200 ECCLESIASTICAL FUNERAL RITES

“The Order of Christian Funerals was canonically approved by the National Conference of Catholic Bishops in the plenary assembly on 14 November 1985 and was subsequently confirmed by the Apostolic See by decree of the Congregation for Divine Worship on 29 April 1987 (Prob. N. CD 1550/85). ...From All Souls Day, 2 November 1989, its use is mandatory in the dioceses of the United States of America. From that date forward no other English version of these rites may be used.” (Order of Christian Funerals: Decree of the National Conference of Catholic Bishops). The Catholic funeral rite is composed of three distinct parts, each with its own structure: the Vigil Service (Wake), the Funeral Liturgy, and the Rite of Committal (Burial or Internment).

Vigil Service (Wake)

The Vigil can be celebrated in a funeral home, a church, or the home of the deceased (Order of Christian Funerals, no. 55). "At the vigil, the Christian community keeps watch with the family in prayer to the God of mercy and finds strength in Christ's presence" (Order of Christian Funerals, no. 56).

Generally a priest or deacon is the minister at the vigil service; however, any lay person, who has received adequate formation can preside at the Vigil as well as the Rite of Committal (Order of Christian Funerals, no. 14). This service can be a Liturgy of the Word which includes Scripture readings, reflection, and prayers (Order of Christian Funerals, no. 69-81, 82-97) or it can be prayers from the Office for the Dead from the Liturgy of the Hours (Order of Christian Funerals, no. 348-396). When the Vigil Service is in the form of a Liturgy of the Word, it should be composed of the introductory rites, the Scripture readings, the prayer of intercession, and a concluding rite (Order of Christian Funerals, no. 57.). It is often the custom to pray the Rosary before or after the Vigil and this practice is to be commended and encouraged. Since the Vigil is the official liturgical prayer of the community and the Rosary is a private devotion, the faithful should be taught that it is not to be prayed during the Vigil.

This is the time for family and friends to gather to remember their loved one, pray together, and offer support to one another. For this reason, this is a most appropriate time for eulogies to be given; this is also an opportune time for relatives or friends to offer words of remembrance (Order of Christian Funerals, no. 62). It is important to note the definitions of eulogy and remembrance. A eulogy is a formal and lengthy address that praises the life of the deceased, especially his or her accomplishments. A remembrance is very brief, informal and shares the ways in which the deceased touched the life of the speaker.
Funeral Liturgy

*The Funeral Liturgy is the central liturgical celebration of the Catholic funeral rite. Gathered together to celebrate the Funeral Liturgy, the Christian community gives thanks to God for Christ’s victory over death, commends their loved one to God’s mercy, and seeks consolation in their time of loss. The Funeral Liturgy is not simply a time to gather to express of sorrow and grief, but most importantly it is a time to worship as a community united in faith. Therefore, it is important the following guidelines be respected.*

**201 Funerals in General**

**201.1 Giving of Ecclesiastical Funeral Rights and a Funeral Mass:**

“The Christian faithful departed are to be given ecclesiastical funeral rites according to the norm of law.” (Can. 1176 §1) A funeral Mass should be considered the norm within the funeral rituals.

**201.2 Location of Funeral Mass:**

The Funeral Mass for any deceased member of the faithful must generally be celebrated in his or her parish church (canon 1177). A pastor may determine what rites may be celebrated at his parish church or the funeral home.

**201.3 Funeral Masses at Non-Church Locations:**

Any Funeral Mass to be held at a university, school, hospital or at any other site that may have a Catholic chapel on site must have the permission of the pastor and the Chancellor’s office.

**201.4 Funeral Rites for the Poor:**

Care is to be taken that the poor are not deprived of proper Funeral Rites, including the Funeral Mass (canon 1181).

**201.5 Catechumens and Funeral Rights:**

Regarding Ecclesiastical Funeral Rites, catechumens are to be considered members of the Church (canon 1183 §1).

**201.6 Celebrating Funeral Rights for Member of Another Church:**
The Church’s Funeral Rites may be celebrated for a baptized member of another Church or ecclesial community provided this would not be contrary to the wishes of the deceased person. The pastor of the parish is granted the authority to make this determination. (Canon 1183 §3, Order of Christian Funerals #18)

202 EXCLUSION FROM FUNERAL RITES

Policy:

Unless they have given some signs of repentance before death, the following are to be deprived of ecclesiastical Funeral Rites:

- notorious heretics,
- apostates and schismatics;
- persons who had chosen the cremation of their bodies for reasons opposed to the Christian faith;
- other manifest sinners for whom ecclesiastical Funeral Rites cannot be granted without public scandal to the faithful.

Procedure:

If some doubt arises about whether a person should be deprived of ecclesiastical Funeral Rights, the Chancery Office is to be consulted (Can. 1184).

