



THE ROMAN RITUAL

**REVISED BY DECREE OF THE SECOND VATICAN ECUMENICAL COUNCIL
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ORDER OF CHRISTIAN FUNERALS

INCLUDING APPENDIX 2: CREMATION

**Approved for Use in the
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ORDER OF CHRISTIAN FUNERALS

GENERAL INTRODUCTION

1. In the face of death, the Church confidently proclaims that God has created each person for eternal life and that Jesus, the Son of God, by his Death and Resurrection, has broken the chains of sin and death that bound humanity. Christ “achieved his task of redeeming humanity and giving perfect glory to God, principally by the paschal mystery of his blessed passion, resurrection from the dead, and glorious ascension.”¹
2. The proclamation of Jesus Christ “who was put to death for our sins and raised to life to justify us” (Romans 4:25) is at the center of the Church’s life. The mystery of the Lord’s Death and Resurrection gives power to all of the Church’s activity. “For it was from the side of Christ as he slept the sleep of death upon the cross that there came forth the sublime sacrament of the whole Church.”² The Church’s liturgical and sacramental life and proclamation of the Gospel make this mystery present in the life of the faithful. Through the Sacraments of Baptism, Confirmation, and Eucharist, men and women are initiated into this mystery. “You have been taught that when we were baptized in Christ Jesus we were baptized into his death; in other words when we were baptized 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” (Romans 6:3-5).
3. In the Eucharistic Sacrifice, the Church’s celebration of Christ’s Pass-over from death to life, the faith of the baptized in the Paschal Mystery is renewed and nourished. Their union with Christ and with each other is strengthened: “Because there is one bread, we who are many, are one body; for we all partake of the one bread” (1 Corinthians 10:17).
4. At the death of a Christian, whose life of faith was begun in the waters of Baptism and strengthened at the Eucharistic table, the Church intercedes on behalf of the deceased because of its confident belief that death is not the end nor does it break the bonds forged in life. The Church also ministers to the sorrowing and consoles them in the funeral rites with the comforting Word of God and the Sacrament of the Eucharist.
5. Christians celebrate the funeral rites to 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. The Mass, the memorial of Christ’s Death and Resurrection, is the principal celebration of the Christian funeral.

¹ Vatican Council II, Constitution on the Liturgy *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, art. 5.

² *Ibid.*

5:7-9). In the Psalms the members of the assembly pray in the voice of Christ, who intercedes on their behalf before the Father.⁵ The Church, like Christ, turns again and again to the Psalms as a genuine expression of grief and of praise and as a sure source of trust and hope in times of trial. Pastors and other ministers are, therefore, to make an earnest effort through an effective catechesis to lead their communities to a clearer and deeper grasp of at least some of the Psalms provided for the funeral rites.

26. The Psalms are designated for use in many places in the funeral rites (for example, as responses to the readings, for the processions, for use at the vigil for the deceased). Since the Psalms are songs, whenever possible, they should be sung.

Homily

27. A brief homily based on the readings is always given after the Gospel reading at the funeral liturgy and may also be given after the readings at the vigil service; but there is never to be a eulogy. Attentive to the grief of those present, the homilist should dwell on God's compassionate love and on the Paschal Mystery of the Lord, as proclaimed in the Scripture readings. The homilist should also help the members of the assembly to understand that the mystery of God's love and the mystery of Jesus' victorious Death and Resurrection were present in the life and death of the deceased and that these mysteries are active in their own lives as well. Through the Homily members of the family and community should receive consolation and strength to face the death of one of their members with a hope nourished by the saving Word of God. Laypersons who preside at the funeral rites give an instruction on the readings.

PRAYERS AND INTERCESSIONS

28. In the presidential prayers of the funeral rites the presiding minister addresses God on behalf of the deceased and the mourners in the name of the entire Church. From the variety of prayers provided the minister in consultation with the family should carefully select texts that truly capture the unspoken prayers and hopes of the assembly and also respond to the needs of the mourners.

29. Having heard the Word of God proclaimed and preached, the assembly responds at the vigil and at the funeral liturgy with prayers of intercession for the deceased and all the dead, for the family and all who mourn, and for all in the assembly. The holy People of God, confident in their belief in the communion of saints, exercise their royal Priesthood by joining together in this prayer for all those who have died.⁶

Several models of intercessions are provided within the rites for adaptation to the circumstances.

