



Helpful Resources for the Preparation of a Christian Funeral

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Funeral Mass

Readings

A careful selection and use of readings from Scripture for the funeral Mass or reception of the body will provide the family and the community with an opportunity to hear God speak to them in their needs, sorrows, fears and hopes. Here is a suggested selection of readings from Scripture, from both the Old and New Testaments – other choices can also be made from the Bible.

Running Order of Readings at a Funeral Mass

1. 1st Reading
2. Responsorial Psalm (Possibly Sung)
3. 2nd Reading
4. Gospel (Read by Priest/Deacon)
5. Homily (Short reflection given by Priest/Deacon)
6. Prayer of the Faithful (Intercessions - 5 max.)

For a **Funeral Mass** itself, you can choose the first reading from the Old Testament or in the Easter Season from the New Testament - see suggestions **1A to 1I**.

The Responsorial Psalm is normally sung. However, if it is not being sung you can choose a Psalm for reading from the Responsorial Psalm section. You can select the second reading from **2A to 2H**. You may also suggest one of the Gospels from the list below.

(These resources may also be useful when choosing scripture readings for a funeral service when Mass is not celebrated)

Tips for the Reader

The following are a few tips which the reader may find helpful:

- o *Ensure that you know which reading you are proclaiming*
- o *Practice the reading a number of times the night before the Mass*
- o *Read slowly and clearly - try not to rush*
- o *Make sure you have the reading with you when you come to the Church*
- o *Speak clearly into the microphone – your mouth should be six inches away from the microphone when you are using it*

First Readings

1A

A reading from the book of Job 19:1.23-27

Lectionary III, p.849

This I know: that my Avenger lives

Job said:

'Ah, would that these words of mine were written down,
inscribed on some monument with iron chisel and engraving tool,
cut into the rock for ever.

This I know: that my Avenger lives,
and he, the Last, will take his stand on earth.

After my awaking, he will set me close to him,
and from my flesh I shall look on God.

He whom I shall see will take my part:
these eyes will gaze on him and find him not aloof.

The word of the Lord.



1B

A reading from the book of Wisdom 3:1-6.9

Lectionary III, p.851

They are at peace with God

The souls of the virtuous are in the hands of God,
no torment shall ever touch them.

In the eyes of the unwise, they did appear to die,
their going looked like a disaster,
their leaving us, like annihilation;
but they are in peace.

If they experienced punishment as men see it,
their hope was rich with immortality;
slight was their affliction, great will their blessing be.

God has put them to the test
and proved them worthy to be with him;
he has tested them like gold in a furnace,
and accepted them as a holocaust.

They who trust in him will understand the truth,
those who are faithful will live with him in love;
for grace and mercy await those he has chosen.

The word of the Lord.

1C

A reading from the book of Wisdom 4:7-15

Lectionary III, p.852

Grace and mercy await the chosen of the Lord

The virtuous man, though he die before his time, will find rest.
Length of days is not what makes age honourable,
nor number of years the true measure of life;
understanding, this is man's grey hairs,
untarnished life, this is ripe old age.
He has sought to please God, so God has loved him;
as he was living among sinners, he has been taken up.
He has been carried off so that evil may not warp his understanding
or treachery seduce his soul;
for the fascination of evil throws good things into the shade,
and the whirlwind of desire corrupts a simple heart.
Coming to perfection in so short a while, he achieved long life;
His soul being pleasing to the Lord,
he has taken them quickly from the wickedness around him.
Yet people look on, uncomprehending;
it does not enter their heads that grace and mercy await the chosen of the Lord,
and protection, his holy ones.

The word of the Lord.

1D

A reading from the prophet Isaiah 25:6-9

Lectionary III, p.853

The Lord will destroy death forever

On this mountain, the Lord of hosts will prepare for all peoples
a banquet of rich food.
On this mountain he will remove
the mourning veil covering all peoples,
and the shroud enwrapping all nations,
he will destroy death for ever.
The Lord will wipe away the tears from every cheek;
he will take away his peoples shame
everywhere on earth, for the Lord has said so.
That day, it will be said: See, this is our God
in whom we hoped for salvation;
The Lord is the one in whom we hoped.
We exult and we rejoice that he has saved us.

The word of the Lord.

1E

A reading from the book of Lamentations 3:17-26

Lectionary III, p.854

It is good to wait in silence for the Lord to save

My soul is shut out from peace;
I have forgotten happiness.
And now I say, 'My strength is gone,
that hope which came from the Lord'.
Brooding on my anguish and affliction
is gall and wormwood.
My spirit ponders it continually
and sinks within me
This is what I shall tell my heart,
and so recover hope:
the favours of the Lord are not all past,
his kindnesses are not exhausted;
every morning they are renewed;
great is his faithfulness.
'My portion is the Lord' says my soul
'and so I will hope in him.'
The Lord is good to those who trust him,
to the soul that searches for him.
It is good to wait in silence for the Lord to save.
The word of the Lord.

1F

A reading from the prophet Isaiah 49:13-16

Lectionary III, p.821

I will never forget you

Shout for joy, you heavens; exult, you earth!
You mountains, break into happy cries!
For the Lord consoles his people
and takes pity on those who are afflicted.
For Zion was saying, 'the Lord has abandoned me,
the Lord has forgotten me'.
Does a woman forget her baby at the breast,
or fail to cherish the son of her womb?
Yet even if these forget, I will never forget you.
See I have carved you on the palm of my hands.

The word of the Lord.

1G

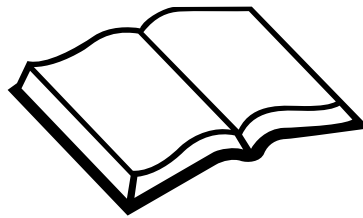
A reading from the book of the Apocalypse 14:13

Lectionary III, p.859

Happy are those who die in the Lord

I, John, heard a voice from heaven say to me, 'Write down: Happy are those who die in the Lord! Happy indeed, the Spirit says; now they can rest for ever after their work, since their good deeds go with them.'

The word of the Lord.



1H

A reading from the book of the Apocalypse 21:1-7

Lectionary III, p.861

There will be no more death

I, John, saw a new heaven and a new earth; the first heaven and the first earth had disappeared now, and there was no longer any sea. I saw the holy city, and the new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, as beautiful as a bride all dressed for her husband. Then I heard a loud voice call from the throne, 'You see this city? Here God lives among men. He will make his home among them; they shall be his people, and he will be their God; his name is God-with-them. He will wipe away all tears from their eyes; there will be no more death, and no more mourning or sadness. The world of the past has gone.'

Then the One sitting on the throne spoke: 'Now I am making the whole of creation new,' he said. 'I will give water from the well of life free to anybody who is thirsty; it is the rightful inheritance of the one who proves victorious; and I will be his God and he a son to me.'

The word of the Lord.

A reading from the book of Ecclesiastes 3:1-8

There is a time for dying

There is a season for everything, a time for every occupation under heaven:

A time for giving birth,
a time for dying;
a time for planting;
a time for uprooting what has been planted.

A time for killing,
a time for healing;
a time for knocking down.
a time for building.

A time for tears,
a time for laughter;
a time for mourning,
a time for dancing.

A time for throwing stones away,
a time for gathering them up;
a time for embracing,
a time to refrain from embracing.

A time for searching,
a time for losing;
a time for keeping,
a time for throwing away.

A time for tearing,
a time for sewing;
a time for keeping silent,
a time for speaking.

A time for loving,
a time for hating;
a time for war,
a time for peace.



The word of the Lord.

Responsorial Psalms

PSALM 26

Lectionary III, p.849

Response The Lord is my light and my help

The Lord is my light and my help;
whom shall I fear?

The Lord is the stronghold of my life;
before whom shall I shrink? **R.**

There is one thing I ask of the Lord,
for this I long, to live in the house of the Lord,
all the days of my life,
to savour the sweetness of the Lord,
to behold his temple. **R.**

O Lord hear my voice when I call;
have mercy and answer.
It is your face, O Lord, that I seek;
hide not your face. **R.**

I am sure I shall see the Lord's goodness
in the land of the living.
Hope in him, hold firm and take heart.
Hope in the Lord! **R.**

PSALM 22

Lectionary III, p.854

Response The Lord is my shepherd; there is nothing I shall want

The Lord is my shepherd;
There is nothing I shall want.
Fresh and green are the pastures
where he gives me repose.
Near restful waters he leads me
to revive my drooping spirit. **R.**

He guides me along the right path;
he is true to his name.
If I should walk in the valley of darkness.
no evil would I fear.
You are there with your crook and your staff;
with these you give me comfort. **R.**

You have prepared a banquet for me
in the sight of my foes.
My head you have anointed with oil;
my cup is overflowing. **R.**



Surely goodness and kindness shall follow me
all the days of my life.
In the Lord's own house shall I dwell
for ever and ever. **R.**

PSALM 24

Lectionary III, p.855

Response To you, O Lord, I lift up my soul.

