



GUIDELINES FOR FUNERALS

and the care of the terminally ill



If you have recently lost a loved one and are planning their funeral, please be assured of our deepest sympathy and prayers at this challenging time. The Catholic community will do all it can to conduct the funeral liturgy with dignity and love, to support you and your family, and to pray to God for the repose of your loved one.

"If we have died with Christ, then we shall live with Him too" (ROMANS 6: 8)

"In him the hope of blessed resurrection has dawned, that those saddened by the certainty of dying might be consoled by the promise of immortality to come. Indeed for your faithful, Lord, life is changed not ended, and, when this earthly dwelling turns to dust, an eternal dwelling is made ready for them in heaven" (ROMAN LITURGY).



BISHOP PHILIP EGAN

*Bishop Philip offers the clergy and people of the Diocese of Portsmouth the following **Guidelines for Funerals and for the Care of the Terminally Ill**. These Guidelines should be followed when planning a funeral for a Catholic person who has died. This leaflet also enables Catholics to leave instructions about their own funeral for their next of kin. In addition, some notes are given for the care of Catholics who are terminally ill.*



DEATH AND DYING TODAY

To talk about death in today's secularised culture is almost taboo. And to think about my own death is very challenging. Even Jesus 'sweated like great drops of blood,' praying, 'Father, if you are willing, take this cup away from me; nevertheless, let your will be done, not mine' (Luke 22:42-44). Yet as Christians, we seek to join our dying and death to the self-surrender of Christ on the Cross, trusting in his promise of resurrection, that for those who die in him, there is a new life awaiting in heaven, together with the angels, saints and faithful departed.

SPIRITUAL CARE OF CATHOLICS WHO ARE TERMINALLY ILL

When a Catholic becomes critically ill, it is usual for the Church, like Mary at the foot of the Cross, to visit that person in their hour of need, whether at home, in a care home, hospital or hospice. The medical staff or relatives should summon the priest so that the sick person can receive the Sacrament of Reconciliation (Confession), the Anointing of the Sick and if possible the Holy Eucharist as 'viaticum' (lit. food for the journey). This along with the prayers and support of relatives, friends and the Christian community, prepares the dying person to meet the Lord.

Sometimes people worry about calling the priest, thinking that it might 'upset' the sick person, especially if they were not a regular churchgoer. Yet, experience shows the opposite is almost universally the case. Indeed, not to call the priest, or to leave it until it is too late, would deprive the dying person of the help of the Church's sacraments at the very moment when they need them most, before they go to meet the Lord face to face.

WHEN A CATHOLIC DIES, A REQUIEM MASS SHOULD BE OFFERED

When a Catholic dies, it is the usual custom of the Catholic Church for them to be brought to their parish church and for a Requiem Mass to be offered up for them. This is the case even for those who during their lifetime rarely practiced their Catholic faith. Catholics believe that when a person dies, it is a priority to offer Mass, because it is the Sacrifice of Christ and in the Mass the Church pleads to the Lord, asking him to forgive the sins and weaknesses of the dead person and to admit them into the communion of the saints (*Order of Christian Funerals* 6).

Sometimes people think that the chief purpose of a funeral is to 'remember' or to 'celebrate the life' of the loved one who has died. Catholics do believe that we must thank God profoundly for the gift of having known and loved our departed. But the principle reason we offer the Mass is to ask the Lord to join our loved one with the Death of Christ so that they might also share his Resurrection.

THE BEST FORM OF FUNERAL FOR A CATHOLIC IS A REQUIEM MASS

Sometimes people think it is less distressing for the mourners or for non-Catholics that the funeral be a brief service at the cemetery or crematorium, especially if the loved one was not a regularly practising Catholic. Yet this not only deprives the person who has died of the spiritual assistance of the Mass, but it can also deprive the people and clergy of the Christian community, to which the person belonged, of an opportunity to pray for them, to thank God for their service, and to commend them to the Lord. Experience shows that the Catholic Requiem liturgy, with its impressive symbols and beautiful prayers, can, be a powerful source of consolation to the living, even to those of little or no faith.

