

Funeral Directives

In 2014 Bishop Doerfler sent out a letter to all Pastors/Pastoral coordinators on the Occasion of the Feast of All Souls. In it he gave us some guidelines for celebrating the “Rite of Christian Funerals” for the Catholic parishes of the diocese of Marquette. From those guidelines we have created the guidelines for Holy Family.

I. Initial Contact with the Parish

The family of the deceased will designate one person from within the family circle to plan the Rite of Christian Burial with the parish.

This person must be present at the meeting with the funeral director. This will allow for a smooth and effective planning process. The pastor needs to know the time and date of the meeting so that he can make himself available.

The Vigil for the Deceased

“At the vigil the Christian community keep watch with the family in prayer to the God of mercy and finds strength in Christ’s presence... 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 and his Spirit, the assembly at the vigil calls upon the Father of mercy to receive the deceased into the kingdom of light and peace.” (*Order of Christian Funerals*, 56)

The Funeral Mass

“Christians celebrate the funeral rites 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 and the hope of the just. The Mass, the memorial of Christ’s death and resurrection, is the principal celebration of the Christian funeral.” (*Order of Christian Funerals*, 5)

The Second Vatican Council referred to the Eucharist as the summit and source of our life. The funeral Mass is the best and most important prayer that we can offer for those who have died.

The Rite of Committal

“The rite of committal, the conclusion of the funeral rites, is the final act of the community of faith in caring for the body of its deceased member.” (*Order of Christian Funerals*, 204)

“In committing the body to its resting place, the community expresses the hope that, with all those who have gone before marked with the sign of faith, the deceased awaits the glory of the resurrection. The rite of committal is an expression of the communion that exists between the Church on earth and the Church in heaven: the deceased passes with the farewell prayers of the community of believers into the welcoming company of those who need faith no longer but see God face to face.” (*Order of Christian Funerals*, 206)

II. Vigil Process

At this time it is my practice to conduct the Vigil prayers; Reception of the Body with the family; when the family gathers for the private viewing. This allows the pastor time with **just** the family and allows the wake to move without interruption through the night.

It is permissible to have a viewing at church one hour before Mass in the gathering space.

III. The Mass

1. The family and friends are encouraged to be involved. If they are a practicing Catholic they may serve in one of the ministries of the Altar – Altar Server, Lector, Cantor. If they wish to assist with the distribution of Holy Communion they must be a certified Parish Eucharistic Minister here at Holy Family or even another Catholic Parish. If there are non-Catholics or persons who are no longer practicing Catholics they too are encouraged to take a role in the Rite of Christian Burial as either Pall Bearer or Gift Bearers
2. Sacred Music – During the Mass only approved Catholic hymns or songs may be sung. All secular ones are reserved for the Wake.
3. Eulogies/Sharing of memories will be done at the Visitation or at the luncheon after the Mass, or at the graveside. If this is to take place at

the luncheon, the parish would need to know in advance. This allows the staff to set up the sound system in the Fr. Matt Hall.

4. The Readings for the Mass – The readings for the Mass are chosen by the priest, who will be giving the homily. This allows the priest ample time to prepare his homily.

Approved by the Parish Pastoral Council on December 8, 2015.