



FUNERAL GUIDELINES

Teller County Catholic Community

Lazarus Ministry



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Dear Friends,

Most likely you are reading this booklet because you have experienced the death of someone significant in your life. The experience of death can be a sudden and painful encounter. Other times it is an understandable relief after the suffering of a terminal illness of a loved one. Regardless of the circumstances, the funeral liturgy is the final act of love and service of the Christian community to its deceased members and their family and friends. It is a celebration of life, death, and ultimately resurrection. Therefore, it is important for you to know that no one is ever turned away or denied a Christian burial. No one - no matter how poor or indifferent a Catholic, no matter how virtuous or how sinful a person - no one will be turned away from the Church doors at this difficult time.

The Gospel imperative is that the Christian community will in charity pray for the deceased and demonstrate by its liturgy that forgiveness, kindness, and reconciliation that Christ showed to all. If the deceased attended Mass daily, yearly, or never, each person shall receive a Christian burial that demonstrates the dignity and honor of each and every human life.

It is a corporal work of mercy to bury the dead. Therefore, we have assembled this booklet to assist you in this process. Know that we are willing to assist you in planning a dignified and prayerful funeral liturgy. In return, we ask for your generous understanding and respect for our local and universal Catholic traditions. Please know that the priests and pastoral ministers of this parish are well trained and know best how to assist you in making the choices that you are now compelled to make. If we can be helpful to you as you move through the grief process, please know that we are here to assist you.

Contact me or my coordinator of Liturgy and Prayer to notify us and arrange an upcoming funeral. The Lazarus Funeral Ministry, led by Ed and Sareva Parkhurst at 687-4353, will contact you when you are ready to plan the funeral.

Sincerely,

Fr. Timothy L. Corbley, Pastor

Where should we have the funeral?

It is a unique and important role of the Church to bury the dead and to console the grieving. Therefore, the most appropriate place to celebrate the funeral is in the context of the Church itself. Some may prefer a smaller and more private gathering in the funeral home. However, the grief process as we understand it is best dealt with in the context of the Church itself. It is in the Church building that the Christian community gathers to celebrate the liturgy and the promise of resurrection day after day and week after week. **It is critical to first contact the parish office to find an available time for the liturgy before deciding on a time with the funeral director or family.**

What is a Vigil?

The Vigil is an extended time for friends, family, and acquaintances to extend their sorrow and prayers at the time of the death of a loved one. It is usually held the day or evening before the funeral liturgy. From our experience the Vigil is an important time for grieving for family, friends and also the local community. It is a time to tell stories and memories of the deceased. It is also a time to show support and express our sympathies for those who weep. The Vigil can be adapted according to the pastoral need of the family and Christian community.

Once again the most appropriate place for the Vigil is in the gathering space of the church. It is within the church, not a funeral home, where the Christian community gathers for prayer. Theologically, the Vigil is a time when the Church (the baptized people of God) waits in prayer and hope for the promised resurrection. The church is available for the Vigil upon your request. However, it is critical to first check with the parish office to find times to schedule the Vigil.

The Vigil continues until the beginning of the funeral liturgy. Therefore, on the day of the funeral a one or two-hour Vigil (open or closed casket) will begin in the church prior to the funeral liturgy. This is a time where family, friends, and acquaintances can say their last good-bye. As you may know, it is fundamentally important to the grieving process to have time to say good-bye to a loved one. The continuation of the Vigil in the church the morning of the funeral liturgy serves this purpose well. The casket can be closed with or without the family present upon the request of the family. Some suggestions for the Vigil are to display pictures of the deceased and his/her loved ones (spouse, children, grandchildren, friends etc.), a Bible or a special prayer book, or religious objects that were important to the deceased. These are placed near the coffin during the Vigil. Others have put together a collage of pictures that celebrates the various times in their loved one's life. These rituals are one way that the church's liturgy assists us with our grieving process.

