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FUNERAL LITURGIES
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This Bulletin is primarily pastoral in scope. It is prepared for members of parish liturgy committees, readers, musicians, singers, catechists, teachers, religious, seminarians, clergy, and diocesan liturgical commissions, and for all who are involved in preparing, celebrating, and improving the community liturgy.

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FUNERAL LITURGIES

In the light of our tradition of 2,000 years of Christian faith and practice, we look at the liturgies that we celebrate after a believer dies.

We consider what our liturgies express today about our beliefs and about our attitudes toward life and death. Our faith is shaped by our liturgy, and in turn our faith is expressed in the rites and texts of our worship.

As we begin to understand more fully the meaning of these liturgies after the death of a believer, we will make greater efforts as a community to celebrate them as well as we can.

Our better celebrations give greater glory to God, and strengthen his people in their faith, until the day when Jesus knocks, and invites us to share for ever in the joys of the messianic banquet.
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RESURRECTION AND LIFE

Life
is changed

Jesus Christ died in obedience to the Father's will. By his obedient suffering, our Lord put death to death, and was raised again to restore our life. He conquered the sting of death for us.

Through the centuries, the Christian people have looked at death in various ways. The prayers and rites of our liturgy express the belief of the Church today, and help those who grieve to pass through the death of one they love to a new stage in their life as believers.

In our liturgies for the dead, we Christians proclaim our faith, our hope, our love.

Our faith: We believe that in baptism we die with Christ to sin, and are raised with him to life for God (Rom. 6: 3-11). We are seized up into his paschal mystery, and share already to a limited extent in his victory over death. We are nourished with the food and drink that bring eternal life, and Jesus has promised that he will raise us up on the last day. When we die, we complete our sharing in the paschal mystery, and are fully his. This is the faith we proclaim in the liturgical celebrations when someone we love has died in Christ.

Our hope: Strong in our faith, we put our trust in Jesus Christ and his promises. The last enemy is death (1 Cor. 15: 26), and he has conquered it. Death holds no victory or triumph. Jesus has overcome sin, Satan, and death, and gives us eternal life.

Our love: Faith and hope pass away; only love remains when we see God. Jesus has promised that those who love him in others will share eternal life, and be with him at the messianic banquet — the perfect fulfillment of our lives and of our worship.

When a relative or friend dies, we know that God has called this person into eternity. We know too that this person is judged by God, and is rewarded or punished. Life is not ended, but changed.

We pray for the person who has died, and ask God to have mercy on our friend. We pray also for ourselves, asking for help to live for God and to be ready to face him in judgment. We also pray for those most closely affected by the death of one we love.
For the Christian, the meaning of death is totally changed by the resurrection of Jesus Christ. His death and rising make it possible for our life and death to make sense and to have true value.

**New Testament Teaching**

**Physical death** is the end of our life and experience on earth. Our life here comes to a complete halt. All that we own now belongs to others. Death is a result of sin, and has power over every human person. Each of us dies but once (Heb. 9: 27).

**Judgment:** After death we are judged by God, from whom nothing can be hidden. He sees and knows us as we are, and judges us on the way we have responded freely to the graces he has given generously to each of us.

**Everlasting life** with Jesus and his saints in the presence of God is the reward offered to those who love God. We are unable to imagine what wonderful rewards God has prepared for us. Human imagery — banquet, rest, refreshment, peace — cannot grasp the marvellous ways in which our heavenly Father will reward us for being faithful to him.

**Everlasting death** and punishment are also part of the New Testament teaching. If we reject God's love and choose any created thing as our god, we are condemning ourselves to eternal death.

**Jesus' victory over sin and death:** During his life on earth, Jesus showed his power over death by raising people to life: the daughter of Jairus, the son of the widow of Naim, and Lazarus come immediately to mind. By his obedience to his Father's will, Jesus suffered death on the cross in order to save us. By his death, he overcame the power of sin and Satan; by his rising, he made it possible for us to share in his glorious victory over death and to live with him for God, both now and for ever.

**Sharing in his victory:** We who are baptized into the death and rising of Christ have his Spirit, and he will raise us to new life. We who are nourished by the body and blood of Christ will live with him for ever. Jesus is our resurrection and our life, and we who believe in him will be raised with him into everlasting life. The resurrection of our body at the end of time is the final sign of his victory over death and his love for us.
Preparing for Our Death

Life is short: Our life on earth is relatively short, a brief span of 70 years or so. Like the grass, we are here today and gone tomorrow; we vanish and leave no traces. The scriptures refer to the brevity of our life, and contrast it to God's unending life (Ps. 90; Ps. 102; Ps. 103; 1 Pet. 1: 17-25).

Life is uncertain: We do not know the day or hour when God will call us to himself (see Mt. 24: 36; Lk. 12: 20-21). We must therefore always be ready to meet God in judgment, watching for the coming of the Lord Jesus (Mt. 24: 44). With Jesus we entrust ourselves into the hands of God our Father (Ps. 31: 5; Lk. 23: 46).

How we prepare for death: The only way we can prepare for death is by living our life well. We follow the example of Jesus our brother when we seek to do the Father's will and to put the kingdom of God in first place in our lives (see Mt. 6: 33). We avoid anxiety, and look forward with joyful hope to our Lord's coming: this is the way we pray after the Our Father during the communion rite of the Mass.

