

FUNERAL GUIDELINES

ST. JOHN XXIII PARISH ✠ WEST HAVEN, CONNECTICUT

WHAT IS A CATHOLIC FUNERAL MASS?

This life is short, and the life to come is eternal. When a Catholic Christian departs this world for eternity, the Church commends him or her to the love and mercy of God. The Funeral Mass is a time to remember the deceased and to give thanks to God for the gift of his or her life. Even more so, it is a very privileged and sacred time to *pray* for the deceased, asking God to grant them a merciful judgment, and to grant peace and consolation to their family and friends.

PLANNING FOR THE FUNERAL

The family of the deceased is welcome and encouraged to actively participate in planning the Funeral Rites. Family members may designate individuals to place the funeral pall (a large white cloth which covers the entire casket) recalling the white garment with which the deceased was clothed on the day of his or her Baptism. The family may choose from a list of appropriate Sacred Scripture readings and music, designate individuals to proclaim those readings and present the gifts of bread and wine in the Funeral Liturgy.

PARISH CONTACT

Whether the Funeral Mass is being scheduled for St. John Vianney Church or St. Louis Church, you may contact Patty Boyne (203) 934-5249 | patricia.stjohn23@gmail.com

SACRED MUSIC

Music is an especially important part of the Funeral Liturgy. There are many beautiful hymns which come to us from all the centuries of the Church's life of prayer and worship. These are available to be played and sung at the Funeral Liturgy. A sample list follows at the end of these guidelines.

By its very nature, the Church's Liturgy is sacred. It is a time set apart, in a sacred place, specifically for the worship of God. Thus, it is possible only for sacred music to be used during the Funeral Liturgy. Any non-sacred, or "secular" music which may

hold a particular significance to the family of the deceased would be more appropriate to be played either at the wake, or at the reception following the Funeral Liturgy. If a family wishes to bring in non-parish liturgical musicians, all music and any visiting musicians must be approved by St. John XXIII Parish.

ALL SOULS DAY MASS

Each year, on November 2, All Souls Day, we at St. John XXIII Parish celebrate a special Mass for all those whose Funeral Masses have taken place in our churches during the past year. Some weeks prior to this, your family will receive an invitation to join us for this special Mass of consolation, hope, and peace. At the All Souls Day Mass, your loved one will be prayed for by name together with all whose Funeral Mass have taken place in our churches during the past year.

WORDS OF REMEMBRANCE

The practice of giving “Words of Remembrance,” also known as a eulogy, is actually not a part of the Catholic Funeral Liturgy. Families should not feel obligated to designate someone to offer one. It is preferable that this take place at the wake, at the cemetery, or at the reception following the burial.

If a family strongly desires to designate someone to offer “Words of Remembrance” in the church, only one person should be designated to offer it. It will be delivered at the beginning of the Funeral Liturgy immediately following the entrance procession. It should be no longer than 3 to 4 minutes. Its content should be suitable and respectful of the sacredness of the liturgy focusing on the positive characteristics of the deceased.

CREMATION

“Although cremation is now permitted by the Church, it 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, since the presence of the human body better expresses the values which the Church affirms in those rites.”

(Order of Christian Funerals, no. 413)

For various reasons, some families choose the option of cremation. While intact burial is clearly preferred, in imitation of Jesus’ own burial after His Crucifixion and before His Resurrection, cremation is permitted by the Church by way of exception, if it is

not carried out so as to deny the Church's unchanging faith in the resurrection of each person's mortal body when Christ comes again at the end of time.

If cremation is chosen and takes place before the Funeral Mass, the urn is brought to the church and placed on a table in front of the sanctuary. A photograph of the deceased, as well as flowers, may be placed beside the urn on the table, should the family wish this.

Following the Mass, the cremated remains must be buried, just like a body, in a cemetery, crypt, or other appropriate burial place. Out of respect for the remains of the deceased, whose body was once a temple of the Holy Spirit and which will be raised up again on the Last Day, scattering ashes, dividing them up, or keeping them at home, is not permissible because it does not express appropriate respect for the dignity of the person's remains.

PRIESTS OR DEACONS FROM OTHER PARISHES

If a family would like to invite a Priest or Deacon from elsewhere to celebrate or concelebrate any of the Funeral Liturgies, they would be welcome to do so, if they are currently in good standing in the Archdiocese of Hartford or Religious Order.

If an invited Priest or Deacon is from another Diocese, or from a Religious Order outside the Archdiocese of Hartford, he must ensure that a *Letter of Suitability* from his Bishop or Religious Superior is sent to the Chancellor of the Archdiocese of Hartford. Our parish priests would be happy to facilitate this process with any visiting clergy.

FINAL THOUGHTS

Funeral Rites must be of a sacred nature since the Funeral Liturgy is principally an act of divine worship. So if, for instance, it is not possible for the parish to accommodate some requests, such as reading a specific poem in place of Sacred Scripture, a specific song, or article which was special to the deceased, it should be remembered that other moments, outside of the Mass (such as the wake, the interment, or the reception following it) are actually more appropriate times for such things to be shared with family and friends.

St. John XXIII Parish is here to support your family in your time of grief and loss, and we will always seek to ensure that the Funeral Liturgy is celebrated with all possible dignity and prayerfulness.