At the Vigil the Christian community keeps watch with the family in prayer to the God of mercy and finds strength in Christ's presence. It is the first occasion among the funeral rites for the solemn reading of the word of God. In this time of loss the family and community turn to God's word as the source of faith and hope, as light and life in the face of darkness and death.

Consoled by the redeeming word of God and by the abiding presence of Christ, the assembly at the Vigil calls upon the God of Mercy to receive the deceased into the kingdom of light and peace.

What is the Vigil Liturgy?

The appropriate prayers recited at the Vigil service are contained in the liturgical books of our Church. In Catholic worship it is essential that the liturgy of the Church be respected and celebrated. The Vigil in the form of the Liturgy of the Word contains prayers, scripture readings, psalms, intercessions, and blessings. The Vigil for the deceased is the principle rite celebrated by the Christian community in the time following death and before the funeral liturgy. **The Vigil liturgy is the most suitable time for a family member or friend of the deceased to speak in remembrance of the deceased.** Most often the priest or trained lay person will preside at the Vigil Service.

Gathering in the Presence of the Beloved

This is an opportunity to for you, your family and your friends to share eulogy or two in the memory of the beloved. This is a time to prayerfully prepare for the funeral liturgy. This is also an appropriate time for secular music if this is important to you.

Why are the primary Liturgical colors white?

Some of you may remember a time when the vestments and the primary liturgical colors for funerals were black. Today the funeral liturgy is called the Liturgy of the Resurrection. The focus has changed from the dark colors of death to the white colors of resurrection. The focus is no longer the poor faithful departed, but the joy of the resurrection promised us by Christ Jesus. Therefore the tone of the liturgy is one of anticipation for the day when all will be raised in Christ.

Should we have a Rosary?

It has been a local custom in the Roman Catholic tradition to bury the deceased with a rosary in their hands. It is beneficial to continue this tradition in the event that the deceased has a devotion to the Blessed Mother or the rosary. However, other symbols of the person's life can also be placed in the casket. Some suggestions might be pictures of loved ones, (children, grandchildren, family pictures, special events, etc), a Bible, or a special prayer book.

The rosary is a wonderful tradition in our church, but it is considered a private devotion and not a liturgical celebration and should not take the place of the Church's liturgy. If the deceased had a particular devotion to the rosary, someone from the church or a member of your family lead

the recitation of the rosary 30 minutes before Mass. However, the recitation of the rosary is neither expected nor required.

Preparing the Liturgy

We have trained ministers who are available to walk with you through this process. If at any time you feel overwhelmed or unsure, please ask for our assistance. We are more than happy to aid you in the choices you will need to make. Let's briefly consider the difference. A Liturgy of the Word service allows for more freedom of expression of those planning the liturgy. Moreover, this liturgy can be celebrated by a priest or trained lay person. The Liturgy of the Word consists of hymns, scriptural readings, homily, prayers, and blessings. Poems, reflections from the congregation, and meaningful theological insights can be used in this service.

The Liturgy of the Eucharist (Mass) also consists of hymns, scriptural readings, homily, prayers, blessings, and the consecration of the Eucharist. The Liturgy of the Eucharist is more formal and deeply grounded in the life and spiritual practice of the Catholic faith. The Eucharist is the source and summit of Catholic life and devotion.

Who prepares the Liturgy?

It is very important that you and your family take an active part in the planning of the funeral arrangements. It will be necessary that you meet with the priest and our Lazarus funeral ministry coordinator to plan the liturgy. The liturgy planning booklet contains readings and petitions to choose from. It will be important for you to take some time to choose readings, songs, and choose people who can fulfill some of the ministries for the liturgy. In the event that you do not have family or friends who can, or desire to fulfill the liturgical ministries (of reader, altar server, communion minister), our funeral ministry coordinator can find people of the parish who can fulfill those ministerial roles.

Should we have a Mass?

This question is best answered by your understanding of the person who we are honoring. Would the deceased person want a Mass? Did he or she view Eucharist as a vital aspect of their life as a Catholic? Most often Catholic funerals are celebrated in the context of a Mass. However, it is not your only option. If the person was not particularly active in the liturgical life of the Church, you may want to choose a Liturgy of the Word service. The point is not if they can have a Mass (since no one is denied a Mass), but rather what would be the best liturgy to celebrate the deceased loved one's life.