Our personal responsibility: When we are mature, we are responsible for our physical and our spiritual life. While others can pray for us, offer sacrifices for us, and give us good example, they cannot force us to respond to God's call. Each of us has a personal invitation from the Spirit to follow the Lord Jesus, and no one can do this for us. Our Lord wants to form us in his own image, but he does not force us. He invites us, and we are free to follow him or reject him: he stands and knocks at the door, and is ready to be with us (see Rev. 3: 20). By his grace he offers us the help to come with him and obey the Father in love.

Ministry to the Dying

Jesus is knocking: Commenting on Lk. 12: 35-40, St. Gregory the Great notes that sickness can be like Jesus knocking at the door before he opens it and invites us to come into eternity.¹

Role of the community: The believing community has a number of responsibilities concerning the dying:

- **Education of all** on the meaning of life and death, on how to face death, on how to help someone prepare for death. This could be done each year as part of the ongoing formation program in the parish. The petition in the Hail, Mary ("Pray for us sinners now and at the hour of our death") may provide a good opening for this topic.

- **Encourage prayer for the dying:** In practice, the community shows its concern for the dying by praying for them in the general intercessions in the Mass and in morning and evening prayer.

- **Helping a family:** When someone is dying, his or her family needs extra help to face the fact of death, and to know what to do. The parish clergy and others can visit the family and spend more time with them, helping them to cope with the realities of death in their midst. The family often needs help to accept the fact of impending death, and to be open with the dying person.

• Praying with the one who is dying: Depending on the condition and mood of the person, we may pray in many ways: in silence, by repeating a familiar prayer, by saying a decade of the rosary together, by praying a brief litany, by reading a psalm or another scripture passage.

The ritual book for the sick also contains the prayers for commending a dying person to God's loving care. These prayers are also given for family use in Sunday Mass Book, pages 1151-1154 and 1333; see also A Book of Blessings, pages 309-314.

• Helping the person to die with dignity: The hospice movement of care for the dying is growing.2

Sacramental assistance: The rites for the sick provide for anointing, reconciliation, frequent and even daily communion, prayers, and visits. The sacrament for the dying is viaticum, communion received as food for our journey into eternity.

Examination of conscience: As we look over the list of community members who died in the past year, we might ask ourselves: Did we help each of them to prepare as well as possible for death? Was there something more we could have done? Have we learned any lessons to improve our care of the dying this year?

* * *

Summary: For Christians, death is the final and complete entry into the paschal mystery of Jesus' dying and rising. When we accept our death with faith, hope, and love, we hear Jesus as he speaks to us: Come, good and faithful servant, and enter into the joy of your Lord (see Mt. 25: 21 and 34).

Helpful reading:

Liturgy and Human Passage, edited by David Power and Luis Maldonado: Concilium, no. 112 (1979. The Seabury Press. 815 Second Ave., New York. NY 10017); see especially “The Liturgy of the Dead as a Rite of Passage.” by Philippe Rouillard, pages 72-82.


Rites for the Dying, in Bulletin 57, pages 38-60.


Excerpts from a treatise on death by St. Ambrose of Milan are given in Liturgy of the Hours (1975, Catholic Book, New York): see vol. IV, pages 497-498. Further texts from the tradition of the Church are included in the office of readings in the office for the dead, near the end of each volume of Liturgy of the Hours and of Christian Prayer.

2 See “A Good Way to Die,” by Victor and Rosemary Zorza, in Reader's Digest, vol. 113, no. 675 (July 1978. Reader's Digest Magazines Ltd.. 2115 Redfern Ave., Montréal, PQ. H3Z 2V9): pages 37-41. This article suggests that interested persons may contact the local branch of the Canadian Cancer Society, or one of these hospitals: The Royal Victoria Hospital. Montréal; Hôpital Notre-Dame, Montréal; St. Michael's Hospital, Toronto; Grace Hospital, Toronto; St. Boniface General Hospital, St. Boniface, Manitoba; or Vancouver General Hospital, Vancouver. B.C.
Rites in the past

A brief review of funeral rites in the history of the Christian Church helps us to understand our current ceremonies and customs.

Jewish and Roman Customs

Jewish practices: We do not have the texts of Jewish funeral rites from the time of Jesus. Some funeral customs are mentioned in passing references in the New Testament:

- Care of the body: Washing, anointing, spices, binding cloths, cloth over the face: see Mk. 16: 1; Lk. 24: 1; Jn. 12: 7; Jn. 11: 44; Jn. 19: 39-40; Jn. 20: 5-7; Acts 9: 37.
- Mourning: Weeping, wailing, flute playing: Mt. 9: 23; Mt. 11: 17; Mk. 5: 38-39; Lk. 8: 52; Acts 8: 2. Since burial normally took place right after death, the mourning went on for some time after the burial. Other mourning practices included: fasting (2 Sam. 1: 12; Mt. 9: 15); sprinkling ashes or earth on the mourner’s head (2 Sam. 1: 2); tearing clothing (Gen. 37: 29, 34; 2 Sam. 1: 11); wearing sackcloth (2 Sam. 3: 31); striking the breast (Is. 32: 12; Lk. 23: 48). These also became signs of doing penance (see Mt. 11: 21).
- Funeral procession: Stretcher, bearers: Lk. 7: 12, 14; Acts 5: 6, 10.
- Entombment in cave or hewn tomb: Jn. 19: 41-42; Jn. 11: 38-39; or burial: Acts 5: 6, 10; Acts 8: 2; Mt. 27: 7; Mt. 14: 12.