BURIAL OR CREMATION?

When discussing burial or cremation, it is important to remember that for Catholics cremation is permitted only as a stage between death and burial. The cremated remains should eventually be interred in an appropriate place and not, for instance, scattered over a hillside. For more information and guidance on this, see <http://www.liturgyoffice.org.uk/Resources/OCF/Ashes.pdf>.

EULOGIES AND 'WORDS OF REMEMBRANCE'

The Catholic Church, unlike other communities, does not permit a eulogy at a Requiem Liturgy. Instead, it directs its ministers to preach about 'God's compassionate love' and the death and resurrection of the Lord (*Order of Christian Funerals* 27). Nevertheless, most ministers will do their very best to link this to the life and times of the loved one who has died. Family members and others who wish to say a few 'Words of Remembrance' at the funeral may be permitted to do so either at the Reception of the Body into Church at the Vigil the night before (if there is one) or at the start of the Requiem Liturgy (before it begins with the Opening Prayer). It should be one page long, one person only and be shown to the priest or deacon first. Alternatively, the more relaxed context of the wake or gathering afterwards might be more suitable. Indeed, this latter is the preferred place for Words of Remembrance as it offers a less formal context than the Requiem.

CHOOSING MUSIC AND READINGS

Only readings from the Sacred Scriptures and only music with texts that 'express the paschal mystery of the Lord's suffering, death and triumph over death' may be used in church. When choosing music to be played at the funeral, please take care that the texts are 'related to the readings from Scripture' (*Order of Christian Funerals* 31).

Sometimes people request secular songs and music to be played in church. The Church does not usually permit this, as secular songs and poetry often do not accord with the Church's faith and her joyful hope in the Lord's resurrection. However, such songs etc. might be appropriate after the committal in the Crematorium.

HAVING A MASS OFFERED

After a funeral, it is customary for Masses to continue to be offered for the person who has died, especially one month later, on the anniversary of their death and on other significant days. Please remember to request this. Most parishes have envelopes for Mass Requests and Offerings, usually at the back of church. An entry might also be made into the Parish Memorial Book (if there is one) so that the faithful can remember the deceased in their prayers when they come to Mass. These and other customs are an important reminder that the person who has died was not only a dearly loved family member but was also, through baptism, a member of Christ's family, the Church.

INSTRUCTIONS FOR MY OWN FUNERAL MASS

Regarding my own death, it is easy to put off completing a will and thinking about the funeral arrangements. However, below you will find a form, which should make things easier for your family and friends at a sad and difficult time. More importantly, when your family or next-of-kin making the arrangements are not Catholics or do not regularly practice their faith, filling out this form can help to ensure that your last days on earth and your funeral itself are conducted in the way you would wish and that you receive what is your right as a member of the Catholic Church.

PRAYING FOR A HAPPY DEATH

'Into your hands, O Lord, I commend my spirit.' (*Night Prayer*).

Catholics are taught to pray that they might be granted a 'happy death' A Christian death is one accompanied by the sacramental care of the Church and supported by friends and family. This was the prayer promoted by St. Margaret Mary Alacoque (d. 1690 Paray-le-Monial) and the devotion of keeping holy the nine First Fridays by attending Mass and going to the Sacrament of Reconciliation. This helps to keep before us our Christian faith, founded on the Resurrection of the Lord, that in dying we will be going home to meet our loving Saviour, Jesus Christ. Indeed, in this context, here is a prayer we can say every day:

Jesus, Mary and Joseph, I give You my heart and my soul.

Jesus, Mary and Joseph, assist me in my last agony.

Jesus, Mary and Joseph, may I breathe forth my soul in peace with You.

In Corde Iesu,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "+ Philip". The plus sign is a simple cross, and the name "Philip" is written in a cursive, flowing script.

