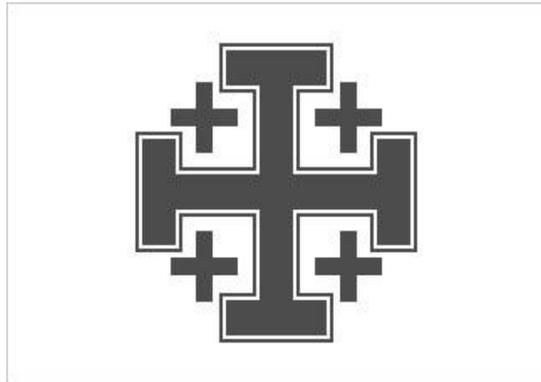


# Holy Cross Church Funeral Ministry



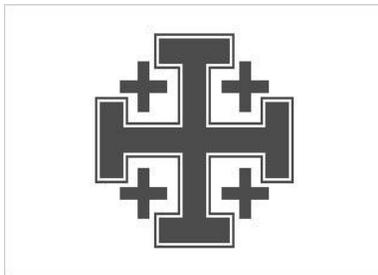
## Catholic Funeral Guidelines

*Revised Edition 2017*

October 2017 edition  
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Holy Cross Church of Batavia  
2300 Main Street  
Batavia, IL 60510-7625

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Catholic Diocese of Rockford  
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# Holy Cross Church Funeral Ministry



Eternal rest grant unto them,  
O Lord,  
And let Perpetual Light  
Shine upon them.  
May their souls  
And the souls of all the faithful departed,  
Through the mercy of God,  
Rest in peace.  
Amen.

Rev. October 2017

My Dear Parishioners,

The most loving efficacious action we can take on behalf of our deceased loved one is to have a Funeral Mass offered for the repose of their soul. The Holy Sacrifice of the Mass is the highest form of prayer because it is Jesus Christ Himself making intercession to the Father (Hebrews 7:25).

As a priest and the pastor of Holy Cross Catholic Church I have said the funeral Mass for many of our people. Some were further along in the faith journey and some lesser so. Over the years I have encountered a number of ways in which family and friends have wished to have their deceased loved ones honored. Some of these ways and ideas were reverent. Some did not reflect the dignity of the deceased nor our Catholic faith. We are a Church steeped in tradition and reverent ritual.

In order to provide a guide which affirms the personal dignity of the deceased and at the same time is appropriately reverential, we have published this booklet as a foundation to guide us in following the norms of the Catholic Diocese of Rockford.

*The Order of Christian Funerals* is a Church document which lays out the basic theology and liturgical practices for conducting Catholic wakes, funerals, and interments. This document provides the basis for the Diocese of Rockford's norms for funerals, wakes, and interments. There are also some refinements that the Diocese has added to emphasize the solemnity of these rites and their public character. This is not to demean the personal and more particular remembrances of the deceased, but rather to put them in the proper context and show their degree of appropriateness.

The Church in its wisdom has directed the bishops, and in turn the priests, to implement and monitor these norms in the practice of conducting a funeral. And as pastor of Holy Cross Church I am promulgating these norms to be used in guiding all who are involved in the planning and execution of a funeral.

I realize that, because of the feelings and affection for the deceased some people may not be in total agreement with these norms, I am urging them to step back and realize the broader importance of properly celebrating the deceased's life in the context of the whole Church.

To close, as the Bishop has so poignantly stated . . .  
“Funerals and death are something we do not enjoy thinking of or talking about, but they are much a part of the human condition. How we handle the issues of the end of life says a great deal about who and what we are as Catholics. The Church has provided us with rituals to face Catholic death in faith and hope. These various rituals not only allow us to accompany the faithful during the final steps of life's journey but, most especially, to celebrate the Paschal Mystery and completeness of the life of the deceased at the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass.”

To all of us who are involved in this journey, I wish you God's abundant blessings and His peace.

