



Catholic Funeral Rite

A Guide to the Sacred Liturgy

"The Church's funeral rites offer worship, praise, and thanksgiving to God for the gift of a life which has now been returned to God, the author of life and the hope of the just."

— Order of Christian Funerals

Introduction

The Mass, the memorial of Christ's death and resurrection, is the principal celebration of the Christian funeral. Through the sacred liturgy, the Church commends the deceased to God's merciful love and pleads for the forgiveness of their sins.

Sacred Music in the Funeral Liturgy

Music is integral to the funeral rites. It allows the community to express convictions and feelings that words alone may fail to convey. It has the power to console and uplift the mourners and to strengthen the unity of the assembly in faith and love.

The funeral director will arrange contact with an experienced parish musician who will assist you in selecting appropriate sacred music for the Funeral Mass.

Musical Elements of the Funeral Mass

- **Entrance Chant/Hymn** — accompanying the procession and entrance rites
- **Responsorial Psalm** — following the First Reading
- **Gospel Acclamation** — before the Gospel
- **Offertory Hymn** — during the Presentation of Gifts
- **Communion Chant/Hymn** — during the distribution of Holy Communion
- **Recessional Hymn** — accompanying the procession from the church

Note: *The Church asks that all music chosen be sacred in nature and appropriate for worship. Secular songs, while meaningful, cannot be included during the Mass itself but may be used at the reception afterwards. The texts should express the Paschal Mystery of the Lord's suffering, death, and triumph over death.*

Liturgy of the Word

Family members and friends are encouraged to participate in the Liturgy of the Word as readers. This participation offers comfort through the proclamation of God's word and expresses the bonds of faith that unite the Christian community.

Selection of Readings

- **First Reading:** Ordinarily taken from the Old Testament (during Easter Season, from Acts of the Apostles)
- **Responsorial Psalm:** Sung or recited after the First Reading
- **Second Reading:** From the New Testament Letters or Revelation
- **Gospel:** Proclaimed only by the priest or deacon

You may choose to have either one reading before the Gospel (in addition to the Responsorial Psalm) or two readings.

Guidelines for Readers

Preparation:

- Familiarise yourself with the text beforehand
- Pay attention to proper pronunciation of biblical names and terms
- Consider the meaning of the passage to convey it effectively

Proclamation:

- Begin with the introduction: 'A reading from...'
- Pause briefly before beginning the scripture text
- Proclaim the Word clearly and with reverence
- Pause after completing the reading
- Conclude with: 'The Word of the Lord'
- Wait for the assembly's response: 'Thanks be to God'

Liturgical Decorum:

- Approach the ambo (lectern) with reverence
- Bow to the tabernacle before entering the sanctuary
- Bow to the tabernacle when leaving the sanctuary

Note: In accord with liturgical norms, only readings from Sacred Scripture are proclaimed during the Liturgy of the Word. Poems, secular readings, or personal reflections should be reserved for the vigil service or reception.

Options for the First Reading

Option 1

A reading from the book of Wisdom.

The souls of the virtuous are in the hands of God, no torment shall ever touch them. In the eyes of the unwise, they did appear to die, their going looked like a disaster, their leaving us, like annihilation; but they are in peace. If they experienced punishment as men see it, their hope was rich with immortality: slight was their affliction; great will their blessing be. God has put them to the test and proved them worthy to be with him; he has tested them like gold in a furnace and accepted them as a holocaust. When the time comes for his visitation, they will shine out as sparks run through the stubble, so will they. They shall judge nations, rule over peoples, and the Lord will be their king forever. They who trust in him will understand the truth; those who are faithful will live with him in love; for grace and mercy await those he has chosen.

The word of the Lord.

Option 2

A reading from the book of Wisdom.

The virtuous man, though he died before his time, will find rest. Length of days is not what makes age honourable, nor number of years the true measure of life; understanding, this is man's grey hairs, untarnished life, this is ripe old age. He has sought to please God, so God has loved him as he was living among sinners, he has been taken up. He has been carried off so that evil may not warp his understanding or treachery seduce his soul, for the fascination of evil throws good things into the shade, and the whirlwind of desire corrupts a simple heart. Coming to perfection in so short a while, he achieved long life; his soul being pleasing to the Lord, he has taken him quickly from the wickedness around him. Yet people look on, uncomprehending; it does not enter their heads that grace and mercy await the chosen of the Lord, and protection, his holy ones.

The word of the Lord.

Option 3

A reading from the prophet Isaiah.

On this mountain, the Lord of hosts will prepare for all peoples a banquet of rich food. On this mountain he will remove the mourning veil covering all peoples, and the shroud enwrapping all nations, he will destroy Death forever. The Lord will wipe away the tears from every cheek; he will take away his people's shame everywhere on earth, for the Lord has said so. That day, it will be said: See, this is our God in whom we hoped. We exult and we rejoice that he has saved us.

