

Funerals: Funerals, in themselves, are not happy times. They are times for us to mourn. We must also trust that the Church mourns with us, Her children. Holy Rosary mourns the death of any and all of her parishioners. Please know that the pastor/administrator also mourns, having known the death of loved ones, and sincerely sympathizes.

The function of a funeral is to bear our loved one to the throne of God. We do this when we bring our beloved deceased into the church and lay him/her before the gate of the sanctuary. After we do that, Christ, in his priest, offers Himself in sacrifice to the Father as a propitiatory offering for the soul of this beloved man or woman.

A funeral is not the time to “celebrate the life” of someone. It is the time to offer ourselves, along with Christ to the Father and to beg the Father to take the soul of our loved one to His bosom. It is a tribute to the merciful love of Christ and to the victory over death won by Jesus, together with a prayerful plea that the merits of that victory be extended now to the person being prayed for. In this, we necessarily give supreme place to God and acknowledge our unworthiness by our adoration and worship of Him. He, in union with His Son and the Holy Spirit are our focus. The beloved deceased is not.

A funeral is a special time, a holy time, a quiet time, a prayerful time and a sacrificial time. Our prayers for the soul of the faithful departed are to blend with the Sacrifice of the Mass offered by Christ’s priest, in order to speed the soul of our departed loved one into the court of heaven. It is incumbent on us to conduct ourselves with reverence, dignity and awe.

A church is a place of sacrifice, not a place for the wake. Therefore, the visitation to a funeral will always be held at the funeral home. The pastor/administrator will make himself available, if at all possible, for whatever the family of the deceased wishes during this time at the funeral home. One of the things that usually happens during this time of visitation at the funeral home is the recitation of the Most Holy Rosary. At a determined time, it is also most appropriate for words of remembrance to be given by a family member or friend. This is sometimes known as “the eulogy.” The funeral home is the most fitting place for the eulogy, not the church. We Catholics, instinctively knowing that God is central to every Mass, not one of His creatures, should be quite comfortable with this. Therefore, there will be no eulogies given at the Church. The appropriate place for that is, as mentioned above, the funeral home during the visitation or at the grave site prior to committal.

Many think that a eulogy is a required part of the funeral service. It is not. The funeral ritual itself has several things to say about the practice of eulogies which the archdiocese itself, in a recent **Criterion** article, supports. Paragraph #141 of the ritual restates the long-standing prohibition of eulogies at Catholic funerals, “A brief homily based on the readings should always be given at the funeral liturgy, but never any kind of eulogy.” The homily should focus on the promises of Jesus about eternal life, and it is the priest who should give examples of the ways in which the deceased person gave witness to Christian belief and values. To that end, the priest should consult with the family for insight into the deceased’s life. The homily should be theological, yet comforting and uplifting, hopeful and faith-filled. It cannot be a biography, as eulogies sometimes are. That belongs in the obituary. The homily cannot be an endless chain of humorous stories about the decedent, as eulogies very often are. Again, such things are

appropriate at the visitation or at the grave-site. Finally, eulogies very often end up being intensely emotional outpourings that neither comfort nor uplift. Indeed, at times, they end up in awkwardness that often results in added depression or discomfort on everyone's part. It also happens, at times, that the eulogy espouses grave theological or doctrinal error, and even, unfortunately, proclaims the "canonization" of the deceased. No one, apart from the Church Herself, has any such authority. Finally, the question must be asked, "Why would anyone want to put him/herself through such distress?"

The pastor/administrator asks that he be contacted as soon as possible by the person, usually a family member, who courageously steps forward and "takes charge" and who accepts the responsibility to deal with the Holy Rosary church office and with the funeral director. Indeed, such a first conversation, even if it be the first of several, may take place between the responsible party and the pastor/administrator together or with the funeral director in attendance. It may also take place by means of a "conference" call from the office of the funeral director.

When administrative things are seen to, the pastor/administrator will then work with the responsible party on those things touching the funeral ceremony itself. The pastor/administrator will give counsel and make recommendations, asking the person responsible to respect set policies for funerals at Holy Rosary. For funerals in the Ordinary Form, the family or person responsible for funeral arrangements may select the readings to be done at the Mass. Of course, the pastor/administrator or the parish staff will assist in selecting the readings.

It is the place and prerogative of the pastor/administrator to celebrate the funeral Mass. He will be either the only celebrant or, if the Mass be concelebrated, the main celebrant. Other priests are invited to concelebrate. Should the family or the person responsible for the funeral (most likely representing the family) request that another priest be celebrant or main celebrant, they must know that if Holy Rosary Church is paramount in being the place for the funeral Mass, they must accept the policy that the pastor/administrator be the celebrant or main celebrant. If the choice of priest is paramount, then they are invited to have the funeral in the church of that priest. In addition, the pastor/administrator is to be notified about the participation of any priest concelebrants no later than one day prior to the funeral Mass.

The vestment color will NOT be white. The pastor/administrator desires that the liturgical color for funerals return to the traditional black. Until that time, for a determined interim, the color will be purple.

With regard to music, certain norms are to be respected. The sense of the sacred must always be maintained. The music chosen for a funeral must reflect this sense of the sacred. Therefore, all music for funerals must be sacred in character. No "pop," blues, jazz, folk, "soul," rock, "oldies," or Broadway show music will be permitted. The repertoire of sacred music is inexhaustible. The organist as well as the pastor/administrator will be quite able to make suggestions for appropriate repertoire. Also permitted will be music from Holy Rosary's hymnals and missalettes. Recorded music of any kind is not permitted.

Holy Rosary has a pipe organ that has been here since the church opened in 1925. The parish encourages the family or responsible person to engage one of the parish organists for the funeral. Our organists rightly expect to be engaged for funerals. If you furnish your own organist, please

be aware that you are required, in justice, to make sure that the organist who would normally play the funeral is compensated \$150.00. This cost is not to be confused with and is in addition to the parish funeral stipend. The organist is to be paid prior to the funeral.

Any additional musicians (instrumentalists/singers), that is, their engagement and compensation, are the responsibility of the family or person responsible for the funeral. If requested to do so, Holy Rosary may be able to engage a soloist or several singers. If this occurs, each singer is to be paid at least \$150.00. These costs are not to be confused with and are in addition to the parish funeral stipend described above. Any musicians secured by Holy Rosary are to be paid prior to the ceremony.

All Mass servers will come from Holy Rosary. None will come from the outside. Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion are usually not needed at a funeral. If their need is determined, Holy Rosary will provide such ministers.

If there is at least one priest concelebrant, and if the pastor/administrator has the duty to celebrate Mass at noon, the pastor/administrator requests that that priest concelebrant officiate at the cemetery.

Promulgated Monday, 12 December, 2011, the Feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe and takes effect on Sunday, 25 December 2011, the Nativity of the Lord.

Rev. Michael W. Magiera, Administrator