

# A GUIDE TO PREARRANGING A CATHOLIC FUNERAL

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## A Gift to Those Who Mourn

Prearranging one's own funeral is an act of compassion, sparing your loved ones from difficult decisions during a time of bereavement. Moreover, prearrangements may be

made at your convenience calmly, responsibly, economically, and prudently.

This guide has been developed to inform you of the decisions

that must be made in preparation for, or following, a death. By completing this guide you are providing a road-map for your loved one's to follow at your time of need.

## In the Sure and Certain Hope

As Catholics, we believe that what happened to Jesus in His resurrection from the dead will also one day happen to us. This hope in life after death has brought joy and comfort to millions of believers as they mourn the death and



GROTTO,  
UNIVERSITY OF NOTRE DAME

experience the loss of a loved one.

The following outlines a traditional Catholic funeral and provides an explanation of each event's purpose and significance.

## VIGIL AND RELATED RITES AND PRAYERS

The Vigil for the Deceased is the first way the Church captures the sentiments of those who are grieving and sets them in the context of our faith. A prayer service with readings selected from Scripture to fit the circumstances of the deceased, a homily that comforts and gives hope, intercessions that speak to the faith of those

gathered around the deceased, and prayers selected from the rich resources found in the *Order of Christian Funerals* can do a great deal to prepare people to enter into the Christian spirit of the funeral liturgy. The Rosary or other prayers to the Blessed Virgin Mary can be a part of the Vigil.

Eulogies are best given at the Vigil Service. Eulogies should be given in the context of prayer and must be more than mere tributes to the goodness of the deceased. There must be reference to what God has done for the deceased person and for us through him or her.



BASILICA OF THE SACRED HEART

## FUNERAL LITURGY (MASS)

Celebrating the funeral liturgy at Mass in the parish church is the normal way most Catholics experience the *Order of Christian Funerals*. The Eucharist looks forward to our participation in the heavenly banquet, where we are united with Jesus, the saints, and all those who share eternal life. Jesus said, “whoever eats of my flesh and drinks of my blood shall live forever.” (JOHN 6:54) The Eucharist is truly the central point in a Catholic funeral. Its

effectiveness is greatly enhanced when the family participates in appropriate ways: clothing the casket with the pall, selecting the Scripture readings, serving as lectors or extraordinary ministers of holy communion, singing the responses and hymns and, most especially, receiving the Eucharist.

The funeral homily is of utmost importance in the funeral liturgy. A homily may be delivered only by a priest or a

deacon, as liturgical homilies are part of the sacramental rite of the Eucharist. The homily speaks of the mystery of Christ's death and resurrection and gives the deeper meaning that is found in the experience of death and dying. The homily occurs within the context of a funeral Mass that is offered for the forgiveness of sins and the salvation of the soul of the faithful departed.

“INTO YOUR HANDS, FATHER OF MERCIES, WE COMMEND OUR BROTHER/SISTER IN THE SURE AND CERTAIN HOPE THAT, TOGETHER WITH ALL WHO HAVE DIED IN CHRIST, HE/SHE WILL RISE WITH HIM ON THE LAST DAY.”

ORDER OF CHRISTIAN FUNERALS

## COMMITTAL SERVICE (CEMETERY)

The Rite of Committal is the final liturgy in the *Order of Christian Funeral*. Like the Vigil Service, the Rite of Committal makes use of Scripture, a few words of hope by the presider, intercessions, and prayers.

To have a representative of the Church present is a great source of consolation to those who will now continue their journeys in life without their beloved. While a priest may be unavailable to preside at the Committal Service, a

deacon or a trained bereavement minister may represent the Church at this final moment.

## CREMATION

The Church prefers to bury the body of the deceased in or on consecrated ground. For a variety of reasons, some people may prefer to have the body of the deceased cremated before it is buried. This is allowed, as long as there is no intentional denial

of the final resurrection of the body.