Remember your mercy, Lord,
and the love you have shown from of old.
In your love remember me,
because of your goodness. **R.**

Relieve the anguish of my heart
and set me free from my distress.
See my affliction and my toil
and take all my sins away. **R.**

Preserve my life and rescue me.
Do not disappoint me, you are my refuge.
May innocence and uprightness protect me:
for my hope is in you, O Lord. **R.**

PSALM 102

Lectionary III, p.857

Response The Lord is compassion and love.

The Lord is compassion and love,
slow to anger and rich in mercy.
He does not treat us according to our sins
nor repay us according to our faults. **R.**

As a father has compassion on his sons,
the Lord has pity on those who fear him;
for he knows of what we are made,
he remembers that we are dust. **R.**

As for man, his days are like grass;
he flowers like the flower of the field;
the wind blows and he is gone
and his place never sees him again. **R.**

But the love of the Lord is everlasting
upon those who hold him in fear;
his justice reaches out to children's children
when they keep his covenant in truth. **R.**

Second Readings

2A

A reading from the letter of St Paul to the Romans 8:14-23 *Lectionary III, p.864*
What we suffer in this life can never compare to the glory which is waiting for us.

Everyone moved by the Spirit is a son of God. The spirit you received is not the spirit of slaves bringing fear into our lives again; it is the spirit of sons, and it makes us cry out Abba, Father! The spirit himself and our spirit bear united witness that we are children of God and if we are children we are heirs as well: heirs of God and coheirs with Christ, sharing his sufferings so as to share his glory. I think that what we suffer in this life can never be compared to the glory, as yet unrevealed, which is waiting for us

The word of the Lord.

2B

A reading from the letter of St Paul to the Romans 8:31-35. 37-39

Death cannot come between us and the love of Christ *Lectionary III, p.865*

With God on our side who can be against us? Since God did not spare his own Son, but gave him up to benefit us all, we may be certain after such a gift, that he will not refuse anything he can give. Could anyone accuse those that God has chosen? When God acquits, could anyone condemn? Could Christ Jesus? No! He not only died for us – he rose from the dead, and there at God's right hand he stands and pleads for us.

Nothing therefore can come between us and the love of Christ, even if we are troubled or worried, or being persecuted, or lacking food or clothes, or being threatened or even attacked. These are the trials through which we triumph, by the power of him who loved us.

For I am certain of this: neither death nor life, no angel, no prince, nothing that exists, nothing still to come, not any power, or height or depth, not any created thing, can ever come between us and the love of God made visible in Christ Jesus our Lord.

The word of the Lord.



2C

A reading from the first letter of St. Paul to the Corinthians 13:1-13

Love does not come to an end

Lectionary III, p.716

If I have all the eloquence of men or of angels, but speak without love, I am simply a gong booming or a cymbal clashing. If I have the gift of prophecy, understanding all the mysteries there are, and knowing everything, and if I have faith in all its fullness, to move mountains, but without love, then I am nothing at all. If I give away all that I possess, piece by piece, and if I even let them take my body to burn it, but am without love, it will do me no good whatever.

Love is always patient and kind; it is never jealous; love is never boastful or conceited; it is never rude or selfish; it does not take offence, and is not resentful. Love takes no pleasure in other people's sins but delights in the truth; it is always ready to excuse, to trust, to hope, and to endure whatever comes.

Love does not come to an end. In short, there are three things that last: faith, hope and love; and the greatest of these is love.

The word of the Lord.

2D

A reading from the letter of St Paul to the Philippians 3:20-21

Our homeland is in heaven

Lectionary III, p.868

For us, our homeland is in heaven, and from heaven comes the saviour we are waiting for, the Lord Jesus Christ, and he will transfigure these bodies of ours into copies of his glorious body. He will do that by the same power with which he can subdue the whole universe.

The word of the Lord.

2E

A reading from the first letter of St Paul to the Thessalonians 4:13-18

We shall stay with the Lord for ever

Lectionary III, p.869

We want you to be quite certain, brothers, about those who have died, to make sure that you do not grieve about them, like the other people who have no hope. We believe that Jesus died and rose again, and that it will be the same for those who have died in Jesus: God will bring them with him. We can tell you this from the Lord's own teaching, that any of us who are left alive until the Lord's coming will not have any advantage over those who have died. At the trumpet of God, the voice of the archangel will call out the command and the Lord himself will come down from heaven; those who have died in Christ will be the first to rise, and then those of us who are still alive will be taken up in the clouds, together with them, to meet the Lord in the air. So we shall stay with the Lord forever. With such thoughts as these you should comfort one another.

The word of the Lord.

2F

A reading from the second letter of St. Paul to Timothy 4:5-8

I have fought the good fight to the end, I have run the race to the finish

Be careful always to choose the right course; be brave under trials; make the preaching of the Good News your life's work, in thoroughgoing service.

As for me, my life is already being poured away as a libation, and the time has come for me to be gone. I have fought the good fight to the end; I have run the race to the finish; I have kept the faith; all there is to come now is the crown of righteousness reserved for me, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will give to me on that Day; and not only to me but to all those who have longed for his Appearing.

The word of the Lord.

2G

A reading from the first letter of St. Peter 1:3-9 *Lectionary III, p.230*

We have a sure hope and the promise of an inheritance that can never fade away

Blessed be God the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who in his great mercy has given us a new birth as his sons, by raising Jesus Christ from the dead, so that we have a sure hope and the promise of an inheritance that can never be spoilt or soiled and never fade away, because it is being kept for you in the heavens. Through your faith, God's power will guard you until the salvation which has been prepared is revealed at the end of time.

This is a cause of great joy for you, even though you may for a short time have to bear being plagued by all sorts of trials; so that, when Jesus Christ is revealed, your faith will have been tested and proved like gold – only it is more precious than gold, which is corruptible even though it bears testing by fire – and then you will have praise and glory and honour.

You did not see him, yet you love him; and still without seeing him, you are already filled with a joy so glorious that it cannot be described, because you believe; and you are sure of the end to which your faith looks forward, that is, the salvation of your souls.

The word of the Lord.



2H

A reading from the first letter of St John 3:1-2

Lectionary III, p.870

We shall see him as he really is

Think of the love that the Father has lavished on us,
by letting us be called Gods children;
and that is what we are.

Because the world refused to acknowledge him,
therefore it does not acknowledge us.

My dear people, we are already the children of God
but what we are to be in the future has not yet been revealed;
all we know is, that when it is revealed
we shall be like him
because we shall see him as he really is.

The word of the Lord.



Gospels

1.

A reading from the holy Gospel according to Matthew 5:1-12

Rejoice and be glad, for your reward will be great in heaven *Lectionary III, p.871*

Seeing the crowds, Jesus went up the hill. There he sat down and was joined by his disciples. Then he began to speak. This is what he taught them:

'How happy are the poor in spirit;
theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Happy the gentle:
they shall have the earth for their heritage.

Happy those who mourn:
they shall be comforted.

Happy those who hunger and thirst for what is right:
they shall be satisfied.

Happy the merciful:
they shall have mercy shown them.

Happy the pure in heart:
they shall see God.

Happy the peacemakers:
they shall be called sons of God.

Happy those who are persecuted in the cause of the right:
theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Happy are you when people abuse you and persecute you and speak all calumny against you on my account. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward will be great in heaven.'

The Gospel of the Lord.

2.

A reading from the holy Gospel according to Matthew 11:25-30

Come to me, and I will give you rest *Lectionary III, p.872*

Jesus exclaimed, 'I bless you, Father, Lord of heaven and of earth, for hiding these things from the learned and the clever and revealing them to mere children. Yes, Father, for that is what it pleased you to do. Everything has been entrusted to me by my Father; and no one knows the Son except the Father, just as no one knows the Father except the Son and those to whom the Son chooses to reveal him.

'Come to me, all you who labour and are overburdened, and I will give you rest. Shoulder my yoke and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. Yes, my yoke is easy and my burden light.'

The Gospel of the Lord.

3.

A reading from the holy Gospel according to Mark 15:33-39; 16:1-6

Jesus gave a loud cry and breathed his last

Lectionary III, p.874

When the sixth hour came there was darkness over the whole land until the ninth hour. And at the ninth hour Jesus cried out in a loud voice, 'Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?' which means, 'My God, my God, why have you deserted me?' When some of those who stood by heard this, they said, 'Listen, he is calling on Elijah.' Some ran and soaked a sponge in vinegar and, putting it on a reed, gave it him to drink saying, 'Wait and see if Elijah will come to take him down.' But Jesus gave a loud cry and breathed his last. And the veil of the Temple was torn in two from top to bottom. The centurion, who was standing in front of him, had seen how he had died and he said, 'In truth this man was a Son of God.'