Placing of the Pall, Cross, and Bible

The Vigil is completed as we move into the Liturgy of the Resurrection. During the introductory rites the family gathers with the cross bearer, altar servers, readers, and presider. You will notice that the liturgy does not begin in the usual way; rather there is an official reception of the deceased at the doors of the church. This is a time where family involvement is critical to the liturgy. The symbols of the Church are rich and should be celebrated with joyful hope of the resurrection. The casket is first blessed with Holy Water, and then chosen family members are asked to reverently place the pall on the casket. The pall is a large white cloth draped over the casket. This white pall is symbolic of the baptismal garment given to each baptized person at the time of their baptism. The pall is important to the funeral liturgy and cannot be replaced by another garment (for example the American flag and other secular symbols which are reserved for outside the church). The family also has the option of placing a crucifix and Bible on top of the casket. The best option is a crucifix and Bible that are displayed in the family home. These are rich symbols of our tradition of faith. The liturgy continues with an opening song and the family follows the ministers and the casket in the procession to the altar. When the procession reaches the altar, the large paschal candle stands in front of the casket. This large candle is symbolic of the risen Christ.

A Word about Pall Bearers

Some people have mistakenly thought that pall bearers had to be male. This is not true. To be a pall bearer is an honored position of a person of either gender who has played a significant role in the life of your loved one. Their role is to carry your loved one to their final liturgy and then on to their final place of rest. Therefore, a pall bearer could be one's spouse, children, grandchildren, and close friends.

Should we have a Eulogy?

Who and When should someone offer a Eulogy? One way for us to recall the memories of our deceased loved ones is to have a eulogy. Basically a eulogy is an opportunity for a close family member, friend, or colleague to offer a few words of respect and remembrance for the faithful departed. The ideal and appropriate time to have the eulogy is during the Vigil Liturgy the evening or day prior to the funeral. In the event that there is no Vigil, the family may choose someone to share their memories 15 minutes before the liturgy begins. You may also choose one person to offer a brief reflection after Communion. They must have no more than a two-page typed paper with their reflections. They must give the priest a copy the day prior to the funeral. Another option is to have a eulogy at the Rite of Committal at the cemetery. In order to maintain the integrity and elegance of the liturgy, we ask that only an ordained priest give a homily during the funeral Mass. Moreover, the liturgy of the church has beautiful prayers, songs, and rituals that best express the need for God's comfort and care during the funeral liturgy. The decision to have a eulogy is optional.

Should we have a reception?

The Parish Event Center is available for receptions. The Church can provide either cake and coffee (\$3.00 per person) or a light lunch of sandwiches, salads, coffee and water (\$4.50 per person)

Does the Catholic Church Allow for Cremation?

Yes, the Catholic Church does allow its members to choose cremation. However, there are some things that you might want to consider. First, if you are choosing cremation, we suggest that you choose a time when your family can view the body of your loved one. From our experience it is helpful to the grieving process that those closest to the deceased have some time to view the body in order to face the reality of death. Second, if you are choosing cremation, another option is to cremate the body after the Liturgy of Resurrection. This allows for the process of grieving in the presence of the body of the deceased. However, this option can be costly. Third, you may have the cremains present at the Liturgy of Resurrection. The teaching of the Church asks that we keep in mind our faith in the resurrection of the body and that the cremains be treated with respect by having them buried or entombed in consecrated ground or a mausoleum.

What is the Final Commendation?

After the communion rite we celebrate the final commendation. Most often the presider will incense the body during the song of farewell. This song is a tradition of the church where we call on the saints, angels, and holy martyrs to carry our beloved to the safe embrace of Christ. This rite expresses our belief in the sacredness of the human body and our hope in the resurrection of the dead.

What is the Rite of Committal?

