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# ORDER OF CHRISTIAN FUNERALS



Diocese of Saskatoon Catholic Foundation

*"The souls of the righteous are in the hand of God, ... they are at peace." Wisdom 3: 1, 3*

# Order of Christian Funerals

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<b><i>A Guide for the Order of Christian Funerals</i></b>	<b>2</b>
<b><i>The Funeral Mass</i></b>	<b>3</b>
<b><i>Burial Instructions</i></b>	<b>5</b>
<b><i>Memorial Gifts – In Lieu of Flowers</i></b>	<b>9</b>
<b><i>My Catholic Faith is Very Important to me</i></b>	<b>9</b>
<b><i>My Personal Funeral Rites</i></b>	<b>10</b>
<b><i>The Vigil for the Deceased</i></b>	<b>11</b>
<b><i>The Funeral Mass</i></b>	<b>12</b>

# Order of Christian Funerals

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## A GUIDE FOR THE ORDER OF CHRISTIAN FUNERALS

At the centre of our Catholic beliefs about death is the paschal mystery of Christ, that mystery which includes life here and hereafter and our own hope of resurrection. Therefore, the actions of a Catholic community when one of its members dies must as

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 assumption. Therefore, if in union with Christ we have imitated his death, we shall also imitate him in the resurrection. [Romans 6:5].

*"Order of Christian Funerals" CCCB, 1990, #1,2*

clearly as possible proclaim this central mystery. Particularly is this true when the community gathers to pray for the deceased and to support with its faith, hope, and love the grieving family and friends. These guidelines are intended to assist in the proclamation of this paschal mystery.

The funeral services are a right, not a privilege of all members of the Church, both the faithful and the catechumens (canon 1176; 1183, 1). The Order of Christian Funerals also provides for the celebration of funeral rites for children whose parents intended them to be baptized (canon 1182,2). There are generally three celebrations to the Order of Christian Funerals: The Vigil, the Funeral Liturgy (Mass – of a funeral service without Mass) and the Rite of Committal (usually at the graveside).

### THE VIGIL FOR THE DECEASED

The vigil for the deceased (or the wake service) is normally the first of the funeral rites. The Christian community gathers in prayer to console and support the grieving family and to intercede with God for the deceased. A priest, deacon, or layperson may preside. The family should be a part of this assembly and not be separated from it by being in a different room.

The vigil can take place in the funeral home or in the church in the afternoon or evening before the funeral. Since many people may be unable to attend the funeral liturgy, it is important that the vigil be a clear liturgical celebration. It should deal with grief while offering the support of Christian faith, hope, and love. If the vigil takes place in the church, the 'reception of the body' forms the introductory rites.

The full participation of the assembly is as important in celebrating the vigil. Participation aids and memorial cards provided should be tasteful and have prayers reflective of the Order of Christian Funerals. The service should include a liturgy of the word with an appropriate gospel reading since the proclamation of the word is the high

# Order of Christian Funerals

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point and central focus of the vigil. A brief, scriptural Homily is given by priest or deacon but not an eulogy. Whether at the funeral home or in the church, a member of the family may speak in remembrance of the deceased, either before the blessing or at another appropriate time during the vigil.

## THE FUNERAL MASS

The Mass, the memorial of Christ's death and resurrection, is the principal celebration of the Christian funeral. This is the main celebration of the Christian community for the deceased person. Usually it is celebrated in the parish church where the local community gathers for the Sunday Eucharist. Two forms are possible: a funeral Mass or a funeral liturgy outside mass. The Church encourages a Mass since the Eucharist remembers and celebrates Christ's own death and resurrection. However, while the Eucharist is our central liturgy, it is not always the best option for every funeral. To celebrate a funeral without Mass is truly a valid form of Catholic worship. The funeral Mass includes the 'reception of the body' (if not already occurred during the Vigil), the celebration of the liturgy of the Word, the liturgy of the Eucharist, and the final commendation and farewell.

## THE RITE OF COMMITTAL

This rite is the final act of the faith community in caring for the body of its deceased member. By their presence at this rite the community member, help the mourners face the end of one relationship with the deceased and the beginning of a new one based on prayerful remembrance, gratitude, and the hope of resurrection and reunion. The celebration, whenever possible takes place at the open grave, the place of interment, or the crematorium. (When a body is cremated, the funeral liturgy is concluded with the interring of the ashes sometime afterwards.) This act of committal takes place either during the rite or at its conclusion to express the full meaning of the rite: that the grave, once a sign of despair, is now, through Christ's own death and resurrection, a sign of hope and promise.

A hymn or liturgical song may be used at the conclusion of the rite to affirm our hope in God's mercy and in the resurrection of the dead. The rite allows for some gesture of final leave-taking (placing flowers or soil on the coffin). Cremation and the presence of cremated remains at the funeral rites is permitted. Priority should be given to having the body present for the funeral rites and then cremation following the said rites. We uphold the cultural diversity of Christ's people in the Diocese of Saskatoon. Final planning and consideration for these cultural traditions should be discussed with the parish priest before finalizing any funeral plans.