Roman customs: In the Greek and Roman culture in which the first generation of Christians lived and died, these were the common practices when someone died:

- Care of the body: After someone closed the eyes of the dead person, the body was washed, anointed, and dressed. A coin was placed in the person’s mouth as viaticum, the fare for the ferry across the river Styx (see Bulletin 57, pages 43, 46).
- Body laid out: The body was laid out on a bed, and friends and relatives could visit the home and join in the mourning.
- Funeral procession: The mourners wore black, and walked behind the body.
- Cremation or burial: The body was burnt, and the remains were preserved by the family. Burials were in the ground or in rock.
- Funeral meals: The family has two funeral meals at the place of cremation or burial, one on the day of the funeral and the second nine days later.
- Purpose: One of the purposes of these funeral rites was to appease the spirits of the dead so that they would not harm or disturb the survivors.
Among the First Christians

Christians followed the general practices of their culture; their faith however taught them that Jesus had overcome the sting of human death by his dying and rising. We do not mourn as do people bereft of faith (1 Thess. 4: 13-14): we know that life is changed, not ended. Read 1 Thess. 4: 13-18, and 1 Cor. 15: 12-28, 35-57.

○ Reassurance in persecution: Jesus promised that his followers would be hated and persecuted as he was (Jn. 15: 18-21). The Apocalypse or book of Revelation is written to reassure believers that Jesus is still with them in times of persecution. Though the whole world is unleashed against the Church, Jesus has won the victory, and his triumph will be seen by all at the end of time.

○ Devotion to martyrs: Stephen, the first martyr for Jesus, was buried with mourning and loud cries (Acts 8: 2). In the book of Revelation, the martyrs are described as wearing white robes washed in Christ's blood (Rev. 6: 9-11; 7: 9-17).

○ On the way to death by wild animals in the arena, Ignatius of Antioch prays for the grace of martyrdom. He will be God's wheat, ground by the teeth of lions, and made into bread for Jesus Christ.¹

○ Around 155, Polycarp was martyred in Smyrna: his dying prayer was like a eucharistic prayer. After his body was burnt by the pagans, his bones were gathered as something precious, and were buried by the Christians. They hoped to celebrate the anniversary or “birthday” of his martyrdom each year.²

○ Cemeteries and catacombs: See page 130, below.

In Africa, Tertullian speaks of the customs surrounding death around the year 200. He points out that pagans see death as evil, and criticizes their rites for the dead because they are too closely involved in the veneration given to dead idols. Pagan funeral rites include crowning the dead, solemn processions, trumpets, sacrificial offerings to the dead, funeral banquets and sacred meals, and cremation of the dead. All these are not done by Christians, he says. Both Christians and pagans wash and embalm the body of the deceased, and use incense at funerals. Christians believe in the resurrection of the body. Death is seen as a time of refreshment, rest, sleep. The day of death is one's birthday into eternal life, and the eucharist is celebrated on the anniversary.

○ Cyprian was the Bishop of Carthage in the 250s. He suggests that Christians should avoid pagan practices. We do not need to weep or lament when people die, because they are not lost: they are separated from us, but they are living with God. They have gone before us. We do not need to wear black because they are already dressed in white robes. A funeral procession, led by people carrying torches or candles, takes the body to the cemetery, where it is buried or laid in a tomb. When Christians die, the eucharist is offered, and the names of the dead are mentioned.


Vocabulary: The words Christians used to describe their attitudes and beliefs were mainly scriptural. Death was often referred to as sleep (Jn. 4: 11-15; 1 Cor. 15: 20). Life is a pilgrimage (Ps. 39: 12), and we have no lasting city here: our permanent home, our homeland, is in heaven (Heb. 13: 14). Here our bodies may be described as tents or temporary dwellings (2 Cor. 5: 1; Is. 38: 12). Life in heaven is seen as refreshment, light, peace (see eucharistic prayer 1).

After the persecutions ended in the Roman Empire in 313, the Church was able to develop its life and liturgies more fully. On moving from house churches to basilicas, the Church needed a different style of liturgy to suit the new settings (see Bulletin 74, pages 106-107). Churches and shrines were built in honor of the martyrs, and many people tried to be buried near the body of a saint. Different styles of liturgy developed in East and West in accordance with their distinct cultures and attitudes. Funeral epigraphs and graffiti continued to proclaim the Christian faith of all classes: see note 1 on page 112, below.

- **Serapion:** Bishop Serapion of Thmuis in Egypt has left us a brief sacramentary dated around the middle of the fourth century. In the eucharistic prayer, he includes an intercession for all the departed, with the naming of those known to the community. In his collection of prayers, no. 18 is a commendation of a person who has just died.

