


Now and At the Hour of Our Death

Archdiocese of Cincinnati
Office for Divine Worship & Sacraments
Office for Respect Life Ministries
Catholic Cemeteries



1

Getting Started

Welcome
Prayer
Overview of Session – Why are you here?

General plan/goals:

- Theology of a Catholic funeral
- 3 stages of a Catholic funeral and preparing each
- Other considerations for preparing the funeral liturgy
- Cremation: what the Church really teaches
- End-of-life medical decisions

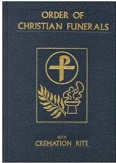


2

Theology of a Catholic Funeral

“In the face of death, the Church confidently proclaims that God has created each person for eternal life and that Jesus, the Son of God, by his death and resurrection, has broken the chains of sin and death that bound humanity.”

(Order of Christian Funerals, General Introduction, #1)



3

Theology of a Catholic Funeral

What does the Church actually say happens at a Catholic funeral?

- "Church intercedes on behalf of the deceased" (OCF 4)
- "Church ministers to the sorrowing and consoles them with the comforting Word of God and the sacrament of the Eucharist." (OCF 4)
- We "offer worship, praise, and thanksgiving to God for the gift of a life which has now been returned to God" (OCF 5)
- "Commends the dead to God's merciful love and pleads for the forgiveness of their sins" (OCF 6)
- "Affirms and expresses the union of the Church on earth with the church in heaven" (OCF 6)

4

Theology of a Catholic Funeral

"The responsibility for the ministry of consolation rests with the believing community." (OCF 9)

- Participating in the vigil, Mass, and committal
- "Family members should take an active part in these ministries, but they should not be asked to assume any role their grief or sense of loss may make too burdensome." (OCF 15)

5

Theology of a Catholic Funeral

MASS FOR THE DEAD
(1st Edition)

The Word of God

- "In every celebration for the dead, the Church attaches great importance to the reading of the Word of God....above all, the readings tell of God's designs for a world in which suffering and death will relinquish their hold on all whom God has called his own." (OCF 22)

6

Theology of a Catholic Funeral

Symbols and rituals

- Water
- Pall
- Easter candle
- Colors: White/violet/black (listed in that order)
 - "should express Christian hope but should not be offensive to human grief or sorrow." (OCF 39)
- Music

7

3 Stages of a Catholic Funeral

1. Vigil

- Principal rite celebrated by the Church in the time between death and the funeral liturgy
- May be celebrated in the home of the deceased, a funeral home, in the church, or some other suitable place
- Two options:
 - Office for the Dead from Liturgy of the Hours
 - Liturgy of the Word (more typical)
- Liturgical dimension
- Reception of the Body?

8

3 Stages of a Catholic Funeral

2. Funeral liturgy

- Central liturgical celebration
- Within or outside of Mass
- Liturgical aspects:
 - Reception of the Body
 - Final Commendation

9

3 Stages of a Catholic Funeral

3. Committal
 • "Final act of the community of faith in caring for the body of its deceased member." (OCF 204)

10

Preparing: Vigil

- Timing
- Leader
- Ministers
- Scriptures
- Intercessions
- Music
- Participation

11

Preparing: Funeral Liturgy

- Form: within or outside of Mass?
- Time
- Scriptures
- Music
- Ministers: greeters, readers, gift-bearers, pall-bearers, etc.
- Participation aid

12

Other considerations

Eulogy

- "Following the prayer after Communion, the priest goes to a place near the coffin. The assisting ministers carry the censer and holy water if these are to be used. A member or friend of the family may speak in remembrance of the deceased before the final commendation begins." (OCF 170)

16

Cremation: What the Church Really Believes

- 1997 permission
- "Does not enjoy the same value as burial of the body." (OCF 413)
- Preference for presence of the body for the funeral rites (cremation afterwards)
- "The cremated remains of a body should be treated with the same respect given to the human body from which they came" (OCF 417)

17

End-of-Life Medical Decisions

Fundamental Principles that Guide Catholic End-of-Life Decisions

1. Life is a gift from God
2. Human life never loses dignity
3. Every life is deserving of respect and protection under the law
4. We are stewards of our bodies, not owners
5. We are human beings, not human doings

18



19

Catholic Funeral Traditions/
Catholic Cemetery: Why?

- The Church, over thousands of years, has become experts in Human Nature – including grief and “closure”
- Funeral process presents opportunity for healing and conversion

We are Catholic

- The Cemetery is a Ministry: This is who we are
- Spiritual and Corporal Works of Mercy: This is what we do

20

Why Choose a Catholic Cemetery?

