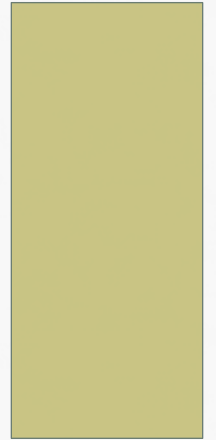


# GUIDELINES TO A CATHOLIC FUNERAL



# THE MEANING OF DEATH

- Death is a passage from this life to the next life that Jesus promised. When we think about death, we should remember the promise. This passage is to be experienced in the light of the Resurrection. In faith, we believe that one day we will all be gathered together by God to live with Him.

# WHEN A LOVED ONE DIES

- In the event that a loved one dies, someone should contact their Church parish. The Catholic Church is very compassionate and will help you and your family during mourning. The Church offers support to live with faith during their loss.

# THE SUPPORT OF THE CHURCH

- Here are ways you can expect the Church to help support you.
- - The person in charge of the Parish will meet with the immediate family to minister to them and to help them prepare the funeral liturgy.
- A prayer may be held for the family at the funeral home.
- A vigil (prayer service) may be celebrated by the community the evening before the main funeral celebration.
- The main funeral liturgy is celebrated in the parish church.
- Prayers of committal take place at the cemetery.

# THE VIGIL

- The community of friends and family gathers the evening before the main funeral liturgy to pray and to keep watch with the family. The Word of God is proclaimed as source of hope in the face of darkness and death. All pray for the deceased. There are also prayers for those dealing with the loss. This prayer service may take place at the funeral home or at the church. This is a vigil and is meant to be celebrated on the night before the funeral. If there is to be a eulogy, it is appropriate at the vigil.

# THE MAIN FUNERAL LITURGY

- A celebration of the Eucharist with the body present is the ideal funeral liturgy. In the Eucharist, the community 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 - the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.
- For valid reasons the family may choose a funeral liturgy without a Mass - a Liturgy of the Word. This decision should be made in consultation with the person in charge of the Parish



# IMPORTANCE OF THE BODY

- The care taken to prepare the body of the deceased for burial reflects our Christian belief in eternal life and the resurrection of the body. The body should be treated with great respect. The prayers and gestures of the funeral rites also affirm the Church's reverence for the body as a temple of the Holy Spirit.
- Catholics bury the body in a grave or tomb in memory of Jesus, whose own body was placed in a tomb. This practice is used as a sign of Christian faith.

# CREMATION

- The practice of cremation is accepted by the Catholic Church as long as the reasons for choosing cremation are not contrary to the Christian way of life. In most cases cremation should take place following the funeral liturgies. These celebrations should take place with the body present. In this way the body can be honored by the community, and the bereaved are allowed the proper time to mourn. Death is the last passage of life and should not be hidden or negated by cremation prior to the funeral celebrations.
- In particular circumstances, it may be necessary for cremation to take place prior to the funeral. This liturgy may then be celebrated with the ashes present.



# THE ASHES

- The ashes are still the body of the deceased, but in a changed form. We honor them as we honor the body. They must be reverently buried or entombed in a place reserved for the burial of the dead, as soon after cremation as possible. It is **not** acceptable to put off this burial, to scatter the ashes, or to keep them in the home.

# COMMEMORATIVE SERVICE

- If for some reason the body or the ashes have been buried before the funeral, a commemorative Eucharist or Liturgy of the Word may be celebrated.

# PRAYER FOR THE DEAD

- Eternal rest grant to them, O Lord, and let perpetual light shine upon them. May the souls of the faithful departed, through the mercy of God, rest in peace. Amen.