- **The Apostolic Constitutions,** written around 380, remind us that the bodies of the dead are not unclean: they are the bodies of the saints. When someone has died we gather to read the word of God, to sing for all who have died, and to offer the eucharist in the cemetery and in the church. In the intercessions, we remember those who rest in Christ.

In the intercessions, we pray to the God of the living for those who have died. Psalms, readings, and prayers are used to mark the third day; the ninth day commemorates the living and the dead; the fortieth day and the anniversary are also kept. Alms are to be taken from the dead person's property, and given to the poor as a form of memorial for him or her. Alms and prayers for the wicked are of no avail. At memorial banquets, Christians should avoid excesses in eating and drinking.

- **Augustine:** In his writings, which extend over a period of years, Augustine speaks on a number of topics relating to funerals:

  - Memorials or monuments are set up in honor of the martyrs. Similar monuments are used to mark the graves of Christians.

  - Banquets were held after the funeral, when the time of mourning ended, and on the anniversary of death. In Hippo these banquets had become the occasion for excess and scandal, and Augustine worked to eliminate the practice; instead, he encouraged prayer vigils and gifts to the needy.

  - Eucharist: In Africa, this tended to be celebrated after the burial, whereas in Rome at this time, it was celebrated in the cemetery before the body was laid in the tomb. Augustine notes proper readings for funerals, and the custom of people trying to be buried near the tomb of a martyr. Prayer for the dead was included in the eucharist, and the dead were named in the eucharistic prayer, a custom dating back to the third century. Around 422-423, Augustine wrote a book, *De cura pro mortuis gerenda* (The care to be shown for the dead).
During the Middle Ages

The middle ages lasted about a thousand years, from 500 to 1500 AD. During this period, a half of the Church's history, we find these circumstances and events among the many that have influenced the celebration of funerals. Gradually, during this time, the ritual moved from joyful celebrations with *alleluias* and paschal imagery to somber and mournful rites.

A one-sided fear of Christ: One of the delayed effects of the Council of Nicaea — which proclaimed in 325 that Jesus was true God and true man — was a growing fear of Jesus, who came to be seen more as a severe judge than a merciful savior. Strange side-effects of this lopsided theology included fear of going to communion (seen first in the East and then later in the West), the silent canon, and an increased emphasis on the intercession of the saints. ³

Purification and expiation: As the doctrines of the Church as the body of Christ and of the people of God as a holy and priestly nation faded from the consciousness of Catholics, people became more aware of their sinfulness. No one was perfect, and most expected to have to enter a state of purification before they could enter heaven. Gradually the teaching about purgatory developed, and it was felt that those on earth could help those in the state of purification by good actions, prayers, and Masses. ⁴ This was a logical development from the communion of saints and the early practice of prayer for the dead.

Sacramentaries: Books of prayer texts for priest and bishop — including what would be in the sacramentary, ritual, and pontifical today — began to be elaborated and copied widely. Prayers for funerals and anniversary Masses for the dead were included, as well as votive Masses. ⁵

“Last” rites: In the early middle ages, the severe penitential discipline of the Church had begun to weaken, and individual celebration of the sacrament was becoming more common. But many left off their repentance until their deathbed. In practice the anointing of the sick was reserved to celebration by the priest and became the anointing of a dying person, with the result that the sacrament became known as *extreme unction* (last anointing), and the rites for the sick were termed “the last rites.” (See Bulletin 52, pages 4-13, on the history of the sacrament of reconciliation; and Bulletin 57 on the rites for the sick and the dying.)

Monastic developments: Among the changes taking place in the monasteries in this period we find the ordination of many members of the community as priests. In many cases they celebrated Masses privately. Masses offered for the dead were popular, and were felt to be a sign of special piety and benefit. The office for the dead, consisting of vespers, matins, and lauds, was sometimes added to the office of the day as an act of pious devotion.


Nov. 2: The feast of All Souls or the commemoration of all the faithful departed came to follow All Saints' day. It was a popular feast, and from Cluny around the year 1000 it soon spread across Europe.6

**Black Death:** From 1347 to 1349, the plague moved steadily through the countries of Europe, killing between ten and fifty per cent of the population. Death came swiftly, and there was no known cure for those stricken by the plague. Several lesser outbreaks occurred later in the century.

**Dies irae:** This sequence from the twelfth or thirteenth century seems to have been composed for the final Sundays of the year, when eschatological themes are prominent. In the 1570 missal of Pius V, it was used for Masses for the dead: it was one of the five sequences retained from the large number in use in the late middle ages. This sequence was dropped when the rites were renewed in a paschal spirit after Vatican II.

A vivid picture of popular attitudes toward life and death, sin and salvation, is painted by Chaucer and Langland in fourteenth-century Catholic England.7

**Modern Times**

**Need of renewal:** At the beginning of the sixteenth century, the Church was greatly in need of reform and renewal. The Fifth Lateran Council listed many of the problems facing the Church in 1516,8 less than a year before Luther posted his 95 theses.

**Reformation:** The Protestant Reformation came at this time, and was nourished by the strong desire felt by many for renewal in the Church. It was also an age complicated by growing nationalism and by political struggles between rulers and popes. (See Bulletin 78, pages 59-63.)

Further notes on the Reformation and funeral rites are given on pages 112-113, below.

