

## Guide for Planning a Christian Funeral

“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...At the death of a Christian, whose life of faith was begun in the waters of baptism and strengthened at the Eucharistic table, the Church intercedes on behalf of the deceased member because of its confident belief that death is not the end nor does it brake the bonds forged in life.”

- *Order of Christian Funerals, 1 – 4*

Through its ministry at the time of death, the church shows reverence for the body of the deceased and offers comfort and hope to the mourners. The funeral liturgy is the central celebration of the church at the hour of death. Because of this, the funeral liturgy should be scheduled at a time when as many members of the Christian community as possible can be present. Our usual custom at St. Thérèse is to celebrate the funeral liturgy in the evening.

6:00 P.M.	Reception of the body at the church, and visitation in the chapel
7:00 P.M.	Funeral liturgy
8:00 P.M.	(after the liturgy) Reception in the parish social hall The body is returned to the chapel, where it is kept overnight.
10:00 A.M.	(the following day) Procession to the place of burial

The celebration of a funeral Mass is most appropriate because it is our primary Experience of the death and resurrection of Jesus. The Mass is always celebrated in the parish church. It is here that believers are welcomed into the Christian community and nourished with the body and blood of Christ. It is fitting that the body of the deceased be returned to the church to be commended to the Lord.

The funeral Mass begins with the reception of the body at the door of the church. The casket is sprinkled with holy water and clothed with the pall in reminder of baptism. Other Christian symbols may also be placed on the coffin once it is brought to rest in the assembly. The Easter candle burns before the body, silently proclaiming Christ as light in our darkness. It reminds us that in baptism we died with Christ so that we might also live with Christ. Family and friends are nourished with the word of God and the body and blood of Christ. The prayer in church concludes with a final commendation through which the members of the community entrust their loved one to the tender embrace of God. The song of farewell can express both sadness and hope in eternal life.

Family members can shape the funeral liturgy to reflect the life of the deceased in the context of faith. They may select the scripture reading, psalms, hymns and intercessions that best give voice to their experience of this death and what, in faith, it means. Family members and friends can serve as pallbearers or giftbearers. They may clothe the casket with the pass and offer words of remembrance during the final commendation. We will assign lectors and Eucharistic ministers to serve at the Mass. No one should be forced to take a role at the funeral liturgy. However, the full and active participation of the gathered community can be a source of comfort and hope in the paschal mystery.

On the following pages are several options, grouping suggested readings together which compliment one another. After you have chosen one of these, please contact Paula Huddy, our Director of Music, who will assist you in choosing liturgical music which reflects these texts.