

## Funeral Liturgy

*“At the funeral liturgy, The Church gathers with the family and friends of the deceased to give praise and thanks to God for Christ's victory over sin and death, to commend the deceased to God's tender mercy and compassion, and to seek strength in the proclamation of the Paschal Mystery. The funeral liturgy, therefore, is an act of worship, and not merely an expression of grief.” From United States Catholic Conference of Bishops (USCCB) web site.*

In keeping with the norms found in the *Order of Christian Funerals*, St. Clare's Pastoral Leadership has the responsibility of the planning and implementation of the funeral liturgies [Vigil (wake), Funeral Mass, and Burial] with our Sacramental Minister.

Our team of qualified ministers meets with family members to plan the funeral liturgy within the guidelines of the funeral rite and the norms established by the Albany Diocese. Where appropriate, family members may and are encouraged to participate in the funeral ritual. (OCF,15). Family may pick readings from the prescribed funeral readings. The family of the deceased may also suggest persons to place the pall and /or a Christian symbol on the Casket at the reception of the body at the doors of the church. Note: Only Christian symbols are to be placed on the casket, such as a Bible or Crucifix of the deceased. Choosing persons who will participate in the offertory procession of bread and wine for the Mass is also a wonderful opportunity to be involved in the Liturgy.

Our Catholic Funeral Liturgy is bursting with signs, symbols and prayers prescribe by the tradition and teachings of the Roman Catholic Church and they should *be trusted* to bring about the hope and the life promised in Jesus as a Baptized Christian in the Paschal Mystery. *To try and change the ritual to suit more secular ways or turn the Mass into a performance by individuals contaminates the ritual and destroys the integrity of the Funeral Rite.* There are places where the favorite baseball cap can be displayed or a secular song, sung by an individual, can be sung, it is *not* at the funeral Mass. The Vigil and/or the graveside are the appropriate places.

The selection of music for the funeral liturgy is often a sensitive issue for bereaved families, parish musicians and pastoral staff. The same liturgical norms applied to music at weekend Mass apply to a Funeral Mass. The choice of music for Catholic funerals must be in accord with all the norms governing music and liturgy, especially those found in the general Instruction of the Roman Missal and the *Order of Christian Funerals*. Music should be appropriate for Catholic Liturgical prayer. The texts of the music should be expressive of the ***Paschal Mystery***: the passion, death and resurrection of Christ.

It is the pastoral responsibility of the parish to provide liturgical music at all Funeral Masses. Should you have a favorite Cantor, they are most welcome to sing with our music ministry. However, our music ministry team is responsible for singing the appropriate parts of the Mass. Their job is to assist the **FULL participation** of the assembly to sing the hymns, responses, and acclamations of the Funeral Rite (OCF, 33). In the *Order of Christian Funerals*, the Cantor **leads the assembly in song** they should not “perform” as a soloist.

The Vigil (wake) for the deceased is a more fitting time for individuals to give a eulogy to share remembrances of the deceased. At the Vigil more than one person can be chosen by the family to give such a remembrance.

Christian Remarks may be given before the Funeral Mass begins. It is given by one person, chosen by the family to speak to the assembly about how the deceased led a Christian life. It is to be a tone of faith and hope, between 3-5 minutes in length, and its purpose is to witness to the assembly the lifestyle chosen at Baptism and Confirmation.