The word of the Lord.

Option 4

A reading from the book of Ecclesiastes.

There is a season for everything, a time for every occupation under heaven: A time for giving birth, a time for dying; a time for planting, a time for uprooting what has been planted. A time for killing, a time for healing; a time for knocking down, a time for building. A time for tears, a time for laughter; a time for mourning, a time for dancing. A time for throwing stones away, a time for gathering them; a time for embracing, a time to refrain from embracing. A time for searching, a time for losing; a time for keeping, a time for discarding. A time for tearing, a time for sewing; a time for keeping silent, a time for speaking. A time for loving, a time for hating; a time for war, a time for peace.

The word of the Lord.

Option 5

A reading from the book of Proverbs.

Let kindness and loyalty never leave you; wear them around your neck, write them on your heart. Trust in God, put no faith in your own perception; in every course you take have God in your mind. Happy the person who discovers such wisdom, because wisdom is beyond the price of pearls, nothing you could wish for is her equal. Her ways are delightful ways, her paths all lead to contentment. She is a tree of life for those who hold her fast, those who cling to her live happy lives.

The word of the Lord.

Option 6

A reading from the second book of Maccabees.

The noble Judas Maccabeus took up a collection, man by man, to the amount of two thousand drachmas of silver, and sent it to Jerusalem to provide for a sin offering. In doing this he acted very well and honourably, taking account of the resurrection. For if he were not expecting that those who had fallen asleep would rise again, it would have been superfluous and foolish to pray for the dead. But if he was looking to the splendid reward that is laid up for those who fall asleep in godliness, it was a holy and pious thought. Therefore, he made atonement for the dead, so that they might be delivered from their sin.

The word of the Lord.

Responsorial Psalm

Psalm 22 (23)

If the Psalm is not sung, the following may be read between the First and Second Readings:

Reader: The Lord is my shepherd; there is nothing I shall want.

All: *The Lord is my shepherd; there is nothing I shall want.*

Reader: The Lord is my shepherd; there is nothing I shall want.

Fresh and green are the pastures where he gives me repose.

Near restful waters he leads me, to revive my drooping spirit.

He guides me along the right path; he is true to his name.

All: *The Lord is my shepherd; there is nothing I shall want.*

Reader: You have prepared a banquet for me in the sight of my foes.

My head you have anointed with oil; my cup is overflowing.

Surely goodness and kindness shall follow me all the days of my life.

In the Lord's own house shall I dwell forever and ever.

All: *The Lord is my shepherd; there is nothing I shall want.*

Options for the Second Reading

Option 1

A reading from the first letter of St Paul to the Corinthians.

Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of all who have fallen asleep. Death came through one man and in the same way the resurrection of the dead has come through one man. Just as all men die in Adam, so all men will be brought to life in Christ; but all of them in their proper order: Christ as the first fruits and then, after the coming of Christ, those who belong to him.

The word of the Lord.

Option 2

A reading from the first letter of St Paul to the Thessalonians.

Do not weep for those who have died, or be filled with sadness like those who have nothing to hope for. We believe that Jesus died and rose to new life, and that the same thing will happen to all who believe in him. Take comfort in knowing that everyone who died in Christ shall rise to new life and be with him forever.

The word of the Lord.

Option 3

A reading from the second letter of St Paul to Timothy.

As for me, my life is already being poured away as a libation, and the time has come for me to depart. I have fought the good fight to the end; I have run the race to the finish. I have kept the faith; all there is to come for me now is the crown of righteousness which the Lord, the upright judge, will give to me on that Day; and not only to me but to all those who have longed for his appearing.

The word of the Lord.

Option 4

A reading from the first letter of St John.

Think of the love that the Father has lavished on us, by letting us be called God's children; and that is what we are. Because the world refused to acknowledge him, therefore it does not acknowledge us. My dear people, we are already the children of God but what we are to be in the future has not yet been revealed; all we know is, that when it is revealed we shall be like him because we shall see him as he really is.

The word of the Lord.

Option 5

A reading from the letter of St Paul to the Philippians.

For us, our homeland is in heaven, and from heaven comes the saviour we are waiting for, the Lord Jesus Christ, and he will transfigure these wretched bodies of ours into copies of his glorious body. He will do that by the same power with which he can subdue the whole universe.

The word of the Lord.

Option 6

A reading from the letter of St Paul to the Romans.

Hope is not deceptive, because the love of God has been poured into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, which has been given to us. We were still helpless when at his appointed moment Christ died for sinful men. It is not easy to die even for a good man — though of course for someone really worthy, a man might be prepared to die — but what proves that God loves us is that Christ died for us while we were still sinners. Having died to make us righteous, is it likely that he would now fail to save us from God's anger? When we were reconciled, surely, we may count on being saved by the life of his Son? Not merely because we have been reconciled but because we are filled with joyful trust in God, through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have already gained our reconciliation.