The burial or inurnment in a cemetery, mausoleum, or columbarium should occur as soon as possible after the funeral Mass, so that the cremated remains of the body are not kept in the funeral

home or family home. Out of respect for the body, the Church does not permit the cremated remains of the body to be scattered over water or some favorite place. Cremated remains are to be given the same respect as the body.

# Mission Organization: The Role of the Funeral Home

The funeral home is instrumental in organizing and implementing the celebration of one's life at its conclusion. With countless details to attend to, it is important that you choose someone you can trust.

Although funeral homes offer similar services, each is differ-

ent. To ensure you find a provider you can trust, tour several facilities and meet with the staff before making a selection.

It is also advisable to research options for pre-paying for services, as doing so can result in cost savings.

The following topics take you through the natural order of events following a death, including the people to contact and the decisions to be made. Space is provided for you to record your wishes.



STAINED GLASS WINDOW,  
BASILICA OF THE SACRED HEART

## WHO TO CALL AT THE TIME OF DEATH

### *Comfort for the Family*

- Family Priest

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

### *Record the Death*

- If a death occurs at home under Hospice Care contact the local hospice office.

Contact Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

- If a death occurs at home contact your local law enforcement..

Non-Emergency Police Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

### *Notify Family Members*

- Designate one family member as the family liaison. The family liaison will field phone calls, answer questions and respond to offers of assistance on your behalf.

Family Liaison: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

- Record names and phone numbers of immediate family. During a time of stress you may forget a phone number or you may ask the family liaison to make the calls for you.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

APPOINTING  
A FAMILY  
LIAISON TO  
FIELD CALLS,  
ANSWER  
QUESTIONS,  
AND  
ORGANIZE  
OFFERS TO  
HELP GIVES  
YOU MORE  
TIME TO  
FOCUS ON  
THE DETAILS  
AND  
ADMINISTER  
TO YOUR  
GRIEF.



BASILICA OF THE SACRED HEART AND GOLDEN DOME

ORGANIZING ITEMS,  
RECORDING  
FAMILY NAMES,  
HOBBIES AND KEY  
ACCOMPLISHMENTS  
ELIMINATES  
UNCERTAINTY FOR  
YOUR LOVED ONES.

## WHO TO CALL

### *Inform Employer*

- Contact both the immediate supervisor and the human resources manager to ensure co-workers of the deceased are informed and that insurance benefits are handled promptly and correctly.

Supervisor: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

HR Manager: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

## ORGANIZE ITEMS AND INFORMATION

There are many personal items, from clothing to pictures, that are either required or recommended for use by the funeral home. The following is a list of items you can gather now.

It is important to notify your family liaison and/or other family members of the location of these items.

### *Items for Burial*

- Clothing (Including under garments)
- Jewelry (Must request returned, if desired)
- Rosary
- Glasses
- Shoes

### *Items and Information for the Death Certificate and Obituary*

- Social Security Number \_\_\_\_\_
- Date of Birth \_\_\_\_\_
- Place of Birth \_\_\_\_\_
- Mother's Maiden Name \_\_\_\_\_
- Marriage Date \_\_\_\_\_
- Photo (Obituary)—Individual/Group \_\_\_\_\_
- Name of Newspaper(s) \_\_\_\_\_  
May include out of town papers \_\_\_\_\_
- Discharge Papers \_\_\_\_\_
- Work History \_\_\_\_\_

Items and Information for the Death Certificate and Obituary Continued

Family Names/Next of Kin

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Relationship: \_\_\_\_\_
Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Relationship: \_\_\_\_\_
Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Relationship: \_\_\_\_\_
Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Relationship: \_\_\_\_\_
Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Relationship: \_\_\_\_\_
Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Relationship: \_\_\_\_\_
Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Relationship: \_\_\_\_\_
Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Relationship: \_\_\_\_\_

Clubs, Hobbies, Accomplishments, etc.

\_\_\_\_\_
\_\_\_\_\_
\_\_\_\_\_
\_\_\_\_\_

SELECT SERVICES AND MERCHANDISE

Establish a Budget

Before visiting the funeral home, it is important to establish a budget. Planning a funeral service is emotional and it is easy to over-spend, especially if arrangements are made at need.