When the Sabbath was over, Mary of Magdala, Mary the mother of James, and Salome, bought spices with which to go and anoint him. And very early in the morning on the first day of the week they went to the tomb, just as the sun was rising. They had been saying to one another, 'Who will roll away the stone for us from the entrance to the tomb?' But when they looked they could see that the stone – which was very big – had already been rolled back. On entering the tomb they saw a young man in a white robe seated on the right-hand side, and they were struck with amazement. But he said to them, 'There is no need for alarm. You are looking for Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified: he has risen, he is not here. See, here is the place where they laid him'.

The Gospel of the Lord.

4.

A reading from the holy Gospel according to Luke 7:11-17

Young man, I tell you to get up

Lectionary III, p.876

Jesus went to a town called Nain, accompanied by his disciples and a great number of people. When he was near the gate of the town it happened that a dead man was being carried out for burial, the only son of his mother, and she was a widow. And a considerable number of the townspeople were with her. When the Lord saw her he felt sorry for her. 'Do not cry', he said. Then he went up and put his hand on the bier and the bearers stood still, and he said, 'Young man, I tell you to get up'. And the dead man sat up and began to talk, and Jesus gave him to his mother. Everyone was filled with awe and praised God saying, 'A great prophet has appeared among us; God has visited his people.' And this opinion of him spread throughout Judaea and all over the countryside.

The Gospel of the Lord.

5.

A reading from the holy Gospel according to Luke 23:44-46. 50.52-53. 24:1-6

Father, into your hands I commend my spirit

Lectionary III, p.878

It was about the sixth hour and, with the sun eclipsed, a darkness came over the whole land until the ninth hour. The veil of the Temple was torn right down the middle; and when Jesus had cried out in a loud voice, he said, 'Father, into your hands I commit my spirit'. With these words he breathed his last.

Then a member of the council arrived, an upright and virtuous man named Joseph. This man went to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus. He then took it down, wrapped it in a shroud and put him in a tomb which was hewn in stone in which no one had yet been laid.

On the first day of the week, at the first sign of dawn, the women went to the tomb with the spices they had prepared. They found that the stone had been rolled away from the tomb, but on entering discovered that the body of the Lord Jesus was not there. As they stood there not knowing what to think, two men in brilliant clothes suddenly appeared at their side. Terrified, the women lowered their eyes. But the two men said to them, 'Why look among the dead for someone who is alive? He is not here; he is risen.'

The Gospel of the Lord.

6.

A reading from the holy Gospel according to Luke 24:13-16. 28-35

Was it not ordained that the Christ should suffer and so enter into his glory

Lectionary III, p.880

On the first day of the week, two of the disciples were on their way to a village called Emmaus, seven miles from Jerusalem, and they were talking together about all that had happened. Now as they talked this over, Jesus himself came up and walked by their side; but something prevented them from recognising him. When they drew near to the village to which they were going, he made as if to go on; but they pressed him to stay with them. 'It is nearly evening', they said, 'and the day is almost over.' So he went in to stay with them. Now while he was with them at the table, he took the bread and said the blessing; then he broke it and handed it to them. And their eyes were opened and they recognised him; but he had vanished from their sight. Then they said to each other, 'Did not our hearts burn within us as he talked to us on the road and explained the scriptures to us?'

They set out that instant and returned to Jerusalem. There they found the Eleven assembled together with their companions, who said to them, 'Yes it is true. The Lord has risen and has appeared to Simon.' Then they told their story of what had happened on the road and how they had recognised him at the breaking of bread.

The Gospel of the Lord.

7.

A reading from the holy Gospel according to John 11:32-45

Lazarus, come out

Lectionary III, p.885

Mary the sister of Lazarus went to Jesus, and as soon as she saw him she threw herself at his feet, saying, 'Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died.' At the sight of her tears, and those of the Jews who followed her, Jesus said in great distress, with a sigh that came straight from the heart, 'Where have you put him?' They said, 'Lord, come and see'. Jesus wept; and the Jews said, 'See how much he loved him!' But there was someone who remarked, 'He opened the eyes of the blind man, could he not have prevented this man's death?' Still sighing, Jesus reached the tomb: it was a cave with a stone to close the opening. Jesus said, 'Take the stone away.' Martha said to him, 'Lord, by now he will smell, this is the fourth day.' Jesus replied, 'Have I not told you that if you believe you will see the glory of God?' So they took away the stone. Then Jesus lifted up his eyes and said: 'Father, I thank you for hearing my prayer. I knew indeed that you always hear me, but I speak for the sake of all these who stand round me, so that they may believe it was you who sent me?' When he had said this, he cried in a loud voice, 'Lazarus, here! Come out!' The dead man came out, his feet and hands bound with bands of stuff and a cloth round his face. Jesus said to them, 'Unbind him, let him go free.'

Many of the Jews who had come to visit Mary and had seen what he did believed in him.

The Gospel of the Lord.

8.

A reading from the holy Gospel according to John 12:23-28

If a wheat grain dies, it yields a rich harvest

Lectionary III, p.886

Jesus said to his disciples:

'Now the hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified.

I tell you, most solemnly,

unless a wheat grain falls on the ground and dies,

it remains only a single grain;

but if it dies, it yields a rich harvest.

Anyone who loves his life loses it;

anyone who hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life.

If a man serves me, he must follow me,

wherever I am my servant will be there too.

If anyone serves me, my Father will honour him.

Now my soul is troubled.

What shall I say: Father, save me from this hour?

But it is for this very reason that I have come to this hour.

Father, glorify your name!'

A voice came from heaven, 'I have glorified it, and I will glorify it again'.

The Gospel of the Lord.



9.

A reading from the holy Gospel according to John 14:1-6 *Lectionary III, p.888*

There are many rooms in my Father's house

Jesus said to his disciples:

'Do not let your hearts be troubled.

Trust in God still, and trust in me.

There are many rooms in my Father's house;

if there were not, I should have told you.

I am going now to prepare a place for you, and after I have gone and prepared you a place, I shall return to take you with me; so that where I am you may be too.

You know the way to the place where I am going.'

Thomas said, 'Lord, we do not know where you are going, so how can we know the way?' Jesus said:

'I am the Way, the Truth and the Life.

No one can come to the Father except through me.'

The Gospel of the Lord.



Summaries of Various Funeral Readings

Old Testament

Job 19:1.23-27	<i>I know that my Avenger (Redeemer) lives...</i>
Deuteronomy 34:1-9.	<i>Moses died, his eyes undimmed, his vigour unimpaired</i>
Wisdom 3:1-6.9	<i>The souls of the virtuous are in the hands of God, no torment shall ever touch them ...they are in peace.</i>
Wisdom 4:7-15	<i>The virtuous ones, though they die before their time, will find rest. Length of days is not what makes age honourable, nor number of years the true measure of life</i>
Ecclesiastes 3:1-11	<i>There is a season for everything, a time for every occupation under heaven: A time for giving birth, a time for dying...</i>
Isaiah 25:6-9	<i>On this mountain... He will destroy death for ever. The Lord will wipe away the tears from every cheek...</i>
Isaiah 49:13-16.	<i>See I have carved you on the palm of my hands</i>
Lamentations 3:17-26	<i>My soul is shut out from peace... It is good to wait in silence for the Lord to save</i>

New Testament

Apocalypse 14:13	<i>Happy are those who die in the Lord their good deeds go with them.</i>
Apocalypse 21:1-5	<i>He will wipe away all tears from their eyes; there will be no more death, and no more mourning or sadness.</i>
1 John 3:1-2	<i>Think of the love that the Father has lavished on us. We shall see him as he really is.</i>
Romans 6:3-9	<i>Death has no power over Him any more</i>
Romans 8:14-23	<i>If we are children we are heirs as well: heirs of God and coheirs with Christ, sharing his sufferings so as to share his glory</i>
Romans 8:31-35.37-39	<i>nothing ... can ever come between us and the love of God made visible in Christ Jesus our Lord.</i>
Romans 14:7-12	<i>Alive or dead, we belong to the Lord.</i>
Philippians 3:20-21	<i>For us, our homeland is in heaven</i>
1 Thessalonians 4:13-18	<i>We believe that Jesus died and rose again, and that it will be the same for those who have died in Jesus: God will bring them with him.</i>

2 Timothy 4:6-8 *I have fought the good fight to the end; I have run the race to the finish; I have kept the faith;*

1 Corinthians 15:20-23 *The Risen Christ is the first fruits of all who have fallen asleep.*

2 Corinthians 5:1,6-10 *We have an everlasting home in the heavens*

1 Peter 1:3-9 *Blessed be God...who in his great mercy has given us a new birth...by raising Jesus Christ from the dead...*

Gospels

Matthew 5:1-12 *Rejoice and be glad, for your reward will be great in heaven.*

Matthew 11:25-30 *Come to me, and I will give you rest.*

Matthew 25:1-13 *The bridegroom is here! Go out and meet him.*

Matthew 25:31-46 *Come, you whom my Father has blessed.*

Mark 15:33-39;16:1-6 *Jesus gave a loud cry and breathed his last.*

Luke 7:11-17 *Young man, I tell you to get up.*

Luke 12:35-40 *Stand ready.*

Luke 23:33.39-43 *Today you will be with me in paradise.*

Luke 23:44-46:50.52-53.24:1-6 *Father, into your hands I commend my spirit.*

Luke 24:13-35 *Was it not ordained that the Christ should suffer and enter into his glory?*

John 5:24-29 *Whoever listens to my words and believes has passed from death to life.*

John 6:37-40 *Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life, and I shall raise him up on the last day.*

John 6:51-58 *Anyone who eats this bread has eternal life, and I shall raise him up on the last day.*

John 11:17-21 *I am the resurrection and the life.*

John 11:32-45 *Lazarus, come out.*

John 12:23-28 *If a wheat grain dies, it yields a rich harvest.*



Sample Leaflet

Funeral Mass

for the repose of the soul of

Entrance Song **Jesus Remember Me (©Taizé)**
All sing: Jesus remember me when you come into your kingdom (2)

Opening Prayer

Reading **I Thessalonians 4:13 – 14,18**
With such thoughts as these you should comfort one another

Responsorial Psalm **The Lord Will Heal (©Liam Lawton)**
All sing: The Lord will heal the broken heart
 God will seek the lost and find them.