• **Reaction:** By 1500, prayer for the dead was inextricably bound up with benefactors' rights, Mass foundations, and indulgences, and the paschal view of death was obscured by the mournful texts and rites surrounding Christian burial. The Reformers reacted against these and other areas of Church teaching, life, and practice where they felt there were superstitions or where the New Testament gave little support.

• **Summary:** The effect of the Reformation on funeral rituals may be summarized in this way:9

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"The Reformation burial rites were all severe simplifications of the medieval pattern. Indeed, on the left wing of the Reformation there were no burial rites at all, the act of burial being viewed as simply a convenient way of disposing of a dead body without particular religious significance, and without the need of any special liturgical forms. Where such forms were provided, as amongst Lutherans and Anglicans, and (minimally) amongst Calvinists, possible references to purgatory were strictly excised, and forms of prayer for the dead were almost completely discarded. The elaborate structure of the medieval burial rites was replaced by a simpler order, and an often lengthy homily was substituted for the earlier multiplicity of psalms and antiphons."

_Catholic reformation:_ The Council of Trent (1545-1563) worked to eliminate the worst abuses in the life of the Church. It left the reform of the liturgical books to the pope, to be carried out after the Council. The reformed breviary was issued in 1568, and the missal in 1570. The Congregation of Rites was set up in 1588 to make sure that the Roman liturgical books were followed. (Eventually, in the succeeding centuries, liturgy came to be seen as "whatever was contained in the official liturgical books."

- **Roman Ritual:** In 1614, the various rites for celebrating sacraments and blessings were gathered into one official book. The funeral texts in this ritual continued the spirit of the medieval rites, with emphasis on punishment for sin, judgment, and God's mercy more than on the paschal approach of the early Christian centuries. Black was the color of the vestments, and somber was the mood of the services.

Gradually the various diocesan rituals for funerals were modified to reflect the Roman book.

In 1954 and 1955, the funeral rites outside Mass were allowed in the vernacular.\(^{10}\)

- **Spirit of the rites:** The texts spoke of sin and forgiveness, judgment, eternal life and light. The general tone of the rites was sobering as the members of the believing community faced death in their brother or sister: it was to remind them that they too would die and have to give an account of their works. The paschal spirit was mentioned only once in an antiphon. Blessed water was used frequently in the funeral services, but not as a reminder of baptism; rather, it was to cleanse us of "all uncleanness," and to protect whatever it touched "from every assault of evil spirits."\(^{11}\)

This was the situation when the Second Vatican Council began in 1962: see page 115, below.

\(^{10}\) _Collectio Rituum ad instar Appendicis Ritualis Romani pro Dioecesibus Statuum Foederatorum Americae Septentrionalis_ (1954, Bruce, Milwaukee). This ritual was extended to Canada in 1955. The burial services for adults are on pages 193-226, and for children on pages 227-237.

\(^{11}\) _Collectio Rituum_ (see footnote 10, above): "Blessing of Holy Water," page 130; see also pages 132 and 134.
Work of the Spirit: The recent movement of renewal in the Christian Churches is seen as the work of the Holy Spirit (see Liturgy constitution, no. 43), slowly drawing us together. As different Churches move back to our Jewish roots and to the liturgical attitudes and expressions of the early centuries, we find ourselves coming closer together. See Bulletin 78: Our common liturgical roots, pages 69-70, and Sharing our liturgical calendar, pages 71-74.

This same movement is evident in recently revised funeral liturgies:

- The Church of England notes that its doctrine "is grounded in the holy Scriptures, and in such teachings of the ancient Fathers and Councils of the Church as are agreeable to the said Scriptures."\(^{12}\)

- The United Methodist Church in the United States has begun to revise its rites as part of "an effort to be faithful to the fourfold Wesleyan norm of Scripture, tradition, experience, and reason."\(^{13}\)

- At the same time, Roman Catholics are seeking to be more faithful to their Jewish roots, to the scriptures, and to the spirit and practices of the early Christians.

Some signs of this movement:

- Paschal character of Christian death: Once more, strong emphasis is being placed on the meaning that Jesus' death-resurrection gives to our death (Liturgy constitution, no. 81). This underlies the reformed rites in the Catholic Church, and is expressed also by the use of baptismal symbolism (see page 117, below).

- Prayer for the dead: Now that the battles of the sixteenth century have died down, other Churches are exploring this part of the common tradition. Some examples:

  - "There are strong reasons — historical, theological, psychological — in favor of this practice [intercessory prayer for the dead]. Protestant aversion to the Roman doctrine of purgatory and reaction against abuses of the mass for the dead have too often become unthinking overreaction and should no longer blind us to the fact that prayer for the dead has been a widespread practice throughout Christian history. It probably derived from Judaism and was an integral part of the Eucharist, which was celebrated in connection with the Christian funeral at least as early as the third century.

  "Theologically, prayer with the dead is inherent in all Christian worship. Because Christian worship is corporate by definition, the prayer of the church on earth is joined with that of 'all the hosts of heaven' who praise and magnify God's holy Name. But Christian prayer is not merely prayer with, it is also prayer for the

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\(^{12}\) The Alternative Service Book 1980 (1980, Oxford University Press, Walton, St., Oxford OX2 6DP; and A.R. Mowbray & Co., Becket St., Oxford OX1 1SJ); Preface, page 10. The funeral rites are given on pages 305-336; proper prefaces, page 333; see also the intercession, page 125.