Sincerely in Christ and His Mother,

*Rev. James Parker*

Rev. James Parker,  
Pastor of Holy Cross Church, Batavia

## **NORMS OF THE DIOCESE OF ROCKFORD FOR FUNERALS**

### **The Catholic Understanding of Death**

“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. Christ ‘achieved his task of redeeming humanity and giving perfect glory to God principally by the paschal mystery of his blessed passion, resurrection from the dead, and glorious assumption.’” (Order of Christian Funerals, [OCF, 1])

“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 because of her confident belief that death is not the end nor does it break the bonds forged in life. The Church also ministers to the sorrowing and consoles them in the funeral rites with the comforting Word of God and the Sacrament of the Eucharist.” (OCF, 4)

Through the celebration of the funeral rites, particularly the Vigil for the Deceased, the Funeral Liturgy, and the Rite of Committal the Church calls for the active participation of all.

### **I. General Principles and Norms**

1. In the Diocese of Rockford the *Order of Christian Funerals* is to be used as the normative liturgical ritual for the celebration of the funeral rites.
2. The three principal ritual moments in the funeral rites are: the *Vigil and Related Rites and Prayers*, the *Funeral Liturgy*, and the *Rite of Committal*. While there are distinct ritual moments, the funeral rites as a whole are a single prayer which need to be celebrated integrally. The General Introduction, and Introduction to each rite or group of rites, set forth guiding principles for the proper liturgical celebration of these various rites.
3. It is the responsibility of the Pastor to ensure that these liturgical principles are respected, understood, and used with pastoral sensitivity by all those, namely, priests, deacons, and lay persons, who participate in the ministry of consolation: to care for the dying, to pray for the dead, to comfort those who mourn.

4. Furthermore, it is the responsibility of the Pastor to both inform the secular funeral service providers of the proper order and liturgical expression of the funeral rites as set forth in the *Order of Christian Funerals* and to ensure that they are followed according to the desire of the Church.

5. The Church encourages the full celebration of the funeral rites, especially the Funeral Mass, for her faithful deceased members. No one should be denied the Church's funeral rites because of the neglect of the practice of the faith of their family members. It is the responsibility of the Pastor to ensure that the funeral rites are available for these persons.

6. Every Catholic, unless specifically excluded according to the norms of Church law, is entitled to the Church's ministry at the time of death.

## **II. Special Pastoral Concerns**

### **Cremation**

The Congregation of the Doctrine of the Faith with the approval of Pope Francis ordered the publication of directives regarding the burial of the deceased and the conservation of the ashes in the case of cremation. Instruction *Ad Resurgendum cum Christo* ("To rise with Christ") was officially promulgated on August 15, 2016, the Solemnity of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary.

It directs the followers of Christ in the following way:

"The Church continues to prefer the practice of burying the bodies of the deceased, because this shows a greater esteem towards the deceased. Nevertheless, cremation is not prohibited, "unless it was chosen for reasons contrary to Christian doctrine" (#4).

"In the absence of motives contrary to Christian doctrine, the Church, after the celebration of the funeral rite, accompanies the choice of cremation, providing the relevant liturgical and pastoral directives, and taking particular care to avoid every form of scandal or the appearance of religious indifference" (#4).

"When, for legitimate motives, cremation of the body has been chosen, the ashes of the faithful must be laid to rest in a sacred place, that is, in a cemetery or, in certain cases, in a church or an area... dedicated by the competent ecclesial authority" (#5).

“From the earliest times, Christians have desired that the faithful departed become the objects of the Christian community’s prayers and remembrance. Their tombs have become places of prayer, remembrance and reflection. The faithful departed remain part of the Church who believes “in the communion of all the faithful of Christ, those who are pilgrims on earth, the dead who are being purified, and the blessed in heaven, all together forming one Church. The reservation of the ashes of the departed in a sacred place ensures that they are not excluded from the prayers and remembrance of their family or the Christian community. It prevents the faithful departed from being forgotten, or their remains from being shown a lack of respect, which eventuality is possible, most especially once the immediately subsequent generation has too passed away. Also it prevents any unfitting or superstitious practices” (#5).