# Order of Christian Funerals

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## CREMATION

Through the centuries, the Church has followed the practice of burial or entombment after the manner of Christ's own burial. This expresses respect for the human body as a member of Christ and faith in the resurrection of the body. "The Church earnestly recommends that the pious custom of burial be retained; but it does not forbid cremation (canon 1176, 3).

The Church grants her funeral rites to those who have chosen cremation. The Order of Christian Funerals recommends that cremation will take place after the funeral liturgy. Although ordinarily the body is present for the funeral, there may be occasions when, with the approval of the bishop, it is permitted to celebrate the funeral liturgy, including the Eucharist, in the presence of the ashes of the deceased. In this case, the ashes are to be placed on a small table covered with a white cloth. The table is placed in front of the altar, and a little to the side. The rites usually held in the cemetery chapel or at the grave may take place in the crematorium. It is recommended that cremated remains be placed in a worthy container, buried in a grave or inurned in a columbarium niche, preferably in a Catholic cemetery. The rite of committal has a special prayer for burying and entombing.

## FUNERAL OFFERINGS

An offering to the parish for funeral services is customary and may be suggested according to the approved diocesan schedule for such offerings. However, a funeral service, including Mass in the church with the body present and a committal service is given to the poor free of charge.

## WORDS OF REMEMBRANCE

When a loved one dies, the grieving family and friends are anxious to honour the memory of the loved one in every way they can. The funeral liturgy is an act of praise and thanksgiving for Christ's victory over sin and death, a proclamation of the paschal mystery. This act of worship belongs to the whole community, the whole Church, and not to any individual or group. Reference to the person's life of faith and love are appropriate in a homily as a sign of God's compassionate love and the paschal mystery.

Because the Vigil's more intimate nature, it is more appropriate to include in it words of remembrance that refer more directly to the deceased person. This is not a eulogy in the strict sense of the word, that is a speech of "high praise", but rather a telling the faith story of a person. Those who prepare such words of remembrance will want to keep in mind that the vigil service is Christian liturgy, and the focus should be the Christian life of the person. Family should guard against making it unduly long.

Sometimes family members want to provide those who come to the funeral liturgy to share their grief with an account of the deceased person's life, with biographical details and a summary of his or her activities. The family might consider preparing a printed leaflet that can be handed out at the funeral or at any other appropriate time. Another opportunity is at the reception which often follows the funeral liturgy.

# Order of Christian Funerals

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## PASTORAL ELEMENTS

No arrangements for funeral, burial or cremation should be finalized until the relatives have discussed them with the parish priest.

## THE PALL

To emphasize the importance of the person's baptism, the Church in Canada encourages the use of a pall at the funeral liturgy. This pall is placed on the coffin during the rite of reception of the body by family members, friends, or by parish ministers. This pall is a reminder of the white baptismal garment, as sign of Christian dignity of the person. The coffin is covered with a white cloth as the person enters into a new life in the resurrection of Jesus. Covering the coffin is a way to make a statement about the identity of the deceased; it proclaims the greatest thing that can be said about the deceased person is that he or she is a sister or brother of Christ, a member of the Church.

Adopted from [www.cccb.ca](http://www.cccb.ca), the National Liturgy Office, Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops: "Catholic Funerals and Eulogies, The Pall and the Flag".

## RELATED QUESTIONS

### **UNBAPTIZED CHILDREN**

The Church's funeral rites may be celebrated for a child who died before baptism and whose parents intended to have the child baptized.

### **BURIAL OF A STILLBORN AND THE FETUS**

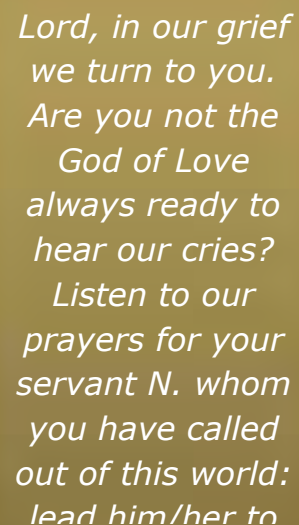
The Church urges that stillborns and fetuses of Catholic parents be interred whenever possible. The decision and procedure for the interment is left to the parents and their pastor.

### **ORGAN TRANSPLANTS AND DONATIONS OF BODIES FOR MEDICAL SCIENCE**

"Organ donation after death is a noble and meritorious act and is to be encouraged as an expression of generous solidarity (Catechism of the Catholic Church, n,2296). Likewise, the donations of bodies is legitimate. However, in keeping with Christian respect for the body, there should be reasonable assurance that the remains will be disposed of in a reverent manner upon completion of the research.