Gospel Acclamation **Alleluia (Fintan O'Carroll)**

Gospel **Matthew 11: 28 – 30**
Come to me...and I will give you rest



Prayer of the Faithful

Presentation of Gifts **Ag Críost An Síol (Seán Ó Riada)**

Eucharistic Prayer Acclamations – International Mass (Tom Egan)

Sanctus

All sing: Hosanna in the highest

Mystery of Faith

All sing: My Lord and my God

Amen

All sing: Amen, Amen

Communion Song **Ubi Caritas (©Taizé)**
All sing: Ubi caritas et amor, ubi caritas Deus ibi est.

Final Commendation

All sing: Receive her soul and present her to God the most high

Song of Farewell **Songs of the Angels (©Bob Dufford)**

'All I ask is that you remember me at the altar of God'
Saint Monica

Template - The Funeral Mass

Entrance Song

Penitential Rite

Opening Prayer

The Liturgy of the Word

1st Reading

Responsorial Psalm

Gospel Acclamation

Gospel

The Homily

Prayer of the Faithful

The Liturgy of the Eucharist

Presentation of Gifts

Prayer over the Gifts

Eucharistic Acclamations

Sanctus

Mystery of Faith

Amen

The Communion Rite

The Lord's Prayer

Lamb of God

Communion Song

Post Communion Prayer

Final Commendation

Recessional Song

The Reception of the Body at the Church

In recent years there has been an increase in the number of funerals that have only one ceremony at the Church which is the celebration of Mass preceded directly by a short Reception of the Body at the Church.

The Rite of Reception of the Body at the Church on the evening before the Funeral Mass

1. Greeting (4 choices or option of *ad lib* words from celebrant)
2. Sprinkling with Holy Water
3. Optional Placing of the Pall (White cloth placed over coffin as a reminder of Baptism)
4. Entrance Procession (Accompanied by music or prayers)
5. Optional Placing of Christian Symbols (Cross, Bible etc.)
6. Invitation to Prayer (2 choices)
7. Opening Prayer (2 choices)
8. Liturgy of the Word (Reading, Psalm, Gospel and Homily)
9. Prayer of Intercession (Litany, The Lord's Prayer and Concluding Prayer)
10. Optional recitation of a Decade of the Rosary



Funeral Services when a Mass is not celebrated

Here are two sample services – A and B - that can be adapted using different prayers, readings, reflections and music.

A

ALL STAND

Opening Song Jesus Remember Me (©Taizé)

All sing: Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom.
Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom.

Welcome and Introduction

Leader In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

All Amen.

Leader The Lord be with you.

All And with your spirit.

Opening Prayer

Let us pray,
God of mercy,
Look kindly on your servant John
who has set down the burden of his years.
As he served you faithfully throughout his life,
may you give him the fullness of your peace and joy.
We give thanks for John's long life,
now caught up in your eternal love.
We make our prayer in the name of Jesus who is our risen Lord now
and forever. **Amen.**

ALL SIT

Reading Revelation 14:13

Happy are those who die in the Lord! Happy indeed, the Spirit says;
now they can rest forever after their work, since their good deeds go
with them.

Responsorial Psalm I Have Found My Peace – Ps.131 (©OCP -Chris Willcock SJ)

All sing: In you, Lord, I have found my peace, I have found my peace

ALL STAND

Gospel Acclamation Mass of St. Columba (Columba McCann OSB)

All sing: Alleluia or Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ!
Glory praise and honour to you.

Gospel John 4:1-3

Jesus said to his disciples, 'Do not let your hearts be troubled. Believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house there are many mansions. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, so that where I am, there you may be also.

ALL SIT

Homily/Reflection

Song Do not let your hearts be troubled (© G.I.A. - David Haas)

All sing: Do not let your hearts be troubled.
Have faith in God and faith in me.
I will go forth to prepare a place for you
and I'll come back to take you with me
that where I am you may also be.

Reflection Bede the Venerable

Christ is the morning star
who, when the night of this world is past,
brings to his saints
the promise of the light of life
and opens everlasting day.

Song Ag Críost an Síol (Seán Ó Riada)

Ag Críost an síol, ag Críost an fómhar;
in iothlainn Dé go dtugtar sinn.
Ag Críost an mhuir, ag Críost an t-iasc;
i líonta Dé go gcastar sinn.
Ó fhás go haois, ó aois go bás,
do dhá láimh, a Chríost, anall tharainn.
Ó bhás go críoch ní críoch ach athfhás,
i bParthas na nGrást go rabhaimid.

Christ's is the seed, Christ's is the crop,
in the barn of God may we be brought.
Christ's is the sea, Christ's is the fish,
in the nets of God may we be caught.
From growth to age, from age to death,
Thy two arms here, O Christ, about us.
From death to end, not end but growth,
in blessed Paradise may we be.



ALL STAND

Intercessions

Leader God, the almighty Father, raised Jesus his Son from the dead; with confidence we ask him to save all his people, living and dead:

For John, who in baptism was given the pledge of eternal life, that he now be admitted to the company of the saints. Lord in your mercy:

All say: Hear our prayer

For the family and friends of John, that they may be consoled in their grief by Jesus who wept at the death of his friend Lazarus. Lord in your mercy:

All say: Hear our prayer

For those who cared for John in his final illness, that they will be blessed in return for their tender care. Lord in your mercy:

All say: Hear our prayer

For our deceased relatives and friends and for all who have helped us, that they may have the reward of their goodness. Lord in your mercy:

All say: Hear our prayer

For all gathered here to worship in faith, that we may meet together again in God's kingdom. Lord in your mercy:

All say: Hear our prayer

Leader God our shelter and our strength,
You listen in love to the cry of your people:
Hear the prayers we offer for our departed brothers and sisters.
Cleanse them from their sins
and grant them the fullness of redemption.
We ask this through Christ, our Lord. **Amen.**

Final Commendation and Farewell

Invitation to Prayer

Before we go our separate ways, let us take leave of our brother. May our farewell express our affection for him; may it ease our sadness and strengthen our hope. One day we shall joyfully greet him again when the love of Christ, which conquers all things, destroys even death itself.

Song of Farewell

Saints of God, come to his aid! Hasten to meet him, angels of the Lord!

Response Receive his soul and present him to God the Most High.

May Christ, who called you, take you to himself;
may angels lead you to the bosom of Abraham.

Response Receive his soul and present him to God the Most High.

Eternal rest grant unto him, O Lord,
and let perpetual light shine upon him.

Response Receive his soul and present him to God the Most High.

Prayer of Commendation

Into your hands, Father of mercies, we commend our brother, John, in the sure and certain hope, that together with all who have died in Christ, he will rise again with Him.

We give you thanks for the blessings which you bestowed upon John in this life:

they are signs to us of your goodness and of our fellowship with the saints in Christ.

Merciful Lord,

turn toward us and listen to our prayers:

open the gates of paradise to your servant and help us who remain to comfort one another with assurances of faith,
until we all meet in Christ

and are with you and with our brother forever.

Response Amen.

In peace let us bring John to his place of rest.

May the angels lead you into paradise;
may the martyrs come to welcome you
and take you to the holy city,
the new and eternal Jerusalem.
or

Song Songs Of The Angels (© G.I A. Bob Dufford)

All sing: May songs of the angels welcome you and guide
you along your way.

May the smiles of the martyrs greet your own
as darkness turns into day.

Every fear will be undone and death will be no more.

as songs of the angels bring you home before the face of God.



B

ALL STAND

Opening Song Bless The Lord My Soul (©Taizé)

Welcome and Introduction

Leader: In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

All: Amen.

Leader: The Lord be with you.

All: And with your spirit.