The word of the Lord.

Option 7

A reading from the letter of St Paul to the Romans.

The life and death of each of us has its influence on others, if we live, we live for the Lord, and if we die, we die for the Lord, so that alive or dead we belong to the Lord. This explains why Christ both died and came to life; it was so that he might be Lord both of the dead and the living. We shall all have to stand before the judgement seat of God; as scripture says: By my life — it is the Lord who speaks — every knee shall bend before me, and every tongue shall praise God. It is to God, therefore, that each of us must give an account of himself.

The word of the Lord.

Option 8

A reading from the second letter of St Paul to the Corinthians.

We know that when the tent that we live in on earth is folded up, there is a house built by God for us, an everlasting home not made by human hands, in the heavens. We are always full of confidence, then, when we remember that to live in the body means to be exiled from the Lord,

going as we do by faith and not by sight — we are full of confidence, I say, and actually want to be exiled from the body and make our home with the Lord. Whether we are living in the body or exiled from it, we are intent on pleasing him. For all the truth about us will be brought out in the law court of Christ, and each of us will get what he deserves for the things he did in the body, good or bad.

The word of the Lord.

Option 9

A reading from the book of Revelation.

Then I heard a voice from heaven say to me, 'Write down: Blessed are those who die in the Lord! Blessed indeed, the Spirit says; now they can rest for ever after their work, since their good deeds go with them.'

The word of the Lord.

Option 10

A reading from the first letter of St Paul to the Thessalonians.

We want you to be quite certain, brothers, about those who have died, to make sure that you do not grieve about them, like the other people who have no hope. We believe that Jesus died and rose again, and that it will be the same for those who have died in Jesus: God will bring them with him. We can tell you this from the Lord's own teaching, that any of us who are left alive to the Lord's coming will not have any advantage over those who have died. At the trumpet of God, the voice of the archangel will call out the command and the Lord himself will come down from heaven; those who have died in Christ will be the first to rise, and then those of us who are still alive will be taken up in the clouds, together with them, to meet the Lord in the air. So, we shall stay with the Lord forever. With such thoughts as these you should comfort one another.

The word of the Lord.

Option 11

A reading from the letter of St Paul to the Romans.

When we were baptised in Christ Jesus we were baptised in his death; in other words, when we were baptised, we went into the tomb with him and joined him in death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead by the father's glory, we too might live a new life. If in union with Christ we have imitated his death, we shall also imitate him in his resurrection. We must realise that our former selves have been crucified with him to destroy this sinful body and to free us from slavery of sin. When a man dies, of course, he has finished with sin. But we believe that having died with Christ we shall return to life with him: Christ, as we know, having been raised from the dead will never die again. Death has no power over him anymore.

The word of the Lord.

Prayers of the Faithful

(Universal Prayer)

Guidelines

The Prayers of the Faithful are an expression of the priestly office of the baptised, through which they intercede for all humanity.

Number of Readers: One to five family members or friends may share in reading the intentions.

Procedure:

1. When invited by the priest, approach the ambo together
2. Bow to the altar before entering the sanctuary
3. Wait for the priest's introduction
4. Each reader proclaims their assigned intention clearly
5. Allow the assembly to respond: 'Lord, graciously hear us'
6. Remain at the ambo until the priest concludes with the closing prayer
7. Bow to the tabernacle when leaving the sanctuary

Sample Prayers of the Faithful

Priest: Let us pray to God in heaven, who through Christ gives us the hope that our mortal bodies will become like his in glory:

1. In Baptism we are given the promise of eternal life: may *N.* be raised up to share the life of God in heaven. *(pause)*... **Lord, hear us.**
2. For the family and friends of *N.*: that they may find strength and consolation in the hope we have through Christ's Resurrection from the dead. *(pause)*... **Lord, hear us.**
3. Lord our God, look on those who live without hope and do not know you; bring them to believe in the Resurrection and the life of the world to come. *(pause)*... **Lord, hear us.**
4. Compassionate Father, bless all who cared for *N.* in illness, and all who devote themselves to tending the sick and the dying; reward their kindness and renew them with your grace. *(pause)*... **Lord, hear us.**
5. Eternal Father, bring *N.*, all our deceased relatives and friends, and all the faithful departed into the light of your presence. *(pause)*... **Lord, hear us.**

Priest: O God, you made us for yourself, and our hearts are restless until they rest in you. Hear our prayers and grant that our hearts may be set on our eternal home where we will all be reunited through your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

Offertory Gifts

Two gift bearers may be selected to carry forward the bread and wine used for the consecration of the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass.

The gift bearers approach the altar at the Offertory, present the gifts to the priest, and then return to their seats.



*Eternal rest grant unto them, O Lord,
and let perpetual light shine upon them.
May they rest in peace. Amen.*