GUIDELINES FOR CATHOLIC FUNERAL RITES

INTRODUCTION

The Catholic Funeral Rites in the *Order of Christian Funerals* (1989) are celebrations that enable the Christian community to mourn as well as to hope by focusing on the mystery of the death and resurrection of Christ. These guidelines are offered to assist in effectively preparing the funeral rites with individuals and families.

Understanding Death - A Christian Perspective

Death and passing on to eternal life are mysteries at the center of the Church’s belief. Although American culture generally recoils from death and tries to deny it, “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.” (*Order of Christian Funerals*, #1)

Celebration of the Church

Christian funerals are not private observances, but celebrations of the whole Body of Christ, in which, “Christians celebrate the funeral rites to offer worship, praise, and thanksgiving to God for the gift of life which has now been returned to God, the author of life and the hope of the just.” (*Order of Christian Funerals*, #5) Therefore these rites are celebrated with appropriate choices of music, readings, gestures, and decorations that are consistent with a Catholic understanding of death. “The celebration of the Christian funeral brings hope and consolation to the living. While proclaiming the Gospel of Jesus Christ and witnessing to Christian hope in the resurrection, the funeral rites also recall to all who take part in them God’s mercy and judgment and meet the human need to turn always to God in times of crisis.” (*Order of Christian Funerals*, #7)
PREFERENCES FOR FUNERAL RITES

**First Preference: Funeral rites with the Body present**
The Catholic Church prefers that the body of the deceased be present for the Vigil Service. In addition, the body of the deceased should be brought to the local parish church for the Funeral Mass.

The Rite of Committal of the body normally takes place at the cemetery although the committal can be done at the end of the Funeral Mass. The body of the deceased is to be interred, either in the ground or in a crypt following the Funeral Mass.

**Second Preference: Funeral rites with the body present and cremation afterwards**
If the choice to cremate a body has been made, the Church recommends that the cremation take place after the Funeral Liturgy. In this case, the Vigil for the Deceased and related rites and prayers should be celebrated in the presence of the body. Then, the body should be brought to the parish church for the Funeral Liturgy with cremation taking place afterwards.

After cremation of the body, the cremated remains should be committed for burial according to the *Order of Christian Funerals*. The cremated remains should be treated with the same respect given to the human body. Therefore, they should be buried in a grave or entombed in a mausoleum or columbarium (but not a common/communal columbarium). This is the reverent disposition of the cremated remains that the Church requires.

**Third Preference: Funeral rites with the cremated remains present**
The Catholic Church does allow the celebration of the Funeral Liturgy in the presence of the cremated remains of the deceased, but it is considered the least desirable choice. The Church strongly prefers that the body of the deceased be present for its funeral rites since the presence of the body clearly recalls the life and death of the person.

For several reasons someone may choose cremation first. When this happens, the Vigil for the deceased may be celebrated in the presence of the cremated remains. Likewise, the cremated remains may be brought to church for the celebration of the Funeral Mass and then buried properly.

**SCHEDULING THE FUNERAL LITURGY**

While we will do everything we can to accommodate family needs, funeral arrangements should never be finalized at the funeral home until the Parish has been consulted. We always have to consider the scheduled use of the building, the availability of clergy, and the occasional restrictions of the Church year (which prohibit the celebration of a funeral). Since we want to serve you as best we can this consultation is important.

Funeral Masses are not celebrated on Solemnities of obligation, on Holy Thursday, Good Friday, Holy Saturday, Easter Sunday, or on the Sundays of Advent, Lent and the Easter Season.
THE CELEBRATION OF FUNERALS

We at St. Simon the Apostle Catholic Church express our condolences to you during this time of sorrow. Please know that we have been praying for you and your loved one. The Catholic Funeral Rites in the Order of Christian Funerals (1989) are celebrations that enable the Christian community to mourn as well as to hope by focusing on the mystery of the death and resurrection of Christ. These guidelines are offered to assist in effectively preparing the funeral rites with individuals and families.

GUIDELINES FOR CATHOLIC FUNERAL RITES

A Parish priest will meet with the family to prepare the Funeral Mass. He will explain the meaning and significance of a Catholic Funeral Mass and explain the Funeral Planning Sheet.