\(^{13}\) A Service of Death and Resurrection: The Ministry of the Church at Death — Supplemental Worship Resources 7 (1979, Abingdon, Nashville, TN; in Canada, G.R. Welch, Co., 310 Judson St., Toronto, Ontario M8Z 1J9); page 11. A review of this book was included in Bulletin 74, page 142.

See also The Patristic Roots of Reformed Worship, by Hughes Oliphant Old (1975, Theologischer Verlag, Zurich); reviewed in Bulletin 59, page 184.
dead. As such, it is a profound expression of faith. It is a way of affirming the reality of shared life in Christ's body, a body not subject to temporal and spatial bounds. Even more, prayer for the dead is a profound act of love addressed to a God of love.

"The instinct to pray to God for those whom we love and to desire their good is surely as valid for the souls of the departed as for the living . . . . And if love as prayer has been offered for people up until the moment of death, we can hardly expect survivors to cease offering love as prayer after death . . . . Indeed, it is a love whose expression seems to need the human agency of prayer . . . . Thus, if one doubts the truth of intercessory prayer for the dead, it would be well to rethink one's understanding of God, one's Christology, and one's doctrine of the church."14

□ "This kind of prayer that mentions the deceased is unusual for most Lutherans, but it is solidly evangelical. The deceased should not be forgotten at the time of the funeral, and it is not enough to assume that the funeral is for the living. A funeral, among other things, ritualizes the situation of death and the bereavement of the family and congregation. In the Burial Service we say what we would have said at the moment of death had we been present. Prayer that God will give the deceased eternal life, the joys of heaven, and fellowship with the saints, are [sic] an expression of the faith and hope of the community."15

• Eucharist at funerals: Provision for celebrating the eucharist at funerals is now included in the ritual books of many Churches, including the Anglican Church in Canada and in England; the United Methodist Church and the Episcopal Church in the United States; and the Lutheran Churches in Canada and the U.S.A.

Helpful reading:


Early Christian Writing: See references on page 104, footnotes 1 and 2, above.


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14 A Service of Death and Resurrection (see footnote 13, above): pages 28-29; see also page 32, no. 8.


The Burial of the Dead, The Doctrine and Worship Committee of the Anglican Church of Canada (1976, The Anglican Book Center, 600 Jarvis St., Toronto, Ontario M4Y 2J6): This is a service in contemporary form and language, and is no. 5 of the Canadian Anglican Liturgical Series.

PERSPECTIVE

"Neither the [Easter] vigil nor a funeral (nor for that matter a wedding or an ordination) is a liturgy 'for' someone.
They are celebrations of the Church, by the Church, and for the Church under the criteria of the gospel."

Aidan Kavanagh, OSB
Made, Not Born: New Perspectives on Christian Initiation (1976, University of Notre Dame Press Notre Dame, IN 46556; and London): see page 126.

A PRAYER

Father of mercy,
listen to our prayers for those who have died.
Welcome them into your heavenly home,
and nourish them with your love.

Have mercy on the living,
and help us to prepare each day for your invitation
to enter into your eternal joy.

We ask this grace through Christ our Lord. Amen!
Praying for the dead

This is one area where Christian practice strongly affected Christian belief. Early Christians prayed for the dead, and included this idea both in their epigraphs and their graffiti. As early as the second century, some celebrated the eucharist after the funeral; soon the eucharist came to be celebrated in each funeral. The dead were prayed for by name in the eucharistic prayer, a practice we still continue.

Catholic tradition kept prayer for the dead as a normal part of Christian practice. Some examples:

- Gregory Nazianzen (330-c. 390) speaks of commending our own souls and those of the persons who have already come to the place of rest before us.²

- Canon of the scriptures: When the Catholic canon of the Hebrew scriptures was established it included the second book of Maccabees; in this book, chapter 12, verses 38-45, we read of the reasons why Judas Maccabeus had sacrifices offered for the dead soldiers who had worn pagan amulets: see especially verses 42-45.

- Augustine (354-430) pointed out that we pray for those who have died; in the case of martyrs, however, they pray for us.³

- Middle ages: During the 1,000 years from 500 to 1500, many practices and abuses flourished. A growing number of foundations for Masses for the dead led to the ordination of many priests for this purpose. The office for the dead was added to the regular office at Cluny. The later middle ages obscured the faith by many superstitions and abuses over indulgences and relics.

Reformation: The Protestant Reformation rejected these abuses, and went on to reject prayer for the dead.

