

Celebrating a Catholic Funeral 2023-24

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May God bless you at this time of grief and give you peace.

It will always be helpful to speak to and be guided by a catechist, deacon or priest when organising the funeral service. We'll be in touch with you soon.

Jesus says: 'Come to me, all you who labour and are overburdened, and I will give you rest. Shoulder my yoke and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble of heart, and you will find rest for your souls. Yes, my yoke is easy and my burden light.'

Let us pray: Lord God we commend into your hands our brother/sister. Welcome him/her into eternal life where there will be no sorrow, but the fullness of peace and joy. We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

What is a Catholic funeral?

A Catholic funeral is most frequently a requiem Mass in Church (45-50 minutes). Otherwise a Catholic funeral could be a funeral service in Church (30-35 minutes), or a funeral service at the crematorium (25 minutes).

A requiem Mass in the Church followed by committal at the crematorium or cemetery would be most appropriate if the deceased and family members practice the Catholic faith through regular Sunday Mass. The family would therefore be able to understand and participate in the responses of the Mass.

The Purpose of a Catholic funeral

It is common in our culture for a funeral to be mainly about a celebration of life for the deceased. The Catholic funeral is more profound than this. The Catholic funeral lays the greater emphasis on giving thanks to God for the life of the deceased, praying for them as we commend the deceased into the arms of a God of compassion, and praying for one another that we may know peace and consolation at this time of grief.

It is appropriate to use only religious hymns and sacred music in the Church. We do not have a license to use secular music. At the crematorium there is wider choice of music available, but there are many beautiful Christian songs to choose from sung by the likes of Aled Jones, Katherine Jenkins, and Russell Watson. Occasionally a poem is requested. If so, this would be best read at the crematorium or cemetery.

The Catholic funeral is calm and dignified. The prayers and Bible readings powerfully speak for themselves. Through the prayers of the funeral we pray that you will receive and know the consolation of faith.

Words of Remembrance

You may wish that someone will share some words of remembrance in honour of the deceased near the beginning of the funeral.

If this is chosen, it should be no more than five minutes in total. It is nearly always helpful to have it written or typed out on one side of A4.

Long eulogies do not have a place in the Catholic funeral. However, it is entirely appropriate for stories about the deceased to be shared at the reception after the funeral.

Hymns

If the funeral is in Church, it is often appropriate to sing some hymns and listen to instrumental organ music. Please consider whether people are likely to know and join in by singing the hymns you may choose. We can book an organist for you.

Examples of popular hymns for a funeral in Church:

Abide with me, Amazing Grace, As I kneel before you, Be thou my vision, Do not be afraid, Hail Queen of Heaven, Here I am Lord, How great thou art, I watch the sunrise, Lord of all hopefulness, Make me a channel of your peace, The Lord's my shepherd, Be still for the presence of the Lord.

Order of Service for a Requiem Mass

(The Order of Service for a funeral service is similar)

The Requiem Mass usually takes about 45-50 minutes.

- Entrance procession to instrumental organ music
- Introduction and Welcome
- ***Optional 'Words of Remembrance' (5 minutes maximum)***
- ***Optional opening hymn***
- Opening Prayer
- First Reading
- Psalm
- Gospel Reading
- Homily – a short sermon given by the celebrant
- Intercessions – The response is: Hear our prayer
- **Hymn** as the gifts are prepared
- Liturgy of the Eucharist & Holy Communion
- ***A hymn or instrumental organ music at Communion***
- Prayer after Communion
- Final Commendation
- ***Recessional hymn or instrumental organ music***

It would be a help with the organisation if you would discuss the choices for Bible readings and hymns with your family before meeting with the representatives from the Church, and to bring those choices with you including the names of people who might read the Words of Remembrance, First Reading and Psalm.