Floral arrangements are welcome, but should not take away from the liturgical space.

Recorded music or non-worship music may not be used within the Funeral Mass. Appropriate recorded music can be used at the wake and at the cemetery.

Liturgical music, appropriate to the liturgical season, and the funeral rite may be chosen. The role of organist, cantor and choir is to assist the congregation in singing the Mass.

Soloists have very limited possible roles within Catholic worship. Their role is to assist the congregation in its prayerful meditation on the mystery of salvation. An appropriate solo is possible during the presentation of the gifts and after the congregation’s communion hymn.

Ordinarily, trained and prepared liturgical ministers may exercise the role of cantor, lector, or Eucharistic minister. Family members or friends who wish to participate at the Funeral Mass should be familiar with the structure of the Mass and consult with the priest preparing the Funeral Mass.

One family member or friend may speak briefly before the "Final Commendation" when invited by the presider to offer some words of remembrance. The brief words need to be prepared. Spontaneous remarks and eulogies can be offered at the luncheon afterward. (See Guidelines for Words of Remembrance).

Non-religious symbols may not be displayed in church at the Funeral Mass.

To choose the readings and universal prayers please visit our website at www.stsimonchurch.org. Click on the Liturgy and Sacraments tab and then Funeral.
RECOMMENDED FUNERAL STIPENDS

The following suggested stipends/fees are based on services rendered by St. Simon's staff. [In case of financial hardship, all fees may be waived.]

- **Church**: $150
- **Organist**: $100
- **Soloist**: $100
- **Servers**: $10 each
- **Priest**: None
- **Deacon**: None

While no stipend/fee is expected, families often choose to make a gift as a sign of their appreciation for the pastoral services rendered by the presiding priest and assisting deacon. In addition to the funeral service itself, this may include wake/vigil and burial services.

GUEST PRIEST/DEACON

If the family of the deceased requests a guest priest or deacon to be present at the Funeral Mass, the priest from St. Simon’s is to be informed. The family would need to provide the name and phone number of the guest clergy. Typically, a guest priest or deacon who is presiding would meet with the family to plan the Funeral Mass. The St. Simon clergy can also assist, if necessary. A guest priest or deacon is always welcome to concelebrate (or assist in the case of a deacon), as long as he is in good standing. At the discretion of the presider, the guest priest/deacon may be permitted to give the homily, final commendation and lead the committal service at the cemetery.

CHARITABLE DONATIONS

Charitable donations are a great alternative for families who don't want to receive a lot of flowers, and are particularly appropriate when the deceased has suffered from a specific illness or disability. St. Simon offers a pre-printed envelope for those families who wish to have friends and family make a donation to the parish or school in the name of your loved one. We also offer an online giving option as a one-time guest for those who wish to give electronically. They can visit our website at www.stsimonchurch.org and click on the “online giving” icon.

CARE NOTES

St. Simon offers Care Notes on various topics of grief. They are free for anyone and are located in the vestibule of church near the parish office.
GUIDELINES FOR LAY SPEAKERS OFFERING WORDS OF REMEMBRANCE

The funeral rite allows for “a member or friend of the family to speak in remembrance of the deceased before the final commendation begins” (#170). Note that the intention is that it be one person and not a series of persons. It takes place following the Prayer after Communion. This is a time of thanksgiving to God, especially for the life of the deceased.

What is the difference between a “eulogy” and “words of remembrance?”
Eulogies and biographical sketches of the deceased's life cannot be spoken within the church service, but are appropriate at the conclusion of a wake, at the family gathering after the burial, or may be included in the printed worship aid. A eulogy recounts some or all of the significant events in the life of the deceased.

Words of remembrance do not attempt to give a biography, but to share some insight into the faith and values of the deceased as seen in one or two examples from his/her life. A eulogy by its very nature tends to be lengthy, while words of remembrance are brief.