Select the Service Type, Hours and Location

- Traditional full body burial/service or
Cremated remains service
The Catholic Church prefers the full body present at viewing and funeral Mass.
Visitation the day prior to the funeral? Yes No
Start Time: \_\_\_\_\_ End Time: \_\_\_\_\_
Visitation two (2) hours prior to the funeral? Yes No
Start Time: \_\_\_\_\_ End Time: \_\_\_\_\_
Name and address of church where the funeral Mass will be held:



INSIDE THE GROTTTO



STATUE OF THE BLESSED  
VIRGIN MARY, GROTTA

## SELECT SERVICES AND MERCHANDISE

### *Select Merchandise*

- Casket  
Caskets are made from a number of materials including bronze, copper, stainless steel, and wood/steel combination. Simple, solid wood caskets are available to those who have chosen cremation.
- Urns for Cremated Remains  
Like caskets, urns are also constructed from a variety of materials including bronze, steel, wood, glass, and porcelain. It is important to note, however, that certain materials lend themselves to specific types of interment. For example, a glass or porcelain urn may be used in a glass display niche but is not suitable for ground burial.
- Vault  
Depending on both the method of interment and your cemetery's rules and regulations, a vault may be required. Typically, a vault is required for in-ground burial but is not required for above-ground interment in a mausolea or columbaria. There are also different types of vaults including those that are sealed, unsealed and lined or unlined.
- Register Book  
A visitation affords the opportunity for family and friends to gather in celebration of the deceased's life. At such an emotional time, it is difficult to remember everyone who came to say good-bye and wish the family well. A register book provides a place for guests to document their name and address, information the family may need when sending thank you cards.
- Prayer Card/Memorial Folder
- Thank You/Acknowledgement Card
- Crucifix

### VISITATION PERSONALIZATION

You are encouraged to incorporate items of significance to you into the visitation.

- Handmade Items
- Artwork or Mementos
- Photographs (individual, family, friends, pets)
  - For display in frames
  - For inclusion in a video tribute
- Flag/Fraternal Organization Memorabilia

# Expressions of Love: Let Flowers Tell the Story

Flowers make a significant impact on the viewing and funeral Mass, therefore it is important to select a florist you or your loved one trusts. The funeral home will receive inquiries from family and friends, so be sure to provide them with the name of the florist. The florist can then ensure all arrangements are complimentary and to your liking.

Flowers are another way to personalize the service when used to reflect the personality and interests of the deceased. Incorporating pictures, art, or religious statuary into a floral arrangement is one common way of personalizing an arrangement.



CASKET SPRAY

## FLORIST INFORMATION & PREFERENCES

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Favorite Flowers: \_\_\_\_\_

Preferred Style of Arrangements: \_\_\_\_\_

## ARRANGEMENT OPTIONS

- Casket Spray  
A casket spray is used to cover the closed portion of a casket in the absence of a U.S. flag. Provide the size of the casket to ensure the casket spray is of appropriate scale.
- Children's Spray  
It is common for a small arrangement, from a single rose to a rosary made of flowers from young relatives to be displayed inside the casket lid.
- Mache  
The most traditional funeral arrangement, flowers are arranged in a paper mache container.
- Easel  
A floral display, often in the shape of a heart or cross, that is partially or entirely composed of flowers and displayed on an easel.



FLOWER CROSS ON EASEL

- Vase or Urn Arrangement  
An elegant arrangement in a vase or urn. May be composed of fresh or silk flowers.
- Planter  
A planter contains small house plants, some of which are flowering. Planters are commonly retained by the family for display in their home.
- Blooming or Green Plant  
Blooming and green plants are much larger than those found in planters and may be displayed on a table or on the floor. Like the planters, they are often retained by the family for display in the home.