The Rite of Committal is the closing rite of the Liturgy of Resurrection. This is also referred to as the Prayers at the Grave Site. This closing rite allows for family and friends to sing hymns, reflect on scripture, bless the grave, offer prayers of petition, closing prayers, and blessings. This rite is usually very short and is often presided over by a priest or trained lay person. A family member may also choose to preside at this liturgy. If you prefer to have a family member lead the prayers at the grave site, please request a copy of the liturgy from our office. This can be a time for just close family and friends or can be a time of prayer for all those who attend the funeral liturgy. **The Rite of Committal is also another time where a eulogy would be appropriate.** This liturgy is often celebrated directly after the Liturgy of Resurrection. However, if pastoral circumstances demand the Rite of Committal be delayed, this can also be arranged. The liturgical texts suggest that the body be lowered or entombed during the rite. However, the family may also choose to have the body lowered after the mourners have left the grave site.

Befriender's Ministry

It is not unusual for any of us to become overwhelmed by the grief of the death of a loved one. Sometimes the comfort of the Church's liturgy is helpful, but more support is needed. If you notice that you or your family or friends need additional support to move through the grief process, please contact our Befriender's coordinator, Sareva Parkhurst, at 687-4353.

Masses for the Dead

The tradition of offering Masses for those who have died often brings some measure of comfort to the loved ones they left behind. When we ask a priest to offer a Mass for a deceased loved one, we do so as an expression of our belief in the communion of saints, as part of our acknowledgement that our loved one, although deceased, is still a member of the community of the faithful.

Contact the parish office at 719-687-9345

Recommended Funeral Offerings

It is highly commendable to make an offering to the Church for use of the Church for funerals. These offerings help offset costs incurred by the parish for facility usage and staff. Families may also wish to make a donation to the priest who celebrates the funeral. These donations are not expected but are highly appreciated. There are necessary fees involved for the use of parish musicians.

Families in genuine financial distress may discuss this privately with the Pastor. Inability to make these donations would never prevent a parishioner from having their funeral celebrated at the parish.

Recommended offerings from non-registered parishioners:

Church Offering	\$350
Clergy	\$125
Musician	\$150

Reception costs are separate from the usage offering.

Visiting the Grave Site

It is a long time Christian tradition for family and friends to visit the grave site of a loved one. Some special religious holidays are All Saints or All Souls Day. The month of November is considered the month of the dead and is a traditional time to visit the grave of a loved one. Some people leave fresh flowers or plant green plants at the grave site as a symbol of the resurrection. It is discouraged that one uses artificial flowers because they do not provide good symbolic value. For example, as fresh flowers and plants at some point die, they remind us of the natural flow of life, of birth, death, and ultimately resurrection. Artificial flowers and plants do not provide us with this rich symbolic value.

Prayer for Visiting a Grave of a Loved One

by Fr. Edward Hays

God of Abraham and of Moses, Lord of the Living, who visited Jesus within his grave and filled Him with the fullness of eternal life, hear our prayer this day as we come to the burial place of (name). With reverence, we visit this sacred shrine where his/her body was placed within the womb of the earth. To await the final day of glory, we pause in silence to be united with him/her.

Pause for silent prayer

Lord, we have come on this pilgrimage of prayer to keep the flame of love alive within our hearts. As we read his/her name upon the marker-stone, we rejoice because that name has been written for all ages in the palm of your divine hand. May the breath of creation that surrounds this grave in trees, grass and earth, birds and sun join us in prayer. May this pilgrimage remind us of what we already know: that nothing dies; rather, life is only transformed into new life. Holy is this grave, holy this earth that has held in gentle embrace the bodies of all who are buried in the cemetery.

Lord, with reverence, we leave a wreath of worship at this grave, woven with love, adorned with memories and with our faith in the reality of that earthen Easter morning when all the holy dead shall rise in the splendor of your glory. Till that day, eternal rest to (name) and to all the holy dead. AMEN+

(Prayer taken from Prayers for the Domestic Church: A Handbook for Worship in the Home. Rev. Edward Hays, 1979.)