⁵ See General Instruction of the Liturgy of the Hours, no. 109.

⁶ See *De Oratione communi seu fidelium* (2nd ed., Vatican Polyglot Press, 1966), chapter 1, no. 3, p. 7: tr., *Documents on the Liturgy* (The Liturgical Press, 1982), no. 1893.

MUSIC

30. 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 texts of the songs chosen for a particular celebration should express the Paschal Mystery of the Lord's suffering, Death, and triumph over death and should be related to the readings from Scripture.

31. Since music can evoke strong feelings, the music for the celebration of the funeral rites should be chosen with great care. The music at funerals should support, console, and uplift the participants and should help to create in them a spirit of hope in Christ's victory over death and in the Christian's share in that victory.

32. Music should be provided for the vigil and funeral liturgy and, whenever possible, for the funeral processions and the rite of committal. The specific notes that precede each of these rites suggest places in the rites where music is appropriate. Many musical settings used by the parish community during the liturgical year may be suitable for use at funerals. Efforts should be made to develop and expand the parish's repertoire for use at funerals.

33. An organist or other instrumentalist, a cantor, and, whenever possible, even a choir should assist the assembly's full participation in singing the songs, responses, and acclamations of these rites.

SILENCE

34. Prayerful silence is an element important to the celebration of the funeral rites. Intervals of silence should be observed, for example, after each reading and during the final commendation and farewell, to permit the assembly to reflect upon the Word of God and the meaning of the celebration.

SYMBOLS

Paschal Candle and Other Candles

35. The paschal candle reminds the faithful of Christ's undying presence among them, of his victory over sin and death, and of their share in that victory by virtue of their initiation. It recalls the Easter Vigil, the night when the Church awaits the Lord's Resurrection and when new light for the living and the dead is kindled. During the funeral liturgy and also during the vigil service, when celebrated in the church, the paschal candle may be placed beforehand near the position the coffin will occupy at the conclusion of the procession.

According to local custom, other candles may also be placed near the coffin during the funeral liturgy as a sign of reverence and solemnity.

PLACING OF THE PALL

84. If it is the custom in the local community, the pall is then placed on the coffin by family members, friends, or the minister.

ENTRANCE PROCESSION

85. The paschal candle may be placed beforehand near the position the coffin will occupy at the conclusion of the procession. The minister and assisting ministers precede the coffin and the mourners into the church. During the procession a Psalm, song, or responsory is sung (see no. 403, p. 392).

PLACING OF CHRISTIAN SYMBOLS

86. A symbol of the Christian life, such as a Book of the Gospels, a Bible, or a cross, may be carried in procession, then placed on the coffin, either in silence or as a text from no. 400, p. 380, is said.

INVITATION TO PRAYER

87. In the following or similar words, the minister invites those present to pray:

My brothers and sisters, we believe that all the ties of friendship and affection which knit us as one throughout our lives do not unravel with death.

Confident that God always remembers the good we have done and forgives our sins, let us pray, asking God to gather **N. to himself:**

Pause for silent prayer.

OPENING PRAYER

88. The minister says one of the following prayers or one of those provided in nos. 398-399, p. 355.

A Lord, in our grief we turn to you.
Are you not the God of love
who open your ears to all?

33

Listen to our prayers for your servant **N.**,
whom you have called out of this world:
lead him (her) to your kingdom of light and peace
and count him (her) among the Saints in glory.
Through Christ our Lord.

R. Amen.

B Lord Jesus, our Redeemer,
you willingly gave yourself up to death,
so that all might be saved and pass from death to life.
We humbly ask you to comfort your servants in
their grief
and to receive **N.** into the arms of your mercy.
You alone are the Holy One,
you are mercy itself;
by dying you unlocked the gates of life for those
who believe in you.
Forgive **N.** his (her) sins,
and grant him (her) a place of happiness, light, and
peace
in the kingdom of your glory for ever and ever.

169

R. Amen.

LITURGY OF THE WORD

89. The celebration continues with the Liturgy of the Word. Other readings, Psalms, and Gospel readings are given in Part III, p. 209.