URN ARRANGEMENT



PLANTER

# Funeral Mass Preparation



MADONNA AND CHILD STATUE, BASILICA OF THE SACRED HEART

The *Order of Christian Funerals* notes that the role and place of music is “integral to the funeral rites.” Hymns and songs that help express our Christian hope, provide consolation for those who mourn, and help direct us to the Paschal Mystery of

Christ’s saving death and resurrection should, as much as possible, be a part of each of the three funeral rituals: the Vigil, the funeral Mass, and the committal service. Music or songs that are not liturgical or are otherwise inappropriate for the funeral

Mass can be included at various times outside the funeral rites, for example, during the Vigil or after the committal service at the cemetery.

YOUR PASTOR,  
DEACON OR PARISH  
BEREAVEMENT  
COUNSELOR WILL  
ASSIST YOU IN  
SELECTING THE  
MOST APPROPRIATE  
READINGS, SONGS  
AND MUSIC FOR THE  
FUNERAL MASS.

Readings:

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Family Representatives for Readings:

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Music:

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Pallbearers (6):

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Clergy:

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Greeters (2):

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Cantor/Singer:

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Organist/Musician:

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Gift Bearers:

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*Stipends for clergy, organist/ musician, cantor/ singer, and alter servers are required. The amount is established by the Diocese. Your funeral home can advise you of the stipend amounts.*

A Catholic cemetery is a place of honor and respect for those who have died. It is a memorial to all who are interred there. It is a sacred place where Catholics come to express their grief and hope for their loved

one who has preceded them in death. It is consecrated ground, fitting for someone whose body was a temple of the Holy Spirit on earth and now awaits the resurrection of the dead.

## OWNERSHIP

### *Sole Owner*

- Own your own grave space(s), crypt(s), or niche(s). Remember to keep your Deed or Right of Burial in a safe place, as it is required by the cemetery at the time of need.

Name of Cemetery: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Name/Description of Spaces: \_\_\_\_\_

Location of Deed: \_\_\_\_\_

Beneficiaries Documented with Cemetery: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

### *Family Plot*

- A family plot refers to additional grave spaces, crypts, or niches purchased by a relative for use by the family. State law determines who is eligible to use the spaces and under what conditions, unless a Burial Plot Reservation Form or similar document is completed, signed and submitted to the cemetery by the original owner. Check with the cemetery to determine both eligibility and *availability*.

Name of Cemetery: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

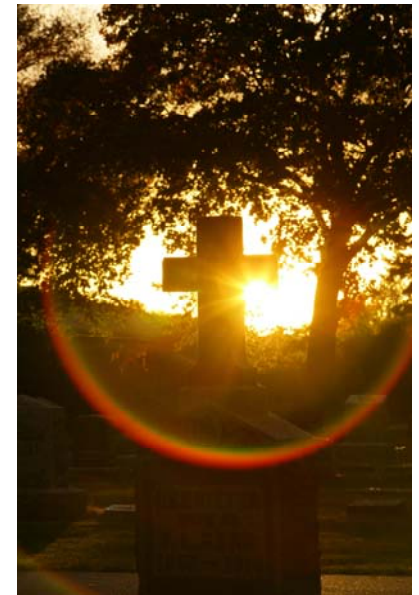
Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Name/Description of Spaces: \_\_\_\_\_

Location of Deed: \_\_\_\_\_

Surviving Heirs: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_



MONUMENT IN CEDAR GROVE CEMETERY

BECAUSE STATE  
LAW  
DETERMINES  
ELIGIBILITY FOR  
BURIAL, *UNLESS*  
*DOCUMENTED IN*  
*WRITING BY THE*  
*ORIGINAL*  
*OWNER*, IT IS  
IMPORTANT TO  
VERIFY  
ELIGIBILITY AND  
AVAILABILITY  
WITH THE  
CEMETERY  
BEFORE THE  
TIME OF NEED.



HISTORIC CEDAR GROVE  
CEMETERY

## BURIAL OPTIONS

### *In-Ground Burial*

If purchasing new in-ground burial space, be sure to understand the number of burials a single grave space may accommodate. Depending on the cemetery, they may allow as few as one full body or cremated remains burial to as many as four cremated remains burials on a single grave space.

