

Order of Christian Funerals

Policy No. 513

Policy Statement: Funerals in the Archdiocese will follow the *Order of Christian Funerals, (OCF) Canadian Edition, 1990*, which is the approved Ritual Book for use in Canada.

The parish church is the proper place for the celebration of the Vigil Prayers and Mass of Christian Burial.

Intent of Policy: To assist in the celebration of the *Order of Christian Funerals* and the associated rites.

Procedure: **Vigil Prayers**

- a) The Vigil Prayers may be celebrated at a funeral home.
- b) The Vigil Prayers should follow the ritual as set out in the *OCF*, using the options that are available, including Evening Prayer.
- c) Words of Remembrance may be offered at the Vigil Prayers. The length of the presentation(s) is to be mutually agreed upon beforehand between the presider and the family or those making the presentations.
- d) All music must be liturgical in nature. Secular music is not acceptable during the Vigil Prayers.

A priest, deacon, or properly trained lay person may preside at the Vigil Prayers.

Mass of Christian Burial

- a) The Mass of Christian Burial is to be celebrated according to the ritual, as set out in the *OCF*.
- b) The Mass of Christian Burial must always be celebrated in the parish church. If, in a rural setting, the parish church is judged to be of insufficient size to accommodate the anticipated congregation, permission to use other community facilities (e.g. community hall, church of another denomination) must be obtained from the Archbishop.
- c) Funeral Masses may be celebrated any day other than Sunday, Christmas Day, New Year's Day, or during the Easter Triduum.

- d) When a funeral liturgy without Mass is celebrated, it should take place in the parish church. In exceptional circumstances it may be celebrated in the funeral home. In either case the official rites of the Church are to be used.
- e) Every parish is to make use of the funeral pall. As the casket is welcomed into the church any objects such as flowers, flags, crucifix, Bible, etc. are to be removed, and the funeral pall placed on the casket as a reminder of Baptism.
- f) Words of Remembrance are not permitted during the Mass of Christian Burial. (*OCF*, #27)
- g) Words of Remembrance may be offered:
 - in the church, prior to the reception of the body or prior to the entrance procession. (In such cases, there should be only one speaker, whose written text is to be reviewed beforehand by the officiating priest or deacon, and must not exceed five minutes in length.)
 - at the luncheon/reception
 - at the cemetery, depending on the weather
 - at the Vigil Prayers
 - in a printed memorial card and distributed

PowerPoint presentations, slide shows, videos and the like are to take place at the reception or Vigil Prayers.

Words of Remembrance may not be offered:

- at the Ambo, but at another microphone
 - at the end of Mass or liturgy
- h) All music must be liturgical in nature. Secular music is forbidden during the funeral liturgy.

Ecumenical Considerations

- a) When requested by the Catholic relatives of a deceased baptized non-Catholic, a priest may conduct a prayer service for the non-Catholic in a funeral home.
- b) In particular circumstances, where the deceased baptized non-Catholic was well disposed to the Church, and the family requests Mass, it may be celebrated, after approval from the Archbishop or delegate has been obtained.

Rite of Committal

- a) The faithful of the Catholic Archdiocese of Edmonton are strongly urged to make use of the archdiocesan cemeteries, Holy Cross, St. Albert, St. Joachim, St. Anthony, Our Lady of Peace or local Catholic cemeteries, for the burial of a body or cremated remains, as a sign of community and in order to ensure the future of Catholic cemeteries.
- b) If the choice for cremation is made, the Church strongly urges that it take place after the Mass of Christian Burial has been celebrated. (Ref. Policy No. 821)
- c) Cremated remains are to be buried in a grave, or placed in a columbarium or mausoleum niche. The interment of the remains will take place as soon as possible after the Mass or liturgy. They are not to be scattered over water, in the air, on the ground, separated for placement in different locations, or kept in homes.
- d) When a non-Catholic is to be buried in a Catholic cemetery, the minister of the deceased's faith community may conduct the burial service according to the minister's own ritual. If the family of the non-Catholic deceased person requests a Catholic priest to conduct the burial service, the priest will celebrate a rite which is appropriate.

Related Questions

- a) *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.
- b) *Burial of Stillborns and Fetuses* 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.
- c) *Disposal of Amputated Limbs* Amputated limbs should be buried in a blessed place, if possible. However, hospital personnel may dispose of portions of bodies in a manner they deem most suitable. Hygienic cremation is not excluded, but the preference of the individual or the family should be considered.

- d) *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*, no.2296). Likewise, the donation 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.
- e) *Cremated Remains* Because of the 1984 indult granted to the Church in Canada by the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments, the funeral liturgy, including the Eucharist may be celebrated with the cremated remains of the deceased person present. The cremated remains are put into a dignified container that shows reverence toward the person’s remains. The liturgy will conclude with the final commendation. Signs of reverence such as the sprinkling with holy water and use of incense are acceptable. (*Catholics and Cremation* Liturgical Leaflet, National Liturgy Office, CCCB 1998, 2003, 2006)
- f) *Knights of Columbus 4th Degree Honour Guard* The Alberta Conference of Catholic Bishops issued a Protocol for Parish Liturgy in April 2010. (See Appendix 513A)

Exception: National parishes, because of cultural traditions or customs, may seek specific exemptions by contacting the Office of the Archbishop.

Also refer to Appendix:

No. 513A 4th Degree Honour Guard Protocol of the Knights of Columbus ...

Also refer to Policy:

No. 821 Burial Registers Entries