

Preparing for my funeral

One certain fact is that one day we all will die. But as Christians our faith is that for the Lord's faithful, in death life is changed not ended. Our great hope is that we will be redeemed from death by Christ's great victory and that as we are united with Christ by sharing in a death like his so we may also be one with him in his Resurrection.

Catholics will want to ensure that their Funeral Liturgy reflects their Christian hope and the faith of the Church.

However it can be difficult for our next of kin to make detailed arrangements for our funeral at the same time as dealing with the grief and loss they will experience at our passing. They will be especially hard-pressed to prepare the funeral as we would wish if they do not share our Faith.

It can therefore be a real help to others when we ourselves give thought to our funeral arrangements ahead of time, and let them know what our preferences are, so that when the time comes they can be taken account of to the fullest degree practicable.

Making such preparations can give us peace of mind too, and be an occasion for finding a new assurance of faith by reflecting on, in particular, the various passages from scripture and the songs which the Church provides for funerals. These offer comfort and support at any time, but they are perhaps especially important for us as we enter old(er) age, consider more directly our own mortality, and experience bereavement more regularly.

This leaflet has been prepared to guide you through a consideration of your preferences with regard to the Funeral Liturgy, and highlights additional things you might also like to consider.

Mostly the things to think about in making our funeral arrangements are straight-forward ones. However you may find it helpful to meet with your parish priest in order to discuss some of the arrangements for the Funeral Liturgy. Should you wish to meet with him, I am sure you will find that he will be able to help you consider what is best and practical for your particular circumstances. He will ensure the services are true to the tradition of the Church, as well as appropriate to yourself and those who will gather to pray for you.

+Vincent Nichols, Archbishop of Westminster

The Funeral Liturgy

The purpose of the Funeral Liturgy is to offer worship and thanksgiving to God, the author of all life; to pray for the deceased, and to offer support to the bereaved. The Church encourages us to celebrate a funeral in three main stages:

- A) *The Vigil of Prayer***, usually the evening before the funeral;
- B) *The Funeral Liturgy***, which may be a Mass or a Liturgy of the Word;
- C) *The Committal*** at the cemetery or crematorium.

When it is not practical to celebrate all three stages the funeral may comprise a single act of worship either in a cemetery chapel or crematorium.

A) The Vigil of Prayer

This Vigil is the first stage of the farewell journey. Its mood is one of quiet support which helps to prepare the bereaved for the final leave-taking. It may be held in the home of the deceased person, in a funeral home or in the church. The body of the deceased may be present or not. The Vigil may be led a priest but may also be led by others. It will include prayers and readings from scripture. It may include the Rosary, and appropriate songs.

B) The Funeral Liturgy

The Funeral Liturgy is the Church's main time of prayer for the deceased person. The Funeral Liturgy usually takes the form of the celebration of Mass, the highest form of prayer in which the Sacrifice of Christ himself is made present. In offering this Sacrifice, we commend to God the soul of the deceased in union with Christ himself. In some circumstances it is suitable for the Funeral Liturgy to take the form of a Liturgy of the Word only.

The Funeral Liturgy usually takes place in a parish church, but it may sometimes be appropriate to hold it in the chapel of a cemetery or crematorium.

1. I would like my Funeral Liturgy to take place at.....

2. I would like my Funeral Liturgy to be *either* a Mass *or* a Liturgy of the Word

Please delete as appropriate.

3. Scripture passages I would like at my funeral

The full selection of scripture readings approved for use at funerals can be found at www.rcdow.org.uk/liturgy

- **First Reading**
- **Psalm**
- **Gospel**

NB: Sometimes the readings used at a funeral are restricted by the liturgical season. In such a case the priest will give the fullest respect to your wishes that he can.

4. Hymns I would like at my funeral are

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You will find a list of suitable hymns in your parish hymn book.

5. Flowers. My preferences for flowers are

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6. Donations/collection

Either I would like a collection to be taken for

.....

or I would not like a collection to be taken

Please delete as appropriate.

C) The Committal

The final act of saying farewell takes place in a brief service at the graveside or at the crematorium. When a body is cremated it is encouraged that there be a further brief service, sometime later, for the burial of the ashes.

A. Either I wish to be buried or I wish to be cremated

Please delete as appropriate.

B. I wish to be buried or my ashes interred at

.....

Other Considerations

- **Reception after the funeral.** I would like the reception to take place at
.....

- **Funeral Directors**

Either: I have a pre-paid funeral plan with

or: Please use as undertakers

or: I leave the choice of undertakers to my next-of-kin

Please delete as appropriate.

- **My Will**

My will is lodged with my solicitor:

Name

Address

Telephone.....

- **My next of kin**

Name

Address

Telephone

- **Power of attorney. (if applicable)**

Power of attorney has been granted to:

Name

Address

Telephone

Name

Please print your name

Signature

Date

Please keep this form with your papers at home, and a copy with (1) your will at your solicitors, (2) your parish priest, (3) your next of kin and (4) (if you have a pre-paid funeral plan) with your nominated funeral director.