

12.8 OTHER LITURGICAL MATTERS

12.8.1 "Music is integral to the funeral rites. It allows the community to express convictions and feelings that words alone may fail to convey ... The texts of the songs chosen for a particular celebration should express the paschal mystery of the Lord's suffering, death, and triumph over death and should be related to the readings from Scripture" (*Order of Christian Funerals*, 30). Music selected for the funeral mass should not be secular but should correspond to the dignity and reverence reserved for the worship of God.

12.8.2 "Music should be provided for the vigil and funeral liturgy" (*Order of Christian Funerals*, 32). At least a cantor, but preferably a cantor and instrumentalist, should be present to assist the assembly's full participation in funeral liturgies when celebrated either at a church or funeral home chapel. Payment for these services can be worked out between the family, the funeral director, and the parish. The Office of Worship is available to assist with contacting cantors and instrumentalists throughout the archdiocese, upon request.

12.8.3 Recorded music should not be used in funeral liturgies. "Recorded music lacks the authenticity provided by a living liturgical assembly gathered for the Sacred Liturgy. While recorded music might be used advantageously outside the Liturgy as an aid in the teaching of new music, it should not, as a general norm, be used within the Liturgy" (*Sing to the Lord*, 93).

12.9 STOLE FEES, VOLUNTARY OFFERINGS, PAYMENTS FOR CHURCH BUILDING

12.9.1 The diocesan bishop is competent to enact norms governing the allocation of offerings and stole fees in his diocese (*Can. 531*). In the Archdiocese of New Orleans, no

fees or offerings should be mandated for the celebration of a funeral liturgy or for the use of the parish church.

12.10 RECORDING OF DEATH IN PARISH

12.10.1 Deaths should be recorded at the parish of the deceased. If the parish of the deceased is unknown, then the death should be recorded in the domicile parish. It is the responsibility of the celebrant of the funeral to inform the appropriate parish.

12.11 ECUMENICAL AND INTERFAITH MATTERS

12.11.1 It is expected that the funerals of Catholics will be celebrated according to the Catholic funeral rites. However, there are instances where due to mixed marriages, the non-Catholic spouse chooses to have the funeral for the Catholic party in a non-Catholic church or ecclesial community. Catholic priests and deacons may participate in funerals held in non-Catholic churches or ecclesial communities. At the invitation of the minister, the Catholic priest or deacon, wearing appropriate attire, may offer appropriate prayers, read from the Scriptures, preach, and bless the body of the deceased. (*Directory for Ecumenism, 118, 119, 158*)

12.11.2 Likewise, upon request of the family, the local Ordinary may permit the Catholic priest to invite a minister of another Church or ecclesial Community to participate in a funeral, to read from the Scriptures. If the funeral is celebrated outside of Mass, the minister may give a brief exhortation not to take the place of the homily. (*Directory for Ecumenism, 113, 118, 133-135*)

12.11.3 In the prudent judgment of the local Ordinary, the funeral rites of the Catholic Church may be granted to members of a non-Catholic Church or ecclesial Community, unless it is evidently contrary to their will and provided that their own minister is unavailable, and that the general provisions of Canon Law do not forbid it. (*Directory for Ecumenism, 120*)

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