- The words of remembrance should be supportive to the bereaved and should deepen our faith in eternal life as a Catholic Christian.
- Therefore, one would speak on behalf of the deceased, how he or she lived out faith within the family, workplace, community or church. Statements ought to reflect how the deceased cared for his/her spouse and children, his/her honesty in the work place, his/her participating and helping in community events to make things better for others, his/her attending Mass and the reception of the Sacraments, and his/her helping in church activities and ministries. The words of remembrance are not a time to theologize or preach a second homily.
- The speaker is encouraged to write out his or her remarks.
- Three to five minutes (or less) is suitable time for words of remembrance. If the interment is to be at Jefferson Barracks National Cemetery, this time frame is even more crucial.
- Within (or in place of) the eulogy it would be good to simply thank everyone for attending and for their prayers and support.

REFLECTION GUIDELINE QUESTIONS

1. Do the statements tell of the Christian legacy left behind for others to learn from?
2. Are the statements helpful to the family and friends in their time of loss?
3. Do the statements help others put this person’s life into the broader context of Christian faith – that while this is a personal loss it must be seen through the eyes of faith?

Personal remembrances help us to go through grief. It is necessary to remember and recognize our relationship with loved ones. This helps us to say good-bye and, at the same time, reflect on our relationship with the deceased and one another. Eventually we come to realize that we still have a spiritual bond with those who have gone before us marked with the sign of faith.
WORDS OF REMEMBRANCE (A MODEL)

If I were to choose a few words that would aptly characterize my mother as I remember her, "selfless", "compassionate", and "gracious" immediately come to mind. In addition to being a faithful and loving wife and mother, she patiently, gently and lovingly cared for her own mother, our grandmother, who lived with us and was physically disabled for the last fifteen years of her life. I recall no words of complaint about the tediousness of the day-to-day nursing care nor the frequent limitations placed upon her own social life. She taught me that patience, selflessness and compassion are the true qualities of both a devoted mother and daughter. My mother was a woman of gracious hospitality.

Family, friends and neighbors were always warmly welcomed into our home. My mother would respond immediately whenever a neighbor had a need. If there was a death in someone's family, or if a neighbor became ill, she was there to offer comfort, or to prepare and deliver a meal. As children, we quickly learned from her words and example, that it was not our place to judge or be critical of other people, but to always look for the positive qualities in another person.

Her parish family was also very important to her. Mom was actively involved in the Rosary and Madonna Guild at St. Simon Parish. While we were in school there, she participated in many school and church functions through the years. She considered her friends in our parish community as part of our extended family. Our hearts are filled with gratitude that God blessed us with such a wonderful wife, mother, friend and woman of faith!
MASS OF REMEMBRANCE

Each year in November, St. Simon’s celebrates our Mass of Remembrance to pray for those who have died. We invite you to come as a family to this celebration. A reception will be held in the lower Church hall immediately following the Mass. Through this beautiful liturgy we would appreciate the honor of walking with you, if only for this brief time. We hope this will be a very moving and healing experience.

Please complete your contact information so we can send you an invitation later in advance of the celebration.

Name of Deceased: __________________________________________________________

Family Contact: ____________________________________________________________

Phone: ___________________________________________________________________

Address: ___________________________________________________________________

City: __________________________ State: _________ Zip code: _______________

Email address: _____________________________________________________________
FOOD AFTER FUNERAL MINISTRY

This ministry provides hospitality to grieving families and their friends by offering food and fellowship after a Funeral Mass. Teams of leaders, callers, food donors and servers enable the bereaved families to gather and share a meal in the comfort of their parish community.

- This meal is provided free of charge, however, if you would like to make a donation, our cost is about $3 per guest served.

- This luncheon is served in the lower church hall.

- This Ministry can feed up to 100 people.

- If the family is expecting more people, they will need to supplement food for the additional guests over 100.

- The meal consists of:
  - Deli meat tray for sandwiches,
  - Cheese tray for sandwiches,
  - Lettuce salad,
  - Fruit salad,
  - Potato salad or cold pasta salad,
  - Hot vegetable dish,
  - Desserts,
  - Condiments as needed,
  - Iced tea, lemonade and coffee.

- All paper products are provided.

- Each team can serve up to 35 people, so please notify the priest or parish office of an estimated expected number of people.