Opening Prayer

Let us pray,
Lord our God,
you are always faithful and quick to show mercy.
Our sister Tracey was suddenly taken from us.
Come swiftly to her aid. Have mercy on her,
and comfort her family and friends
by the power and protection of the cross.
We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

ALL SIT

Reading Romans 8:37-39

Nothing can come between us and the love of Christ, even if we are troubled or worried or being persecuted or lacking food or clothes or being threatened or even attacked. These are the trials through which we triumph, by the power of Him who loved us. For I am certain of this: neither death nor life, no angel, no prince, nothing that exists, nothing still to come, not any power, or height or depth, nor any created thing, can ever come between us and the love of God made visible in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Responsorial Psalm Shepherd Me, O God – Ps.23 (© G.I.A. - Marty Haugen)

All sing: Shepherd me, O God, beyond my wants,
beyond my fears, from death into life.

ALL STAND

Gospel Acclamation Mass of St. Columba (Columba McCann OSB)

All sing: Alleluia or Glory to you, O Christ, you are the Word of God.

Gospel Matthew 11:28-30

Jesus said 'Come to me all you who labour and are overburdened and I will give you rest. Shoulder my yoke and learn from me; for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. Yes, my yoke is easy and my burden light.'

Homily/Reflection

Song On Eagles' Wings – Ps. 91(© OCP - Michael Joncas)

All sing: And he will raise you up on eagles' wings
Bear you on the breath of dawn
Make you to shine like the sun
And hold you in the palm of his hand.

Reflection Guardian of the Grieving (©Joyce Rupp)

Guardian of the Grieving,
You do much more than stand there
Being attentive to heart-sore spirits.
You lovingly embrace and closely guard
Those who feel bereft and lonely.
You vigilantly attend to each one
Lest they be overtaken by their sadness.
Your protective gaze of compassion
Softens the blows of their sorrow.
Guardian of those who have lost much,
Watch devotedly over those who mourn.



Song The Lord of Life (©Liam Lawton)

All sing: The Lord will heal the broken heart
God will seek the lost and find them.

ALL STAND

Intercessions

Leader Brothers and sisters, Jesus Christ is risen from the dead and sits at the right hand of the Father where he intercedes for his Church. Confident that God hears the voices of those who trust in the Lord Jesus, we join our prayers to his:

In baptism Tracey received the light of Christ. Scatter the darkness now and lead her over the waters of death. Lord hear us.

All: **Lord, graciously hear us.**

Our sister Tracey was nourished at the table of the Saviour.
Welcome her into the halls of the heavenly banquet. Lord hear us.

All: Lord, graciously hear us.

The family and friends of Tracey seek comfort and consolation. Heal their pain and dispel the darkness and doubt that come from grief.
Lord hear us.

All: Lord, graciously hear us.

Many people die by violence, war, and famine each day. Show your mercy to those who suffer so unjustly these sins against your love, and gather them into the eternal kingdom of peace.
Lord hear us.

All: Lord, graciously hear us.

Many friends and members of our families have gone before us and await the kingdom. Grant them an everlasting home with your Son.
Lord hear us.

All: Lord, graciously hear us.

Leader Lord God,
giver of peace and healer of souls,
hear the prayers of the Redeemer, Jesus Christ,
and the voices of your people,
whose lives were purchased by the blood of the Lamb.
Forgive the sins of all who sleep in Christ
and grant them a place in your kingdom.
We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Final Commendation and Farewell

Invitation to Prayer

Before we go our separate ways, let us take leave of our sister.
May our farewell express our affection for her; may it ease our sadness and strengthen our hope. One day we shall joyfully greet her again when the love of Christ, which conquers all things, destroys even death itself.

Song of Farewell

Saints of God, come to her aid!
Hasten to meet her, angels of the Lord!

Response Receive her soul and present her to God the Most High.

May Christ, who called you, take you to himself;
may angels lead you to the bosom of Abraham.

Response Receive her soul...

Eternal rest grant unto her, O Lord, and let perpetual light shine upon her.

Response Receive her soul...

Prayer of Commendation

Into your hands, Father of mercies, we commend our sister, Tracey, in the sure and certain hope, that together with all who have died in Christ, she will rise again with Him.

We give you thanks for the blessings
which you bestowed upon Tracey in her life:
they are signs to us of your goodness
and of our fellowship with the saints in Christ.

Merciful Lord,

turn toward us and listen to our prayers:

open the gates of paradise to your servant
and help us who remain

to comfort one another with assurances of faith,
until we all meet in Christ

and are with you and with our sister forever.

We ask this through Christ our Lord.

R. Amen.

In peace let us bring Tracey to her place of rest.

May the angels lead you into paradise;

may the martyrs come to welcome you

and take you to the holy city,

the new and eternal Jerusalem.

Song Quietly, Peacefully (© G.I.A. - Dvorak/True)

All sing: Quietly, peacefully may she rest in you.

Quietly, peacefully bring her home to you.



GATHERING IN THE PRESENCE OF THE BODY

Sign of the Cross

Leader: In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit

All: Amen.

Leader: May the Father of mercies, the God of all consolation, be with us as we gather to pray for N. and for one another.

All: **And with your spirit**

Hymn: **Jesus Remember Me (©Taizé)**

All sing: Jesus remember me, when you come into your kingdom
Jesus remember me, when you come into your kingdom.

***Together we pray psalms, prayers from the Word of God, for the deceased.
Those on either side of the room may like to lead alternate verses.***

Psalm 86

Turn your ear, O Lord, and give answer
for I am poor and needy.

Preserve my life, for I am faithful;
save the servant who trusts in you.

***You are my God, have mercy on me, Lord,
for I cry to you all the day long.***

***Give joy to your servant, O Lord,
for to you I lift up my soul.***

O Lord, you are good and forgiving,
full of love to all who call.
Give heed, O Lord, to my prayer
and attend to the sound of my voice.

***In the day of distress I will call
and surely you will reply.
Show me, Lord, your way
so that I may walk in your truth.
Guide my heart to fear your name.***

I will praise you, Lord my God, with all my heart
and glorify your name for ever;
for your love to me has been great:
you have saved me from the depths of the grave.

***You, God of mercy and compassion,
slow to anger, O Lord,
abounding in love and truth,
turn and take pity on me.***

Glory be to the Father and to the Son
and to the Holy Spirit.

***As it was in the beginning is now and ever shall be
world without end. Amen.***

Psalm 26

The Lord is my light and my help;
whom shall I fear?

The Lord is the stronghold of my life;
before whom shall I shrink?

***There is one thing I ask of the Lord,
for this I long,
to live in the house of the Lord,
all the days of my life,
to savour the sweetness of the Lord,
to behold his temple.***

O Lord hear my voice when I call;
have mercy and answer.
It is your face, O Lord, that I seek;
hide not your face

***I am sure I shall see the Lord's goodness
in the land of the living.
Hope in him, hold firm and take heart
Hope in the Lord!***

Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit.

As it was in the beginning is now and ever shall be world without end. Amen.



Psalm 22(23)

The Lord is my shepherd;
There is nothing I shall want.
Fresh and green are the pastures
where he gives me repose.

***Near restful waters he leads me
to revive my drooping spirit.
He guides me along the right path;
he is true to his name.***

If I should walk in the valley of darkness,
no evil would I fear.
You are there with your crook and your staff;
with these you give me comfort.

***You have prepared a banquet for me
in the sight of my foes.
My head you have anointed with oil;
my cup is overflowing.***

Surely goodness and kindness shall follow me
all the days of my life.
In the Lord's own house shall I dwell
for ever and ever.

***Glory be to the Father and to the Son
and to the Holy Spirit.***

As it was in the beginning is now and ever
shall be world without end. Amen.



Scripture Reading:

From the Gospel according to John 6:37-39

Jesus said to the crowd: "All that the Father gives me will come to me and whoever comes to me I shall not turn away; because I have come from heaven, not to do my own will, but to do the will of him who sent me. Now the will of him who sent me is that I shall lose nothing of all that he has given to me, and that I should raise it up on the last day.

Yes, it is my Father's will that whoever sees the Son and believes in him shall have eternal life, and that I shall raise them up on the last day."

Short Responsory:

Into your hands, O Lord, I commend my spirit

All: Into your hands, O Lord, I commend my spirit

Lord redeem your servant for whom you shed your blood.

All: Into your hands, O Lord, I commend my spirit

Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit.

All: Into your hands, O Lord, I commend my spirit

Prayer of Commendation

We all pray together

Go forth, Christian soul, from this world in the name of God the almighty Father, who created you, in the name of Jesus Christ, the Son of the living God, who suffered for you, in the name of the Holy Spirit, who was poured out upon you.

Go forth, faithful Christian!

May you live in peace this day, may your home be with God in Zion, with Mary, the virgin Mother of God, with Joseph, and all the angels and saints.

We entrust you to your Creator

who formed you from the dust of the earth.

May holy Mary, the angels, and all the saints come to meet you as you go forth from this life.

May Christ who was crucified for you bring you freedom and peace.

May Christ who died for you admit you to his garden of paradise.

May Christ the Good Shepherd, acknowledge you as one of his flock.

May he forgive all your sins, and set you among those he has chosen.