Bishop of Portsmouth

Prayers for the Dying & Terminaly III

PRAYER OF COMMENDATION FOR A HAPPY DEATH

Jesus, Mary and Joseph, I give you my heart and my soul.

Jesus, Mary and Joseph, assist me in my last agony.

Jesus, Mary and Joseph, may I breathe forth my soul in peace with you. Amen.

PRAYER FOR THE DYING

Hail, holy Queen, Mother of mercy;

hail, our life, our sweetness and our hope.

To you do we cry, poor banished children of Eve:

to you do we send up our sighs,

mourning and weeping in this vale of tears.

Turn then, most gracious Advocate,

your eyes of mercy toward us,

and after this our exile,

show unto us the blessed fruit of your womb, Jesus,

O clement, O loving, O sweet Virgin Mary!

PRAYER FOR THE DEAD

Eternal rest grant unto them, O Lord,

and let perpetual light shine upon them.

May ☩ they rest in peace. Amen.

Fulfilling Your Wishes

Please complete the following form. It does not have a legal status, but it will be a help to everyone in fulfilling your wishes.

AFTER COMPLETING THIS FORM:

- Please either complete digitally and return via email to your Parish Priest, OR print, complete and return physically to your Parish Priest where he will be happy to photocopy it.
- With your permission, your Parish Priest will keep a copy in a secure file in the Parish Archive until the time it is needed. You may of course ask him to return it to you or remove it at any time.
- Keep the original and put it among your papers so that those who want to find out your wishes and instructions at the time of your death will find it there.
- Let your next-of-kin know that you have filled in this form and where it can be found.
- Let your next-of-kin know that should you become seriously ill or be admitted to a hospital or into care, you would like them to inform the priest so he can bring you the sacraments.

INSTRUCTIONS RELATING TO MY DEATH AND FUNERAL

My name: _____

Address: _____

Postcode: _____

Phone No: _____

Executor No: _____

Relationship to me: _____

IF I BECOME ILL

I am a Catholic. Please inform the medical staff and note this on my medical records. Moreover, I earnestly request the medical staff or my relatives to summon a Catholic priest so that I may receive the Sacraments.

WHEN I DIE (tick and complete as applicable)

A copy of my will can be found: _____

I would like the following undertaker: _____

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I wish to be buried at: _____

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OR, I wish to be cremated at: _____

and I would like my ashes to be buried at: _____

AT MY REQUIEM MASS

I would like my funeral to take the form of a Requiem Mass.

If possible, I would like the following Reading from Scripture to be read:

Reading: _____

If possible, I would like the following hymns to be sung:

Hymn 1: _____

Hymn 2: _____

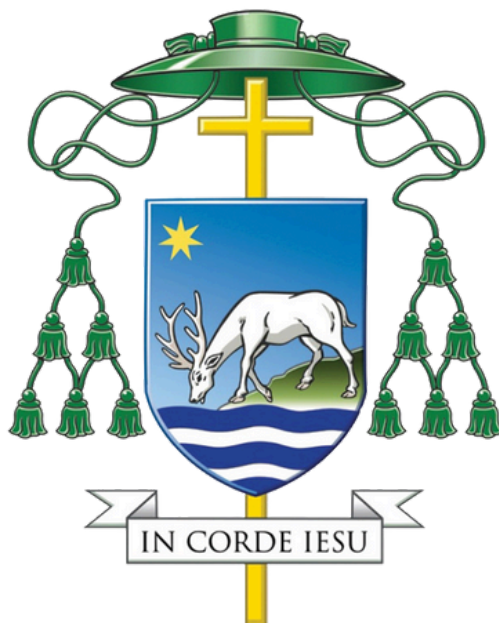
Signed: _____

Date: _____

☐

Please indicate that you have included a copy of these Instructions with your papers





Catholic Diocese of Portsmouth
Bringing people closer to Jesus Christ through His Church

<https://www.portsmouthdiocese.org.uk>