- Luther did not prepare a ritual for funerals, but did write prayers, hymns, German psalms, and canticles that could be used in these services. He insisted that Christians find comfort, not sorrow, in death because of their faith in the resurrection (see 1 Thess. 4: 13-18). Death is a sleep (Mt. 9: 24; Jn. 11: 11-14), and burial is a planting of a mortal seed, leading to immortal fruit (1 Cor. 15: 42-44). Luther retained traditional rites such as adorning the body of the deceased, carrying it in state, singing over it, and marking the grave with a tombstone. He also encouraged

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the use of scripture texts on tombs, and retained melodies used in Catholic services for the dead, but fitted them with texts emphasizing hope and resurrection.4

• The Anglican Church kept some prayers for the deceased in its burial services, asking for a merciful judgment, a welcome into eternal life, and the rising of this person at the general resurrection. The praying community also asks to be included in God's mercy and in the resurrection of the dead. The 1549 prayer book provides a prayer for the dead in the eucharistic prayer, and indicates that holy communion may be celebrated as part of the funeral. In the 1552 revision, however, these are dropped. Both books include a prayer of thanks to God for delivering the deceased from the miseries of this sinful world.5

Some modern Anglican and Protestant references are given above on pages 109-110.

Catholics since Vatican II: Our renewed liturgy continues the traditional Christian practice of praying for the dead, but now places greater emphasis on the full paschal mystery of Jesus Christ:

• Lectionary: The number of scripture readings in the lectionary has been greatly increased.

• Sacramentary: Many more prayers and Masses are available in the sacramentary. We pray for the dead in seven of the eucharistic prayers (exceptions: children, no. 3, and reconciliation, no. 2), and may pray for them in the prayer of the faithful in each celebration.

• Ritual: The first stage of the funeral rite has been developed more fully, and the local community has ample opportunity to shape it in each celebration. (See pages 119-124, below.)

• Liturgy of the hours: The final petition in the intercessions at evening prayer each day is for the faithful departed. The office for the dead is contained in each volume of the Liturgy of the Hours and of Christian Prayer. A simple form of morning or evening prayer is also encouraged as one way of celebrating the first stage in the funeral rites (see CBW II, choir edition, nos. 61-79).

• November 2 continues as the feast of All Souls day in the 1969 reform of the calendar. Since the 1970 edition of the Missale Romanum, however, this celebration is now able to replace the Sunday Mass texts, much to the consternation of many liturgists.

The following note has been included in Resources for Sunday Homilies (years B and C), and in Guidelines for Pastoral Liturgy whenever this celebration falls on a Sunday:

The universal calendar prescribes that this commemoration replace the Sunday texts when it falls on the Lord's day. Even though this might be difficult in our culture, efforts must be made to place this celebration within the context of the paschal mystery. The suffering, dying, and rising of Jesus is seen as the great act of God's saving love for us.


The focus of this Sunday’s liturgy must remain on Christ, on his death and resurrection; it must not be displaced by undue attention to the faithful departed. We celebrate them today insofar as they participate in the death and rising of Jesus Christ through their baptism, their life, and their death.

White vestments are more appropriate today.

Recommended Mass texts: The following texts are recommended by the National Liturgical Office as being most appropriate for this celebration when it takes place on the Lord’s day: first Mass of All Souls day (sacramentary, no. 352); preface of Christian death 77-81; these texts focus more on Christ.

Suggested readings: Gospel: Mt. 11: 25-30 (Lectionary, no. 101)
First reading: Is. 25: 6-10 (no. 143)
Responsorial psalm: Ps. 23 (no. 143)
Second reading: Rom. 14: 7-9 (no. 131)

Further resources:

- Catholic Funeral Rite: Ritual and Pastoral Notes (1973, CCC, 90 Parent Avenue, Ottawa, Ontario K1N 7B1).
- Rite for a Catholic Wake (1973, CCC, Ottawa).
- Catholic Book of Worship II (CBW II): Funerals, nos. 48-60, with pastoral notes in choir edition; morning or evening prayer may be used as part of the vigil or wake service (nos. 61-79); liturgical index in choir edition: no. 763, Funerals, and no. 743, Comfort and consolation, and the other references given in no. 48.
- A Book of Blessings (1981, CCCB, 90 Parent Ave., Ottawa, Ontario K1N 7B1): see ‘Death’ in index, page 366. The main prayers are given under these headings: Prayers for the dead, pages 315-318; time of sorrow, 69; accidental death, 70; victims in community disaster, 275, 333; Remembrance day, 244; solemn blessing, 347; and mourners, pages 70, 317.

Helpful reading:


NEXT ISSUE

Bulletin 85, Advent in Our Home, offers many positive suggestions for family prayer and practices during Advent and the Christmas season each year. These are based on the daily liturgy of these seasons. This Bulletin is intended for wider distribution. It may be used each year by individual families, and will help them to share more fully in the graces of the Advent and Christmas seasons.

This issue will be ready for mailing early in September.
CELEBRATING FUNERALS

Understanding our present rites

Since the Second Vatican Council spoke in 1963 of renewing our funeral liturgy we have seen some important developments in our rites as they have been revised to express our baptismal spirituality more fully.

A Time of Renewal

One is often surprised to see how much has happened and how far we have come in the past twenty years.

Before Vatican II: In the years immediately before the Council, the typical Catholic funeral was filled with faith, but the rites seemed to express gloom. Black vestments, dark candles, the absence of flowers, the Dies irae and the other somber chants, the silent congregation, with few people receiving communion: all these seemed to be lugubrious, and brought home the starkness of death and judgment.