May you see your Redeemer face to face, and ever rejoice in the beauty of God for ever. Amen.

Concluding Prayer

Lord Jesus our Redeemer, you willingly gave yourself up to death, so that all might be saved and pass from death to life.

We humbly ask you to comfort your servants in their grief and to receive N. into the arms of your mercy.

You alone are the Holy One, you are mercy itself;

by dying you unlocked the gates of life for those who believe in you.

Forgive N. his/her sins, and grant him/her a place of happiness, light, and peace in the kingdom of your glory forever.

All: Amen.

Eternal rest grant unto N. O Lord and let perpetual light shine upon him(*her*) and may (s)he rest in peace.

All: Amen.

May his(*her*) soul and the souls of all the faithful departed, through the mercy of God rest in peace.

All: Amen.

Conclusion: May the love of God and the peace of the Lord Jesus Christ bless and console us and gently wipe every tear from our eyes: In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

All: Amen.

A decade of the Rosary may now follow

Memories of the deceased may be shared

*A Mhuire, is tú mo mháthair is mo dhóchas, tabhair dom foscadh faoi do chlócadh
O Mary, you are my Mother and my hope. Keep me safe beneath your cloak.*



Music Suggestions and Resources

Songs of Farewell CD - Dublin Diocesan Liturgy Resource Centre 2004

Jerusalem	(Kilmore/Carol)
Ag Críost an Síol	(Seán Ó Riada)
Bless the Lord My Soul (Ps.102)	(Taizé)
Into Your Hands, O Lord	(Bernard Sexton)
I Put My Life In Your Hands (Ps. 31)	(John Michael Talbot)
'Sé an Tiarna m' Aoire (Ps.23)	(Fintan O'Carroll)
To You O Lord (Ps. 24)	(Marty Haugen)
Like the Deer That Yearns (Ps. 41)	(Joseph Walshe)
I Rejoiced When I Heard Them Say (Ps. 121)	(Ronan McDonagh)
I Have Found My Peace (Ps. 131)	(Christopher Willcock)
The Lord is My Shepherd (Ps. 23)	(Tom Egan)
Soon and Very Soon	(Andrae Crouch)
Litany	(S. Bodley/ S Ó Riada /Plainchant)
Grant Them Eternal Rest, O Lord (Ps. 129)	(Owen Alstott)
The Lord is My Light and My Help (Ps.26)	(Paul Inwood)
Glory to You, O Word of God	(David Haas)
May Flights of Angels	(Orlando Gibbons/James Quinn)
Come to Me	(Michael Joncas)
Regina Coeli	(Plainchant)
May the Road Rise	(Lori True)
Receive Her Soul	(Seán Terry)
Song of Farewell	(Michael Joncas)
Resucito	(Kiko Arguello)
Songs of the Angels	(Bob Dufford)

Some Other Suggestions

Take Me Home	(David Haas)
Quietly Peacefully	(Adapted Dvorak – Lori True)
Jesus Remember Me	(Taizé)
There is a Place	(Liam Lawton)

Dona Eis Pacem	<i>(Owen Lynch)</i>
Do Not Let Your Hearts Be Troubled	<i>(David Haas)</i>
Jesus King of Angels	<i>(Fernando Ortega)</i>
Christ In Me Arise	<i>(Trevor Thomson)</i>
I Am The Bread of Life	<i>(Suzanne Toolan)</i>
God Is	<i>(LaRue/Stevens)</i>
Abide with me	<i>(Henry Lyte)</i>
When Creation Was Begun	<i>(Paul Décha)</i>
Holy God We Praise thy Name	<i>(VXII Century, Melody A. M. Muller)</i>
Sweet Heart of Jesus	<i>(Traditional)</i>
How Great Thou Art	<i>(Stuart K. Hine)</i>
Christ Be Beside Me	<i>(Traditional)</i>
The Servant Song	<i>(Richard Gillard)</i>
Here I am Lord	<i>(Dan Schutte)</i>

Additional Psalm Suggestions

Lord You are my Shepherd (Ps. 23)	<i>(Ephrem Feeley)</i>
The Lord's my Shepherd (Ps. 23)	<i>(Crimond)</i>
The Lord is compassion and love (Ps.102)	<i>(Fintan O'Carroll)</i>
I will walk in the presence (Ps.114/5)	<i>(Stephen Dean)</i>
On Eagles Wings (Ps. 91)	<i>(Michael Joncas)</i>
O God, You are my God (Ps.62)	<i>(Sue Furlong)</i>
In the Shadow of your Wings (Ps. 27)	<i>(Roc O'Connor)</i>
To You O Lord I Lift my Soul (Ps. 24)	<i>(Bob Hurd)</i>
Shepherd Me O God (Ps. 23)	<i>(Marty Haugen)</i>
The Cry of the Poor (Ps.34)	<i>(John Foley)</i>



MUSIC FOR THE FUNERAL RITES

(Advisory Committee on Church Music)

The following advice is offered to help you in making arrangements for music to accompany the Funeral Rites of your loved one. The Funeral Book (Order of Christian Funerals – 1991) that we use outlines the role of music at this difficult time.

'The music at funerals should support, console, and uplift the participants and should help to create in them a spirit of hope in Christ's victory over death and in the Christian's share in that victory'.

This is the challenge which musicians, celebrants and you the bereaved face in preparing to celebrate with dignity the Funeral Rites of a Christian. There is considerable scope for music at the two ceremonies which take place in the church – the Reception of the Body at the Church and the Funeral Mass.

A. RITE OF RECEPTION

Since the church is the place where the community of faith assembles for worship, the rite of reception of the body at the church has great significance.

Music is possible at the following points in this simple liturgy.

1. The **Entrance Song** accompanies the Procession from the door of the church and is complete when all are in place to continue with the liturgy. Participation in this may be helped by allowing, after the sprinkling of holy water, a large part of the congregation to get to their seats before the chief mourners, the coffin and the priest. If the singing is not possible instrumental music is played (organ, harp, guitar etc. depending on availability of musicians) which can continue during the placing of Christian symbols.
2. The **Responsorial Psalm** is sung after the First Reading and many settings of appropriate psalms are available. The psalm enables the community to respond in faith to the readings, to express its grief and to praise the God. The psalms are rich in imagery, feeling and symbolism. They powerfully express the suffering and pain, the hope and trust of people of every age and culture. Above all the psalms sing of faith in God, of revelation and redemption. Since the psalms are songs, whenever possible, they should be sung.
3. The **Litany or Prayer of Intercession** is spoken or sung after the homily. The Litany used has a 'Lord have mercy' response. This will be enhanced if sung, using, for example, one of the Penitential Rite settings with which you, and your congregations, are familiar.

A Hymn to Our Lady might be appropriate during the Concluding Rite according to local custom. The use of instrumental music as people offer sympathies is always appreciated and contributes to the warmth of the ceremony. The music at this

celebration can be effectively led by a Cantor or Soloist with the support of an instrumentalist. Your Parish may have this kind of structure in place so that you can make choices from the available repertoire of the parish community without too much difficulty.

B. THE FUNERAL MASS

The choice of music, either vocal or instrumental, at a funeral mass follows the usual guidelines for any Eucharistic celebration.

Eucharistic Prayer Acclamations

Given that Eucharistic Prayer is the main prayer of the Mass, it is important that everyone is encouraged to participate in the singing. Three acclamations are traditionally sung during this prayer: the Holy, Holy, (Sanctus), the memorial acclamation (e.g. When we eat this bread) and the Great Amen. Choose a setting which is well known or which can be sung easily by everyone. It may be helpful to have a Cantor/Soloist to lead the congregation.

Liturgy of the Word

The singing of the Responsorial Psalm is an important element in the celebration of the Liturgy of the Word. It is important not to substitute other songs in place of the psalm at this time in the liturgy.

Some people feel that singing a Gospel Acclamation is out of keeping with the spirit of a funeral liturgy. On the contrary the Alleluia is a powerful reminder of Easter joy in the resurrection which is the source of our hope at this time.

Songs and Hymns

When choosing songs/hymns for the Funeral Mass, it is important that the congregation are able to participate as much as possible. The Entrance and Communion Songs are particularly significant. Since music can evoke strong feelings, it should be chosen with great sensitivity. If you are thinking of including a piece of non-religious music, it is important that it is in harmony with our faith in the Lord's death and resurrection and will contribute to the atmosphere of Christian worship. Secular music should not replace the sacred music which is part of the rite. Other songs are often suggested for a funeral Mass which would be more suited to the wake in the home when favourite songs can be sung in the right setting. Once again the Funeral Book offers us advice in the matter of texts and choices.

'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 mourners and to strengthen the unity of the assembly in faith and love. The texts of the songs chosen for a particular celebration should express the paschal mystery of the Lord's suffering, death, and triumph over death and should be related to the readings from Scripture'.