203 PRESIDERS FROM OUTSIDE THE PARISH

Policy:

A priest from outside the parish should generally be allowed to celebrate the various rites of the Funeral Liturgy when a reasonable request is made. (CIC 265). He must abide by the policies established by the pastor and the Archdiocese of Baltimore.

Procedure:

A) Any priest who wishes to celebrate a Funeral Liturgy must have obtained faculties from the Archdiocese of Baltimore to do so. Priests from outside the Archdiocese of Baltimore must obtain at least Event Faculties before being permitted to minister in any way within the territory of the Archdiocese.
B) The pastor of the parish is responsible for making certain the proper faculties have been obtained prior to allowing any extern priest to minister in his territory. For more information see http://www.archbalt.org/vocations/priests/event-faculties.cfm.

**204 READERS AT THE FUNERAL LITURGY**

**Policy:**

The readers at the funeral liturgy should usually be Roman Catholic. (*GIRM* nos. 99, 101, and *Directory for the Application of Principles and Norms on Ecumenism*, no. 133). Pastors are granted permission to permit a member of another church or ecclesial community to take on the task of reader.

**205 MUSIC AT THE FUNERAL MASS**

**Policy:**

Music at a Funeral Mass must reflect the paschal mystery and be related to the readings from Scripture. (*Order of Christian Funerals*, nos. 30-34)

**Procedure:**

The liturgical music selected should “support, console, and uplift participants and help to create in them a spirit of hope in Christ’s victory over death and in the Christian’s share in that victory.” (*Order of Christian Funerals*, no. 31)

**206 EULOGIES AND REMEMBRANCES**

**Policy:**

The norm of law is that there are to be no eulogies at a Funeral Mass. It is up to the pastor to the parish to determine whether a remembrance will be permitted at a Funeral Mass for his parish. If a remembrance is permitted is must take place according to the procedures listed below. Visiting clergy are required to abide by the decision of the pastor and this policy (*GIRM* no.382).

**Procedure:**
A) If a pastor permits a remembrance, it should take place immediately before the Funeral Liturgy begins.
B) It should be limited to 3-5 minutes.
C) Only one person should represent the family and friends. Multiple remembrances are not permitted.
D) The pastor may request a written outline of the proposed remembrance remarks, if he deems it appropriate.
E) The current liturgical guidelines clearly indicate, “[a]t Funeral Masses there should usually be a short Homily, but to the exclusion of a funeral eulogy of any kind.”

**207 CREMATION AND THE FUNERAL LITURGY**

*Policy:*

Pastors and associate pastors are granted permission for the Funeral Liturgy to be celebrated in the presence of the cremated remains. (Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments on March 21, 1997- Prot. N. CD 1589/96/L and Order of Christian Funerals Appendix 2: Cremation: Decree of the National Conference of Catholic Bishops.)

*Procedure:*

A) In every case, the priest must consider the reasons for the request and receive the necessary assurance that the cremated remains will be handled with reverence and will be buried in a grave or entombed in a mausoleum or columbarium. (*Order of Christian Funerals Appendix 2: Cremation #417*)

B) If there are plans to scatter the cremains, a clergyman or representative of the Church should not be present for the Rite of Committal.

**208 RITE OF COMMittal (BURIAL OR INTERNMENT)**

**208.1 Final Funeral Rite:**

The Rite of Committal concludes the Funeral Rites. The community gathers together for a final act of public worship and expresses the hope in the glory of the resurrection.
**ARCHDIOCESE OF BALTIMORE**

**SECTION**
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208.2 **Internment and Cremation:**

Internment of the faithful is traditional and preferable. However, cremation may be permitted provided it has not been chosen as a sign of rejection of the Church’s teaching regarding reverence for the human body or the resurrection of the dead (Can. 1176 §3).

208.3 **Consecrated Ground:**

A baptized member of another Christian Church or ecclesial community, who for a reasonable cause requests it, may be buried in consecrated ground (Can. 1183 §3).

208.4 **Consultation with Chancery:**

For funerals involving prominent persons or for other concerns regarding the proper funeral rites to be accorded a member of the faithful, the Chancery should be consulted.

209 **Best Practices for Funeral Rites**

The following are best practices for funeral rites:

- Providing the bereaved family with the proper information (in written form if possible) regarding these policies as the funeral is planned assists in establishing expectations in keeping with the Church’s teachings;
- Asking the person giving a remembrance (if permitted) to provide the priest with a written copy of what will be “remembered” well before the Funeral Mass so the remarks can be focused and within the expected time;
- Establishing a practice of having a time (an hour or half hour) BEFORE the Funeral Mass for eulogies at the Church;
- Being clear and consistent with staff and parishioners about what is permitted and what is not so that all feel fairly treated; and
- Having any comments from family and friends be done away from the Ambo.

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