

GUIDELINES FOR FUNERALS IN OUR CHURCH

Death in the Christian Context

Catholic belief in death as the entrance into eternity, hope in the resurrection, recognition of the value of prayer for the deceased, reverence for the body which remains and the sense of mystery and sacredness which surround the end of earthly life are all reflected in the Church's care for the deceased and the family and community that survives them. Private and liturgical prayer, meditation, reflection and the liturgical rites connected with the funeral and committal unite us to the Lord's paschal mystery and our hope of eternal union with almighty God. The events which surround death call for a community response. Although the immediate family bears a heavy burden of sorrow, relatives, friends and parishioners provide prayerful support.

Church Law

“The funeral of any deceased member of the faithful should normally be celebrated in the church of that person's proper parish” (canon 1177, § 1).

“However, any member of the faithful, or those in charge of the deceased person's funeral, may choose another church; this requires the consent of whoever is in charge of that church and a notification to the proper parish priest of the deceased” (canon 1177, § 2).

“When death has occurred outside the person's proper parish, and the body is not returned there, and another church has not been chosen, the funeral rites are to be celebrated in the church of the parish where the death occurred, unless another church has been designated by particular law” (canon 1177, § 3).

PRACTICE IN THE PARISH

- Produce a **Death Certificate** from a Medical Practitioner.
- Produce a **burial permission** from Bombay Municipal Corporation (B.M.C) and hand it over to the parish office before the burial. The family should ensure that the undertaker or any other person has done this. The family members should ensure that the death certificate has
 - A. the accurate spelling of the name of the deceased
 - B. the correct age

- C. the right relationship (e.g. wife of _____ husband of _____)
- In case of permanent grave holder, Original grave card must be furnished.
 - When a death occurs, a member of the family or any other responsible person should contact the church office or any of the priests with regard to the timing of the funeral and other arrangements. One or two responsible persons should come to the parish house. A group serves no purpose; in fact it leads to confusion.
 - In order that the correct entries may be made in the Funeral Register, the relevant form should be filled in and signed by a family member. In the form under "Relationship" the correct one should be stated.
 - To ensure a meaningful funeral service, it is suggested that a member of the deceased family seek guidance from a priest of our parish regarding the liturgy.
 - Only those who can read effectively and are accustomed to read at mass should be entrusted with readings. Persons should not be selected just because they are relatives.
 - Choirs that sing at funerals/month's mind/anniversary Masses should ensure that they take hymns pertaining to the liturgy of the day.
 - Those who read lead the singing or are members of the choir should be formally and appropriately dressed.
 - The timing of the funeral should be fixed in consultation with the church office or any of the Fathers of the parish. No announcement should be made before this.
 - Usually the priests of the parish will celebrate the funeral Mass and conduct the Last Rites. If the family desires that another priest should be involved in the funeral liturgy, a request could be made.
 - If the family desires, the body could be brought directly to the church for the Mass.
 - There should be **only one tribute and a brief word of thanks** and these should not be more than 3 to 4 minutes in all. No person may give a eulogy at a funeral Mass without the permission of a priest of this church. Only one, brief eulogy will be permitted which should be given from the stand near the choir and not from the lectern which is to be used only for the Word of God.
 - The Rite in the grave yard should not be unduly prolonged by adding additional prayers or by waiting for everyone to pay their 'last respects'.

CEMETERY

- If the deceased has to be buried in a 'family grave' the grave card has to be produced.
- The Archdiocese has discontinued the practice of allotting 'family graves'
- When the grave stone is removed, prior permission must be obtained from the church office.
- It should be stored with the undertaker or in any other place except the cemetery. The Church is not responsible for damage or loss that may be caused to a slab.

BURIAL CERTIFICATE

- Burial Certificate should be collected from the Parish Office after about three days so that mistakes, if any, can be corrected.