C. FINAL COMMENDATION AND FAREWELL

The ***Song of Farewell*** is usually sung as the coffin is incensed and sprinkled with water. The Order of Christian Funerals contains a straightforward music setting of the refrain and verses '*Receive his soul and present him to God the Most High*'.

The ***Processional Song*** – '*May the angels lead you into paradise*' – offers words of hope to everyone who gathers for the funeral rites. Some examples are given in the Rite. There are several settings of this song, including *Songs of the Angels* and other suitable pieces like *An tAiséirí*.

When Christians die, the Church intercedes on their behalf, confident that 'life is unchanged, but not ended'. During the funeral rites, the Church on earth unites with the Church in heaven to offer worship, praise and thanksgiving to God for the gift of life which has now been returned to God, the author of life. The ceremonies also bring hope and consolation to the living.

We hope that this document will help you as you grieve and that you will be assisted in your preparations by musicians who are committed to their role as ministers of consolation and hope.



MUSIC FOR THE RECEPTION OF THE BODY AT THE CHURCH

(Advisory Committee on Church Music)

Good Practice Guideline for Music Ministers

INTRODUCTION

When Christians die, the Church intercedes on their behalf, confident that 'life is changed not ended'. 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. During the funeral rites, the Church on earth unites with the Church in heaven to offer worship, praise and thanksgiving to God for the gift of a life which has now been returned to God, the author of life. The ceremonies also bring hope and consolation to the living.

MINISTRY OF CONSOLATION

As a cantor, musician or organist, you are part of the ministry of consolation to those who have suffered the loss of one whom they love. Your music allows the community to express convictions and feelings that words alone may fail to convey. It has the power to uplift the mourners, to strengthen the unity of the assembly in faith and love and to create a spirit of hope.

PLANNING

You may be involved with members of the family in planning sacred music and song for the funeral rites. In so doing you can console the mourners with words of faith and support. You are in a position to explain to the family the meaning and significance of the rites. The readings and prayers, psalms and songs that you choose, should be proclaimed or sung with understanding, conviction and reverence. Your music should be truly expressive of the texts and at the same time simple and easily sung. A member of the family may wish to become involved in the music. It is important not to ask loved ones to assume a role that their grief or sense of loss may make too burdensome.

SENSITIVITY

Take care to exercise your ministry of consolation in a reverent way, always keeping in mind the life of the deceased and the circumstances of death. Since music can evoke strong feelings, it should be chosen with great sensitivity. If you are thinking of including a piece of non-religious music, it is important that it is in harmony with our faith in the Lord's death and resurrection and will contribute to the atmosphere of Christian worship. Secular music should not replace the sacred music which is part of the rite. Prayerful silence is also important and can permit the assembly to reflect upon the word of God and the meaning of the celebration.

RITE OF RECEPTION

Since the Church is the place where the community of faith assembles for worship, the rite of reception of the body at the Church has great significance.

Music is possible at four points in this simple liturgy.

The **Entrance Song** accompanies the Procession from the door of the Church and is complete when all are in place to continue with the liturgy. Participation in this may be helped by allowing, after the sprinkling of holy water, a large part of the congregation to get to their seats before the chief mourners, the coffin and the priest. If singing is not possible instrumental music is played (organ, harp, guitar etc. depending on availability of musicians) which can continue during the placing of Christian symbols.

The **Responsorial Psalm** is sung after the First Reading and many settings of appropriate psalms are available. The psalm enables the community to respond in faith to the readings, to express its grief and to praise the God. The psalms are rich in imagery, feeling and symbolism. They powerfully express the suffering and pain, the hope and trust of people of every age and culture. Above all the psalms sing of faith in God, of revelation and redemption. Since the psalms are songs, whenever possible, they should be sung.

The **Litany or Prayer of Intercession** is spoken or sung after the homily. The Litany used has a 'Lord have mercy' response. This will be enhanced if sung, using, for example, one of the Penitential Rite settings with which you, and your congregations, are familiar.

A Marian Hymn or the Salve Regina might be appropriate if the option of inclusion of the Hail Holy Queen is taken up during the Concluding Rite according to local custom.

The use of instrumental music as the assembly offer their sympathies is always appreciated and contributes to the warmth of the ceremony.

RESOURCES

The music at this celebration can be effectively led by a Cantor with the support of an instrumentalist. Parishes are encouraged to put this kind of structure in place so that the bereaved can then make choices from the availability repertoire of the parish community without too much difficulty.

Full music resources and laminated cards for congregational participation are offered in **Music for the Reception of the Body at the Church** published by Veritas in 1998. This project was undertaken by the National Advisory Committee on Church Music.

Diocesan Policy on the placing of Flags on a Coffin

The Irish Episcopal Conference for Bishops are of the opinion that, when the regulations of the Defence Forces permit it, there should be a general permission to place the national flag on coffins of serving members of the Permanent Defence Forces, serving members of the Reserve Defence Forces, retired members of the Permanent Defence Forces who have received permission from the Adjutant General's Office, and serving members of An Garda Síochána.

Helpful Hints on Preparing Words of Appreciation or Eulogy for a Funeral Liturgy

While it is not actually a part of the Christian Funeral Rite, a custom has begun at some funerals whereby a eulogy or an appreciation of the person is given by a relative or a friend of the deceased. Sensitivity has to be exercised around this as occasionally insensitive and indeed inappropriate things have been said at funerals. Saying something uplifting and charitable in a spirit of appreciation about the person who has died should be the main emphasis of these words.

Best practice suggests the following:

- A short tribute on behalf of the family is possible but not obligatory. People should feel totally free not to have one.
- It should be brief, no longer than five minutes, written down and delivered by one person. It should only contain words of tribute to the deceased and of thanks to those who have helped and supported the family.
- An immediate family member may not always be the best person to offer the words of appreciation, particularly if they are not accustomed to public speaking or overcome with grief, someone close to the family could be more suitable.

The appropriate time for these words of appreciation is:

- at the Reception of the Body at the Church, if it takes place on the evening before the Funeral Mass
- at the Reception of the Body if it takes place before the beginning of the Funeral Mass
- at the conclusion of the Funeral Mass before the Prayers of Commendation and Farewell.
- at the Crematorium or Graveside.

WHEN SOMEONE YOU LOVE HAS DIED: PREPARING FOR A FUNERAL

Fr Columba McCann O.S.B. takes us through organising the honouring of a deceased Roman Catholic through the Funeral liturgies of the Church.

The trauma of losing someone close is very deep and leaves us disorientated. Depending on the circumstances, the death of a loved one can leave us feeling numb, shocked, exhausted, angry, relieved, depressed, or a combination of any of these. Trying to organise a funeral in the middle of all this is not easy. Thankfully there are people around to help: your local priest, your local undertaker, a parish Funeral Ministry Team, friends and neighbours. Priests, Funeral Ministry Teams and undertakers have long experience of helping people when a death occurs and will give you the advice and support that you need.

What follows is intended as a brief guide to help you choose what is best for the funeral of a loved one. First, there is a brief description of the principal rites at the time of a funeral, and then some general advice about planning.

Remembering the Dead: the Wake or Vigil

Funerals are a time for remembering. We can feel an urge to tell the story of the one who has passed away. Stories about the good times and the bad surface and want to be told. We reminisce. This is something natural and healthy and deserves a bit of time and space. The Irish tradition of the wake has allowed for this, but this custom hasn't survived everywhere.

A rite called the '**Vigil for the Deceased**' has been put together for use in Ireland. It is not well known but it offers an opportunity for family and friends to gather for prayer in the presence of the body of the person who has died. This could take place at home, in a funeral home or in the hospital or nursing home mortuary chapel. It includes readings and prayers that evoke our hope in the resurrection as well as giving voice to the pain of what has happened. It is a moment of entrusting ourselves and our loved one who has died to the care of Christ himself. Sometimes, if people wish, it could include the rosary or a portion of it. All the prayers can be led by a lay person or a religious or priest. At the end of the prayers people might want to voice some personal remembrances of the person who has died, perhaps to read a poem or any other text that was dear to the deceased, tell some stories or to hear some favourite music. This kind of remembrance takes place more easily and naturally at a small gathering such as this than at the funeral Mass, which tends to be more public and formal.

If you would like to use some of the material from the Vigil for the Deceased, ask your local Funeral Ministry Team or priest. You may be the first person in the parish to request it!

The Reception of the Remains

An important moment in the Funeral celebration is when the body of the person who has died is received or welcomed back into their parish church where they worshipped with the rest of the Christian community. It is a kind of homecoming. Relatives, friends and other members of the community gather either inside or outside the church. When the chief mourners arrive with the coffin at the door of the church, they are greeted by the priest or lay minister who conducts the service. The coffin is sprinkled with holy water as a reminder of Baptism: the person who has died was already united at Baptism with the death of Christ in order that he or she would rise again to new life.

