

**Frequently Asked Questions about Funerals**

**What is the purpose of the Funeral Liturgy?**

Because of our belief not only in the immortality of the soul, but also in the resurrection of the body, the Church professes hope in the face of death, and acts with charity in the funeral rites. The Church provides a number of prayers for the faithful to offer both to accompany the dying of a loved one and to strengthen our faith upon their death. Through private prayer and public funeral rites, we strengthen our faith and hope, comfort those who mourn, and bury the bodily remains of the deceased with care befitting what was the Temple of the Holy Spirit. (Taken from the [*USCCB*](http://www.usccb.org/prayer-and-worship/bereavement-and-funerals/index.cfm))

**What do I do when my loved one dies?**

You may contact the church directly or have the funeral home call us. Together we will coordinate the date, time, and location for the Mass or Liturgy outside of Mass. Completing the planning guide with readings, music, and other details, is helpful to do prior to your meeting with a member of the consolation team. You can also pre-plan the arrangements when your loved one or you are still alive and able to make those decisions. Our consolation team is happy to assist you with the several choices available for the funeral.

**Burial or Cremation?**

While the Church continues to hold a preference for corporeal burial, cremation has become part of Catholic practice in the United States and the around the world. The Church's reverence and care for the body grows out of a reverence and concern for the person whom the Church now commends to the care of God. This is the body once washed in baptism, anointed with the oil of salvation, and fed with the bread of life. This is the body whose hands clothed the poor and embraced the sorrowing. The human body is so inextricably associated with the human person that it is hard to think of a human person apart from his or her body.

The Church clearly prefers and urges that the body of the deceased be present for the funeral rites, since the presence of the human body better expresses the values which the Church affirms in those rites. For the funeral rites to be accomplished there are three options in order of preference: 1) the body present in a casket for the funeral Mass, then buried afterward; 2) the body present in a casket for the funeral Mass, then cremated afterward with inurnment as soon as possible; 3) cremated remains present for the funeral Mass, then inurned as soon as possible afterward.

Cremated remains are to be treated with the same reverence as the body and should be inurned in a cemetery as soon as possible. They are not to be kept in one’s home, and never are they to be divided, scattered, or made into another object such as jewelry.

**What are the options for a Funeral Liturgy?**

The funeral rites are meant to be accomplished in three parts: the vigil, the liturgy, and the committal. The vigil service occurs at the end of visiting hours at the funeral home the evening before the liturgy. It is a time for scripture, prayer, and reflection about the deceased – a beautiful ritual to close the evening and prepare for the funeral liturgy the next morning. Sometimes a rosary service is provided instead of a vigil.

The Mass of Christian Burial is the preferred liturgy. This may take place at the church or at a Catholic cemetery chapel. It contains the Liturgy of the Word, Liturgy of the Eucharist, and the Rite of Final Commendation.

A Funeral Liturgy Outside of Mass may also be celebrated. This contains the Liturgy of the Word, prayers, and the Rite of Final Commendation. A priest or deacon may celebrate this liturgy. It can take place in church, at the funeral home, or cemetery chapel. Both should be followed by burial immediately after the liturgy. If the cremation is to happen after the liturgy, the inurnment should occur as soon as possible afterward.

Finally, a graveside service consisting of the Rites of Commendation and Committal can also be celebrated if there are circumstances preventing a full liturgical celebration.

If the body cannot be present due to donation to science or other extenuating circumstances, a memorial Mass can be held with the Rites of Final Commendation and Committal later.

**What are the options for music and readings?**

We have compiled a list of suggested readings based on the Order of Christian Funerals. Apart from the Easter season, one Old Testament Reading, one New Testament reading, and one Gospel is chosen (Easter is New Testament only). Family may choose someone to read the first and second readings. It is highly encouraged that the family choose someone other than immediate family members. Proclaiming the readings is challenging in and of itself, but adding grief and stress is extra challenging. The family should be able to grieve and receive in the liturgy, not worry about doing. If the family does not have someone in mind for the readings, the consolation team will provide someone trained to do so. The general intercessions are read by the deacon or consolation team member. The family may also choose 2-3 people to bring up the bread and wine during the preparation of the gifts.

Funeral music should be sacred and focused on the paschal mystery of Christ’s suffering, death, and triumph over death. Secular music is not permitted. Songs may be selected from the list of suggested music or, if not on this smaller list, then in the St. Brendan Music repertoire. Cantors and musicians are provided through our music director. Family or friends wishing to participate need to be approved by and rehearse with the director.

**What about a eulogy?**

The Order of Christian Funerals does not allow for a eulogy to take place within the celebration of the funeral liturgy: *A brief homily based on the readings is always given after the gospel reading; but there is never to be a eulogy.* (OCF 27). The Church gathers with the family and friends of the deceased to give praise and thanks to God for Christ's victory over sin and death, to commend the deceased to God's tender mercy and compassion, and to seek strength in the proclamation of the Paschal Mystery. These are accomplished in comforting prayers, rituals, and in a designed “flow” of the liturgy. Adding in a eulogy that may or may not be appropriate, and emphasizing the human life rather than pointing to God, when people are in a state of healing and comfort, will disrupt the purpose and benefit of the Mass.

A spoken eulogy is best delivered at the visitation and vigil service the evening before or at the luncheon or gathering following the liturgy. Families have also provided written eulogies or letters to insert in the program. This is a keepsake that can go with those attending and be a lasting tribute.

**Visitation**

If the family would like visitation, the funeral home is the best environment to hold this the evening before or in the morning prior to Mass. We can provide a vigil service (readings, homily, prayers, and eulogy by a family/friend if desired) or a rosary service at the end of the visitation time at the funeral home.

After trying different arrangements, we are no longer able to offer visitation at the church in the gathering space or the cry room. Because Adoration is often scheduled, there needs to be an atmosphere of quiet and reverence outside the chapel. In addition, we are not able to provide the same comforts a funeral home can. Please consider having a luncheon (see next section) for additional time with family and friends. Family is welcome to greet their guests 30 minutes prior to Mass near the entrance to the sanctuary as guided by our consolation team.

**Celebration of Life Luncheon**

As part of our ministry to serve families in this time of mourning and need, the parish can provide a luncheon following the burial (or if burial is later or out of town, immediately after the Mass). The parish provides the main course (usually fried chicken or sandwiches), while our dedicated volunteers cook, bake, and serve the rest. Meals are held in the Davidson Meeting Rooms, just across the hall from the church gathering space. It has a capacity of 120. Favorites of the deceased or family can be requested to add a special touch. No alcohol permitted. Donations are not necessary but welcomed to continue this ministry. Please note that there are circumstances that may prevent us from being able to offer a meal such as during holidays, more than 2 funerals in a week, scheduled events that cannot be moved or having less than 2 days to plan.

**Livestreaming the Mass**

We are happy to livestream the funeral Mass for family or friends unable to attend. This stream goes to our YouTube channel: https://www.youtube.com/c/SaintBrendantheNavigatorHilliard/

The funeral may be viewed live or later in our funeral playlist. Please let the funeral coordinator know if you would like us to stream the Mass.

For additional information or questions, please contact the parish office at 614.876.1272.