- ❑ Standard Grave Space

A standard size grave space may accommodate both full body and cremated remains burials. It is important to note that most cemeteries require a body be embalmed prior to full body burial.

- ❑ Cremation Grave Space

Cremation grave spaces are smaller than standard grave spaces and exclusively accommodate burial of cremated remains. Cremation graves typically accommodate one or two cremated remains burials; clarify what is allowed on your grave space.

### *Above-Ground Burial*

Many cemeteries now offer above-ground burial as it makes the most use of available land. Above-ground burial is offered in either a mausoleum or columbarium.

- ❑ Mausoleum

A mausoleum is a structure dedicated to the entombment of the full body within a crypt. A mausoleum may also contain niches for the inurnment of human cremated remains.

- ❑ Columbarium

A columbarium is a wall or column of niches that is either free standing or part of a mausoleum designed to accommodate the above-ground inurnment of human cremated remains.

- ❑ Crypt and Niche Types

Crypts and niches may be sold as singles for the interment of one person or as companions for the interment of two individuals. In rare cases, a crypt or niche may accommodate up to four individuals.

Companions may be side-by-side, tandem (front to back, head to toe) or couch (front to back, length-wise).



OUR LADY OF SORROWS AT  
CEDAR GROVE CEMETERY MAUSOLEA

❑ Opening and Closing Fees

Regardless of the type of burial there is a fee associated with the opening and closing of a grave, crypt, or niche. This fee is typically assessed at the time of need, however, some cemeteries may package the opening and closing fee with the purchase of a burial space, crypt or niche. Such bundling is advantageous as it avoids price increases and inflation.

❑ Vault

As noted on page 6, a vault is typically required for in-ground burial of both the full body and cremated remains. A vault ensures that the casket or urn does not shift as the ground settles following burial. There are different types of vaults including sealed, unsealed, lined, and unlined. Refer to the cemetery’s published rules and regulations to ensure you purchase an approved vault.

❑ Memorialization

According to the *Order of Christian Funerals*, “whenever possible, appropriate means for recording with dignity the memory of the deceased should be adopted, such as a plaque or stone which records the name of the deceased.” The type of grave space and /or location within the cemetery often determine the type, size, and style of monument (headstone, marker) allowed. Memorialization is typically purchased separately from the grave space, however, as with opening and closing fees, some cemeteries package the memorialization with the purchase of the burial space, crypt or niche. Such bundling is advantageous as it avoids price increases and inflation.

• Upright Monuments

Upright monuments are most commonly made of granite. There are three standard types of upright monuments: the traditional Base and Tablet, Slant, and Bevel (slanted at a 2 degree pitch). Upright monuments require a proper foundation poured for a fee by the cemetery or monument company to avoid settling.

• Flush Monuments

Flush monuments are made of either granite or bronze. It is important to note that a flush monument can be difficult to see/find and is easily covered by grass, leaves, and snow. Flush monuments also require a foundation.

• Crypt or Niche

Crypts and niches are faced with a “shutter” made of granite or some other durable material. Crypts and niches on the interior, for example, may feature a marble shutter. Some niches located on the interior of a mausoleum may also feature a glass shutter.

- ◆ The shutter may be engraved with the deceased’s personal information or a bronze plate may be attached to the shutter.
- ◆ In the case of a glass front niche, some form of memorialization, such as a plaque, is displayed inside the glass beside the urn.

❑ Additional Services

Many cemeteries offer additional services such as annual plantings or the placement of a wreath during the Christmas holiday for those families who live far away or are unable to do so themselves. Flowers may be ordered from a local florist for placement at or on the monument to mark an anniversary, birthday, etc. Be sure to understand your cemetery’s rules and regulations before ordering.



TRADITIONAL UPRIGHT MONUMENT



NICHE SHUTTERS ON THE EXTERIOR OF OUR LADY OF SORROWS AT CEDAR GROVE CEMETERY MAUSOLEA

## With Special Thanks

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