## BURIAL INSTRUCTIONS

The following person(s) will act on my behalf with my cemetery arrangements:



*Lord, in our grief  
we turn to you.  
Are you not the  
God of Love  
always ready to  
hear our cries?  
Listen to our  
prayers for your  
servant N. whom  
you have called  
out of this world:  
lead him/her to*

# Order of Christian Funerals

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Name:		
Relationship:		
Address:		
City:	Province:	Postal Code:
Telephone:		
Name:		
Relationship:		
Address:		
City:	Province:	Postal Code:
Telephone:		

The following people have permission to be buried in the grave, lot, crypt or niche:


I have pre-arranged my funeral at the following funeral home:

Contact Person:		
Address:		
City:	Province:	Postal Code:
Telephone:		

I wish my funeral to be celebrated at:

Parish Name:		
City/Town:		

I wish to be buried at:

Cemetery Name:		
City/Town:		

# Order of Christian Funerals

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I have interment rights for a grave, lot, crypt or niche at:

Cemetery Name:	
City/Town:	
Telephone:	
Grave/Lot/Crypt/Niche Location:	

I wish my remains to be:

<input type="radio"/> Interred (Ground Burial)
<input type="radio"/> Cremated
<input type="radio"/> Entombed (In Mausoleum)

Following my death, the interment rights of the grave, lot, crypt, or niche are to be transferred to the following person:

Name:			
Address:			
City:	Province:	Postal Code:	
Telephone:			

Check off the following supplies and services that have been pre-paid or need to be arranged:

Burial or Entombment Fee:	<input type="radio"/> Pre-Paid	<input type="radio"/> Needs to be arranged
Burial or Cremation Vault:	<input type="radio"/> Pre-Paid	<input type="radio"/> Needs to be arranged
Cremation Urn:	<input type="radio"/> Pre-Paid	<input type="radio"/> Needs to be arranged
Monument or Marker:	<input type="radio"/> Pre-Paid	<input type="radio"/> Needs to be arranged
Inscription or Memorial:	<input type="radio"/> Pre-Paid	<input type="radio"/> Needs to be arranged
Pictures:	<input type="radio"/> Pre-Paid	<input type="radio"/> Needs to be arranged

## VIEWING

I  do /  do not wish to have my casket open at the  Funeral Home  Church.

My jewelry should be  Left On,  Removed.

Burial Clothing:	



# Order of Christian Funerals

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## MONUMENT

Stone  Plaque

Inscription:


Other Information for my survivors:


# Order of Christian Funerals

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## MEMORIAL GIFTS – IN LIEU OF FLOWERS

### Memorial Gifts (in lieu of flowers) to:

Parish:

Diocese:

Favorite Charities:

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## MY CATHOLIC FAITH IS VERY IMPORTANT TO ME

I would deeply appreciate it if my loved ones were to designate that all "in-lieu-of-flowers" donations made in my memory be directed towards:

Please select One:

- My Parish (Name/City-Town)
- Bishops Annual Appeal, Diocese of Saskatoon – for ministries and programs
- Stain Glass Memorial Fund
- Priest Pension Fund
- Education of Seminarians and Priests

To my Loved ones:

Please notify the funeral home of my in-lieu-of-flowers intention so that they may contact the Diocese of Saskatoon and request that special In Memoriam cards be delivered to the funeral home for use during my service.

Please place a line in my obituary that reads, "in-lieu-of-flowers, donations may be made to (please insert the selection I have made above)."

Name:

Signature:

Date:

# Order of Christian Funerals

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## MY PERSONAL FUNERAL RITES

I wish my services to reflect my life, faith and love.

### SUGGESTED PALLBEARERS

1.	
2.	
3.	
4.	
5.	
6.	

### MUSIC MINISTRY

Choir:	
Choir Leader:	
Organist:	

### AFTER SERVICE ACTIVITY

Describe the type of activity after the service you wish to have for family and friends, and which funds are to be used to pay for this activity.


# Order of Christian Funerals

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## THE VIGIL FOR THE DECEASED

Cross Bearer (Name):	
Family process behind casket:	<input type="radio"/> Yes or <input type="radio"/> No
Prayers around the body and placing of pall (back of church):	
Placing of the Pall (names):	
Opening Hymn:	
1st Reading:	Read by:
Responsorial Psalm:	
Gospel Reading:	Read by: <input type="radio"/> Presider or <input type="radio"/>
Homily:	By: <input type="radio"/> Presider or <input type="radio"/>
Special Prayer or Devotion:	By:
Words of Remembrance:	<input type="radio"/> Yes or <input type="radio"/> No Read by:
Closing Hymn:	

# Order of Christian Funerals

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## THE FUNERAL MASS

Cross Bearer (Name):	
Altar Servers (2) (Names):	
Family process behind casket:	<input type="radio"/> Yes or <input type="radio"/> No
Opening Hymn:	
1st Reading:	Read by:
Psalm:	
2nd Reading:	Read by:
Gospel Reading:	Read by: <input type="radio"/> Presider or <input type="radio"/>
Preparation of the Altar	Gifts brought up by:
Offertory Hymn:	
Prayers of the Faithful #:	Read by:
Communion Ministers:	
Communion Hymn #1:	
Post Communion Hymn:	Sung by: <input type="radio"/> Choir <input type="radio"/> Soloist
Song of Farewell:	
Recessional Hymn:	
Afterwards:	



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O | U | N | D | A | T | I | O | N

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