- **Consecrated Ground** – the Cemetery is a continuation of the Sacramental Life of the Parish
- **A permanent resting place**, among thousands of Christian brothers and sisters, priests, bishops, and religious
- **Prayerful, contemplative grounds** that encourages the *whole* Christian community to pray for the Faithful Departed
- Burial in a cemetery confirms the Christian’s faith in the **resurrection of the body**
- Burial in a cemetery **accords the respect** and piety owed to our bodies which, through Baptism, have become temples of the Holy Spirit

21

Faith

The Nicene Creed
 I believe...
 ...and I look forward to the resurrection of the dead and the life of the world to come.

The Apostles' Creed
 I believe...
 ...the resurrection of the body and life everlasting.

22

Christian Burial Guidelines

A Catholic cemetery is a sacred place of honor and respect for those who have died and a memorial to all who are interred there. It is blessed ground, **fitting for someone whose body was a temple of the Holy Spirit on earth and now awaits the resurrection from the dead.**

23

Reasons why People Don't Pre-Plan

- Don't want to talk about death.
- Don't consider cost savings of pre-planning.
- Have never had to plan a burial before, and don't realize the stresses involved at the time of death.
- Are undecided regarding casket burial or cremation.
- Minimalist attitude toward final resting place.
- "The kids can take care of this."

24

Christians Prepare for Death

“The business of the Christian is nothing else but to be ever preparing for death.”
- Saint Irenaeus of Lyons

25

Why Pre-Plan?

- Ensure your end-of-life intentions become reality.
- Couples can make decisions together, instead of leaving all decisions to the surviving spouse.
- Ensure all family members can be interred together.
- Secure today's cost – inflation proof!
- Spare your family and loved ones the financial and emotional burden of arranging a burial immediately after a death.
- Enjoy flexible payment options.
- Give the gift of - Peace of Mind – to your loved ones

26

Church Practices Regarding Cremation

- A Funeral Mass **should still** be held for the deceased.
 - The urn can be present at the mass, but the whole body is preferred.
- The urn should be **permanently placed** in sacred ground.
 - To ensure the deceased is not excluded from the prayers and remembrance of the **entire** Christian community.
- This prevents the deceased from being forgotten, or their remains being shown a lack of respect, or becoming the object of unfitting or superstitious practices.
- Cremated Remains, then, should never be:
 - Kept in a home for an extended period
 - Divided among family members
 - Scattered in the air, on land, at sea,
 - or any other way preserved in mementos,
 - pieces of jewelry, or other objects mixed
 - with the cremated remains of another person, or animal.

27



28

End-of-Life
Medical
Decisions

Ordinary vs. Extraordinary Means of Preserving Life

- Ordinary: Means that offer reasonable hope of benefit, and do not entail excessive burden. Typical examples (food, water, hygiene, rest). These are morally obligatory
- Extraordinary: Means that are excessively burdensome or disproportionate to the expected outcome. These are not morally obligatory.

29

End-of-Life
Medical
Decisions

Factors to Indicate Excessive Burden?

- Patient's condition
- Expectation of recovery
- Potential side effects or other risks
- Treatment cost
- Degree of pain of treatment and resulting pain
- Whether there are limited medical resources available

30

End-of-Life Medical Decisions

Examples of when the same means could be ordinary, or extraordinary

- 1. Ventilator
- 2. Chemotherapy
- 3. CPR

31

End-of-Life Medical Decisions


Special Notes on Assisted Nutrition and Hydration

1. Generally, the Church teaches artificial nutrition and hydration is ordinary care, even for those in a vegetative state
2. Examples when it can be omitted
 - Body can no longer assimilate
 - Treatment no longer benefits, or the burden outweighs benefits
 - Treatment is difficult to obtain
 - Death is imminent
 - Artificial means leads to other problems, such as infection
 - Provokes more suffering without likelihood of recovery

32

End-of-Life: Planning Ahead

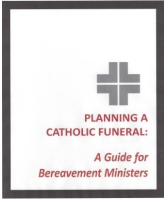

1. Medical Power of Attorney
2. Living Will



33

Resources

Shop for resources on planning a Catholic funeral:
shop.catholicaoc.org



34

Q&A & Concluding Remarks

Office for Divine Worship & Sacraments
www.catholicaoc.org/worship

Office for Respect Life Ministries
<https://resources.catholicaoc.org/offices/respect-life-ministries>

Catholic Cemeteries
<https://resources.catholicaoc.org/offices/cemeteries>

35
