

Holy Cross Catholic Parish

Georgetown, Ontario

Order of Christian Burial

The death of a Christian is at once a time of sadness and grief, and also a time of celebrating our new life in Christ Jesus. At the funeral of its children, the Church confidently celebrates Christ's Paschal Mystery - his passion, death and resurrection. We find our hope in our participation in this mystery.

The *Order of Christian Funerals* offers those who grieve opportunities for family and communal prayer. The following information will serve as an introduction to the *Order of Christian Funerals* and how it is observed in our parish.

Further resources for planning these Rites are available and will be provided by our pastoral team as they assist families in planning the funeral celebration.

The public prayer of the Church is offered for the deceased and their families at three specific times or "stations". These include:

The Vigil for the Deceased
The Funeral Celebration
Rite of Committal (Burial)

Often these times are preceded by family prayers at the time of death; in the first gathering of the family in the presence of the body; and in prayer before the procession to the Church.

Vigil for the Deceased

The first celebration takes the form of a *vigil* service of Scripture readings and prayers and is usually observed the day before the Funeral Liturgy. A member of the family or a friend of the deceased may offer *words of remembrance* at the conclusion of the Vigil.

Funeral Celebration

The second "station" is the funeral celebration which may or may not take place during the celebration of the Eucharist depending on specific circumstances. The celebration of the *Funeral Mass* **always** takes place in the parish Church. The Christian community gathers and offers praise and thanksgiving to God for the gift of Christian life.

A funeral Mass may not be celebrated on Sundays and on certain days of the liturgical year - Holy Thursday, Good Friday, Holy Saturday. The family and community may gather for a Funeral Celebration outside the Eucharist on these days - with a memorial Mass arranged for a later date.

In some situations a Funeral celebration may take place outside the celebration of Eucharist. This funeral liturgy consists of prayer, Scripture and the final commendation and farewell. It usually takes place in the parish church.

Rite of Committal

The final celebration takes place at the grave of the deceased person. In this prayer the Church offers its blessing over the place of burial and offers prayers for the deceased and those who grieve.

Eulogies

Catholics are sometimes surprised to learn, as they prepare for the funeral liturgy, that a *eulogy* is not permitted and that there is no provision for a eulogy in the celebration of the Funeral Mass. The General Introduction to the *Order of Christian Funerals* clearly states that the homily after the Gospel is never to be a eulogy.

The homilist (priest or deacon) is called to weave the person's life into the life, death and resurrection of Christ. It is the "high praise" of the deceased person, often with little reference to the Christian life, which is out of place in the Funeral Mass.

Words of remembrance are more suitably offered at the end of the Vigil Service in the funeral home or a reception following the Funeral Liturgy.

Our parish's pastoral team is ready to assist families in planning these rites and will offer their prayerful support and consolation.