“For the reasons given above, the conservation of the ashes of the departed in a domestic residence is not permitted...” (#6).

**“When the deceased notoriously has requested cremation and the scattering of their ashes for reasons contrary to the Christian faith, a Christian funeral must be denied to that person according to the norms of the law” (#8).**

Therefore, in the Diocese of Rockford the following norms are to be observed:

1. When the choice has been made to cremate a body, it is recommended that the cremation take place after the Funeral Liturgy followed by the proper disposition of the remains according to the norms of the Church, that is, burial in a grave, or entombment in a mausoleum or columbarium.
2. If cremation takes place before the Funeral Liturgy, a burial place in a grave, or entombment in a mausoleum or columbarium for the cremated remains must be established in order to celebrate the Funeral Liturgy in the Church.

## **2. The Homily and the Remembrance of the Deceased**

“A brief homily based on the readings should always be given at the funeral liturgy, but never any kind of eulogy. The homilist should dwell on God’s compassionate love and on the Paschal Mystery of the Lord as proclaimed in the Scripture readings.” (OCF, 141)

“The homilist should also help the members of the assembly to understand that the mystery of God’s love and the mystery of Jesus’ victorious death and resurrection were present in the life and death of the deceased and that these mysteries are active in their own lives as well. Through the homily members of the family and community should receive consolation and strength to face the death of one of their members with a hope nourished by the saving word of God.” (OCF, 27)

The fact that a eulogy is not permitted does not mean that there is to be no reference to the deceased person during the homily. The homilist helps the bereaved to understand the mystery of God’s love and the Paschal Mystery in the life of the deceased person and in their own lives. References to the person's life of faith and love are obviously appropriate. (OCF, 30)

The *Order of Christian Funerals* recognizes the need to reflect on the life of the loved one who has just died by providing an invitation during the *Vigil for the Deceased* (Wake) to a family member or friends of the family to speak in remembrance of the deceased person just before the concluding rite.

**Therefore, in the Diocese of Rockford the following norms are to be observed:**

1. In the Diocese of Rockford, it is recommended that the Vigil (Wake) is the most appropriate time for members of the family and friends to share memories of the deceased or to pay tribute to the deceased through vocal remembrances, photographs, favorite songs, etc.

2. The reception after the burial is another appropriate time for the remembrances because there is less of an emotional burden and the context is looking toward the future in a more positive manner.

### **3. Keeping the Memory of the Deceased**

In keeping with our Catholic tradition, all are encouraged to ensure that the memory of our dead is observed in the following ways:

- Offering of Masses for the deceased, especially on the anniversary of death
- Parish remembrance on All Souls Day.
- A parish celebration of Mass for the recently deceased of the last year during the month of November.
- The encouragement of cemetery visitation.  
Praying for the living and the dead.

### **4. Music for the Funeral Liturgy**

1. "Music is integral to the funeral rites. It allows the community to express convictions and feelings that words alone may fail to convey. It has the power to console and uplift the mourners and to strengthen the unity of the assembly in faith and love." (OCF,30)

2. In some pastoral settings, there has been an increasing confusion about the appropriate types of music for funerals. An almost "anything goes" mentality has crept into the full funeral rites, that is, the Vigil (Wake), the Funeral Mass, and the Committal.

3. Non-liturgical or secular music is forbidden before or during the funeral rites, particularly in church. Thus, such music as "Wind Beneath My Wings," "From a Distance," "Danny Boy," "The Notre Dame Victory March," etc., may not be used during the rites, neither before nor after the funeral rites in church.

4. The priest celebrant is to approve and authorize the use of proper liturgical music for all funeral rites.

*Prepared by the Office for Divine Worship, Diocese of Rockford, March 2002*



Holy Cross Church  
Funeral Ministry

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