The Pall

If the deceased was a member of a particular association or group, the coffin may have had a flag or other insignia on it when it was being brought to the church; these are normally now removed – we are all one in Baptism and thus no individual is singled out by special insignia on the coffin once it is inside the church. There are however special signs of honour associated with being a Christian that you may wish to be placed on the coffin. The first of these is the pall. This is a large white cloth which is draped over the coffin. It recalls the white garment (sometimes called the Christening shawl) worn by each newly baptised person as a sign of their Christian dignity. It can be placed on the coffin by family, friends, or another member of the community. Every parish should have a pall, but many don't, so you may need to check this in advance.

Christian Symbols

The coffin is then led in procession to the sanctuary of the church. When everyone has taken their place you may wish to have the Christian life of your loved one further honoured by having Christian symbols placed on the coffin. Examples of these would be a cross, a Bible, rosary beads or a prayer book. This introductory part of the service concludes with a short prayer. All then sit of the Liturgy of the Word.

The Liturgy of the Word

The Liturgy of the Word is the central part of this service and is composed mainly of readings from the Bible. Although the books of the Bible are many centuries old and not always easy to understand, we believe that they are inspired by God and that God can really speak to us through these ancient texts. Above all, these writings help us to know Christ himself, who passed through death into new life. At a critical moment like this, when all our certainties seem to fall away, we can derive great inner strength when we hear the story and message of Jesus himself, who triumphed over death. If you wish, the Parish Funeral Team or priest will help you choose readings which seem particularly suitable to your situation.

Who Should Read the Readings?

If you really want people to hear the message of the readings which you have chosen, you need to have someone who is experienced at reading in public. Inexperienced readers sometimes think they can be clearly heard and understood, but, because they have no training, much of what they read is lost. It is best to pick someone who already reads at Mass, a friend, relative or, better still, one of the regular parish readers (the priest or Funeral Team should be able to track one down for you). One piece of advice: a person who was very close to the one who has died may be put under quite a strain, trying to read in public, so close family may not be the best candidates. They need support and care rather than additional burdens. If you want to involve family members and other chief mourners in a prominent way in the liturgy, choose other ways instead of reading. You will see a number of examples later on. After the readings are concluded and the priest explains them briefly, everybody stands to pray together for the person who has died and for those who mourn and are in pain. Together everyone prays the Our Father. If you wish, a decade of the Rosary might be recited before the rite concludes.

Extending Sympathies to the Mourners

At the end of the Reception of the Body (if it takes place the evening before the Funeral Mass), the family or chief mourners normally remain in the church so that people may greet them briefly and sympathise. This might be in the front seat of the church, where the family was for the service, or in some other part of the church building. If you wished, you could set up some souvenirs or mementos of the person who died on a table nearby for people to see as they file past. The best place for this would be somewhere discreet to the side.

The 'Reception of Body' described here normally takes place in the evening, with the coffin remaining in the church overnight. The funeral Mass then takes place the following day. It is also possible for the remains of your loved one to be received into the church at the beginning of (or shortly before) Mass, rather than being in the church overnight.



The Funeral Mass

The Funeral Mass is normally the principal element of the whole funeral. The greatest gift we can give a person is to remember them at Mass and to unite our prayers for them with the self-offering of Jesus which is at the heart of the Mass. Perhaps it should also be said that Mass is not always the ideal service for everyone. If, for example, the Mass had no real significance for the person who has died or for the chief mourners, then it could be very artificial for them to go through a ceremony that means little for them. Asking for a funeral Mass is not just a matter of using the church building for an hour or so, but of asking to be part of the Christian community as it gathers to worship Jesus Christ. The principal focus in the funeral Mass will be on Jesus Christ, whose death and resurrection are solemnly commemorated and made present under the signs of bread and wine. If this is not the focus you want for your loved one's funeral, then you might talk to your priest about arranging a different kind of service. The Mass is there as a wonderful help to you and your loved one who has died. At Mass the Christian community will pray for you, that you will receive the strength and the care you need to live through your grief. The Christian community which gathers for Mass will also be very honest: they won't 'canonise' your loved one, but will give thanks to God for them and pray that God will forgive them their sins. Most importantly, the whole liturgy proclaims Jesus Christ who was crucified, died and rose from the dead and prays that each one of us, in our own way, will share in his triumph over death.

The Word of God

The Word of God, proclaimed in the Scripture readings is, just as in the Reception of the Remains, a fundamental element of the Mass. Through these readings from Scripture we hear the voice of Christ himself. He has a message of love and hope for us most especially in the bleak experience of death. Because of the importance of the Scriptures, we don't have any other readings at this point of the Mass. You may have other prayers or texts that you think are very relevant to the death of your loved one.



Don't include them among the scripture readings. Instead you might ask the Parish Funeral Team or priest to use them when he preaches, or you might consider reading them at the end of Mass. Other possible times are at the end of the Reception of the Remains, or at the Vigil, as described above.

Who should read? As at the Reception of the Remains, pick an experienced reader who was not too close to the person who died. Getting up to read is difficult enough without having to worry about whether you are going to break down and cry.

What readings should be picked? Again, the Parish Funeral team or priest will give you all the help you want here.

The Liturgy of the Word finishes with the Prayer of the Faithful: together the whole gathering of people prays for the needs of the whole Church and for people throughout the world. At a Funeral Mass, this will of course include special prayers for the person who has died and all those who mourn their passing. Sometimes the prayer intentions are read by the priest, but there is the (preferable) option of having a lay reader read them. Again, it is a good idea to have a reader who is experienced and who will not be put under strain at this moment.

The Preparation of Gifts

The gifts of bread and wine are carried forward and presented to the priest. This is an ideal moment to involve family members or others among the chief mourners – it is a significant action in the Mass, and yet easily performed. You could also include among these gifts some kind of donation to a charity or worthy cause which was dear to the person who has died. The emphasis at this moment in the Mass is the giving of bread and wine and other donations; it is not really the time for carrying other mementos or keepsakes of the person who has died. If you want to symbolise their life through various objects, it is better to put them on display somewhere in the church, as outlined in the section Reception of the Remains.

Sharing in the Eucharist

The true heart of the funeral Mass is our sharing in the Eucharist. We do this by entering into the great prayer of the Mass, the Eucharistic Prayer. The priest recites this prayer, but he does so in the name of everyone present. We join in by praying silently but also by singing or saying out loud the various acclamations that are part of the prayer: the Holy, Holy; the Memorial Acclamation; the Great Amen. The other great moment is the sharing in Holy Communion. Those who are prevented from receiving (for example, non-Catholics) might present themselves and ask the priest for a blessing instead.



The Final Commendation

The Mass concludes with a solemn and moving ritual through which we commend our loved one to God's love. Before we go our separate ways, we pray for the person who has died and honour their remains with special signs: we sprinkle the coffin with blessed water, as a reminder of Baptism, and we use incense as a sign of honour to their body, which was a temple of the Holy Spirit. When this rite has been completed, we all process together through the church and eventually make our way to the place of burial or cremation.

The Burial or Cremation

This moment is called the 'committal', when we finally commit the body of our loved one to the dust from which it was made, either by burial or cremation. It can be a harrowing, but important, moment, and should not be rushed over. We need to take time with this moment of 'goodbye', and even linger for a while. When a person is buried, the priest normally sprinkles some earth on the coffin. It might be a good idea for each of the chief mourners also to do the same, perhaps at the end of the ceremony. Some communities have the custom of the family members throwing some clay onto the coffin. Another gesture of farewell is possible at a cremation, for example, sprinkling the coffin with Holy Water. The short readings and prayers which accompany this solemn moment of the funeral will strengthen all who are present.

Some General Points

The following points may help summarise what is needed:

- This first thing is not to worry about the arrangements. All the material above may seem rather detailed, but in practice the priest and undertaker will guide you through it. Don't feel you have to do everything. The priest and other ministers are there to look after you.
- After a death has occurred people sometimes feel under pressure to have the Mass and burial as soon as possible. If possible, avoid the temptation to rush things.
- You may wish to involve family members or other chief mourners in the celebrations in a special way. Give them some of the simpler tasks: placing of Christian symbols at the reception of remains, bringing up the gifts at Mass, sprinkling earth on the coffin at the cemetery. You can also involve a lot of people in a more informal way by gathering for prayer (Vigil for the Deceased) and reflection at the funeral home or at home. This is an ideal time for favourite songs, prayers, poems and stories.
- The reading of any texts in the church itself is more demanding, and is best given to someone who will not be too distraught, preferably an experienced church reader.
- Music can add greatly to the meaningful celebration of a funeral. In the church itself, use only religious music that has been written for the liturgy. Your local priest will be able to contact those who have the ministry of music in the parish. Some parishes have congregational singing at the funeral Mass, which is the best way to have it. Ask if this is feasible.

- You might find it helpful to have other significant moments in the weeks and months ahead when you remember your loved one in a special way: a month's mind Mass, visits to the cemetery, the annual parish Mass for the dead in November, putting up a tombstone, and the first anniversary. These could be moments when you gather with just a few people to pray and to remember.



Notes

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Useful links www.rip.ie Funeral Mass Template courtesy of Father Pat Rogers C.P.