



Message from the Bishop...

My dear friends

Sickness, suffering and death touch the very core of our journey through life. At some stage they will affect every one of us. The death of people near and dear to us can destabilise us more than somewhat.

Being confronted with the fact that we will one day die, we struggle to make sense of such loss and to come to grips with the fact that a human life is irrevocably ended on earth whilst ours continues to go on. In this human experience of intense loss and grief, we reach out for the comfort and support of our family and friends and the support of the wider community of faith.

The funeral rites of the Catholic Church (vigil, funeral, rite of committal) not only pray for the eternal repose of the deceased, but also give us support as we mourn. A context is provided in which we can grieve the final separation we experience. These Church's funeral rites employ a language and symbolism, chiselled out over centuries, to comfort the grief-stricken where ordinary words fail.

Thanks to our faith in the Communion of Saints we know that, despite death, we are still connected, even though we now have to relate to our deceased in a different way until we are reunited in eternity.

I pray that this leaflet, produced by the Diocesan Liturgical Commission with the support of the Council of Priests, will be a valuable resource, not only for those who are faced with the tasks of preparing the funeral of someone they love, but also for those who will assist and be with the bereaved at such a critical time.

Most Rev Peter W Ingham DD
Bishop of Wollongong

*Jesus promised that those who believe in Him
will live forever!*

May the love of God and the peace of the Lord Jesus console you in this time of loss and grief.

A time to pray...

Be our refuge and strength O Lord and lift us from the depths of grief into the peace and light of your presence.

As Catholic Christians, a funeral is a time to pray for our deceased beloved and console one another with our faith in eternal life.

The Church walks beside you offering rich prayers and rituals to help you turn to God in this time of grief.

A Catholic funeral takes place in a church or chapel. The actual form of the funeral is worked out with the priest and may take place within a Mass of Christian Burial or within a service of prayers and Scripture.

The celebrant will assist you in the selection of readings, hymns and other details of the ceremony.

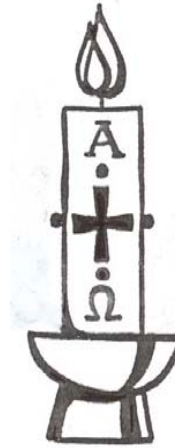
A time to gather ...

Where possible, members of the church community gather with you and your family for the funeral rites to support you in expressing our common faith and to acknowledge the deceased as one of their own.

The family or community may gather at the entrance of the church or chapel to receive and welcome the body of the deceased.

A time to remember ...

"Remember N... whom you have called from this life. In Baptism he (she) died with Christ: may he /she also share his resurrection when Christ will raise our mortal bodies and make them like his own in glory. Welcome into your kingdom our departed brothers and sisters and all who have left this world in your friendship. There we hope to share in your glory when every tear will be wiped away". Eucharistic Prayer 3



These words are prayed by the celebrant on our behalf during Mass of Christian Burial. They highlight the connection between baptism and resurrection. To show that your beloved is baptised in Christ, and so is called to share in his resurrection, the Paschal (Easter) Candle is lit. The symbols of baptism become the symbols with which the Christian is farewelled at the end: the coffin is sprinkled with holy water reminiscent of baptism and may be clothed in a white pall reminding us of the white robe of baptism. Symbols of the Christian life such as a Book of Gospels, a Bible, Rosary beads or a Cross may be carried in procession and then placed on the coffin.

Other personal mementos of the deceased can be displayed in the foyer of the Church or on a small table near the coffin or near the family.

A time to listen ...

"The Lord is kind and merciful, slow to anger and abounding in love." Psalm 103

"The Church attaches great importance to the reading of the Word of God." (OCF # 22)

Because we remember your loved one in the context of a Christian burial, the readings are taken only from the Christian Scriptures and not other sources.

These readings from Scripture give you the opportunity to hear God speaking to you in your pain and grief.

The priest, or member of the parish staff, will show you the selections of readings so that you can choose Scripture readings that relate to your loved one. This is the way to make the funeral ceremony more personal.

When selecting someone to read the Scripture readings, keep in mind that they need to be experienced in reading in public so that they will do it well.

You may choose from a selection of Prayers of Intercession in the ritual or compose your own.

A time to sing ...

Music plays an important part in a Catholic funeral. It assists the gathering of believers to express and share the gift of faith that is within them.

Music helps us to express convictions and feelings that words alone fail to convey.

Because we are in a context of faith we sing sacred hymns rather than secular songs during the liturgy.

A time to bid farewell and commend

... until we all meet in Christ, and are with you and our brother/sister forever.

Before the final commendation someone nominated by your family may give some words of remembrance.

Normally this brief remembrance is given by one person and is not more than five to seven minutes. It needs to be well prepared ahead of time so that it is focussed and maintains the tone of the liturgy as one of faith and hope. Multiple speeches, including long story telling, poems and anecdotes, are more appropriately shared at the Vigil on the previous evening (eg following the rosary at the home or the funeral parlour).

Cremation

The burial of the dead ... honours the children of God who are temples of the Holy Spirit. Catechism of Catholic Church #2300

In Catholic tradition, the remains of cremated bodies are afforded the same respect given to a human body that is buried. They need to be interred with a plaque that designates and identifies the deceased person (so that family and friends may visit and remember the person). Practices such as scattering cremated remains or keeping cremated remains in the home of a relative or friend of the deceased, or dividing the ashes into several containers, fail to show reverence to the body and do not provide a place where grieving family and friends may visit to remember and pray for their dead.

Be gentle with yourself

As you prepare for the funeral of a person you love, you are surrounded by a loving community which prays and grieves with you, but not without hope! May you be consoled by the great dignity and the depth of faith and love that is expressed in the funeral rites of our Church.

Confirm us in our faith O Lord, so that we may bear your peace to one another. Strengthen our hope and love that we may look forward to the day when we will stand in your loving presence with our loved ones and all the saints forever and ever. Amen

Life
is
changed
not
ended



A Resource for the Bereaved

Produced by the
Catholic Diocese of Wollongong