The Roman Missal provided only six Masses, with a total of eight scripture readings. The prayer texts in the missal and ritual contained many positive references (such as perpetual light, eternal rest, living with God, Christ who calls, seal of the Holy Trinity, paradise, heavenly city of Jerusalem, resurrection and life, union with the company of the angels, saints, and martyrs in heaven, light and peace, happiness for ever), but the general atmosphere was overshadowed by the gloom of black vestments.

In 1967, it was surprising how these texts came to life when used in English with white vestments: it was the first light of the dawn of renewal.

Vatican II: The Council spoke of Christian death in two of its main documents:

- Meaning of death: The human person has an innate feeling against being snuffed out and disappearing for ever. The Council points out that we have within us an eternal seed, a desire for something higher than our present life. (In this, it echoes Augustine’s cry, “You have made us for yourself, O Lord, and we cannot rest until we rest in you.”) Humanly speaking, the mystery of death is beyond our ability to understand.
As Christians we believe that God has made us to be happy. The death of our body — which comes because of sin (see Rom. 5: 21; 6: 23; James 1: 15; Wis. 1: 13; 2: 23-24) — will be overcome because of God’s mercy.

Our heavenly Father calls us to share in his unending life. Jesus, who came to give us abundant life (Jn. 10: 10), was raised from the dead by the power of the Spirit (Rom. 8: 11). By his death, Jesus destroyed the power of death over us (1 Cor. 15: 56-57). Our faith teaches us that we are united with Christ, and in him we are one with all Christians on earth and in the next life: this is the communion of saints. (See Pastoral constitution on the Church in the modern world, no. 18.)

Reform of the rites of Christian burial: The most important change was the Council’s emphasis on the “paschal character” of our death: our dying is related to the paschal mystery, the dying and rising of Christ. By baptism, we are buried with Christ into death, and with him we rise to new life (Rom. 6: 3-11). The basic Christian spirituality is baptismal, and this shows through in our Christian funeral rites.

Other points made by the Council include acceptance of local traditions and circumstances, including liturgical colors; and a new rite for the burial of infants, with a special Mass. (See Liturgy constitution, nos. 81-82.)

Gradual renewal: In the years following the Council, the Catholic Church slowly renewed its funeral rites:

- **Bible services or wakes**: During the 1960s, these began to be celebrated as the first stage of the funeral.¹ See pages 119-124, below.

- **Experimental rite**: On April 7, 1967, the Canadian bishops decided to publish *The Funeral Rite for Adults: “An Experiment” According to the Instruction of the Post-Conciliar Commission on the Sacred Liturgy* (decision, Bulletin 13, pages 87-88; text of rites, in Bulletin 14, May 1967). Where permitted by the local ordinary, this rite remained in use for several years, and introduced many to the first steps of renewal in the funeral rites.

- **Lectionary for Mass**: On May 25, 1969 the new lectionary was issued in response to the Liturgy constitution, nos. 51 and 35: 1. Many readings were provided for funeral Masses: 7 readings from the Hebrew scriptures (Old Testament); 10 responsorial psalms; 18 New Testament readings; 10 gospel acclamations; and 17 gospel passages. This wealth of scripture is in strong contrast with the small number of texts used before Vatican II (see page 115, above). In Canada, these texts were available in loose-leaf form from Advent 1969; the permanent *Lectionary for Mass* appeared in one volume in 1973.

- **New funeral rites**: The Latin rites were issued on August 15, 1969, and the ICEL white book followed in the next year. In Canada, the French sector worked with the French-speaking nations of the world, and a ritual was issued in 1972. (See also Bulletin National de Liturgie, no. 35: Les Funérailles.) The English sector developed a Canadian adaptation of the Latin ritual, *Catholic Funeral Rite*, in 1973, along with an accompanying booklet, *Rite for a Catholic Wake*.

Further adaptations: Beginning in 1976, the Presentation of Texts Subcommittee of ICEL began working on a pastoral revision of the funeral rites. This work had to take a back seat to more urgently needed adaptations in the Christian initiation of adults and the rites for the sick and the dying. Now that these rites are being issued in “white book” or final form in 1982, ICEL will continue to work on the funeral rites. A worldwide consultation was held as part of this work in 1981.

Baptismal Spirituality

The Second Vatican Council called for reforms in the funeral liturgy so that Christian death may be seen more clearly to share in the paschal mystery of the Lord Jesus (Liturgy constitution, nos. 81-82).

Baptismal spirituality: The effects of our baptism touch our entire life. We are buried with Christ into his death to sin, and are raised with him to new life for the Father (Rom. 6: 3-11). Each eucharist we celebrate can be a renewal of our personal baptismal covenant (Liturgy constitution, no. 9). Forgiveness of sin in the sacrament of reconciliation is a return to our baptismal grace (see Rite of Penance, Introduction, no 2). Because of our baptism, we have both the privilege and the responsibility of sharing in the priesthood of Jesus, and of taking part in his liturgy (Liturgy constitution, no. 14). Everything we do is done for the Lord, and is not in vain (1 Cor. 15: 58): we are able to offer all we do for God’s glory (1 Cor. 10: 31; Col. 3: 17; Eph. 5: 19-20).

Two helpful articles on baptismal spirituality are:

* Baptism: basis of our spirituality, in Bulletin 62, pages 4-8; and
* Our spirituality is based on baptism, in no. 70, pages 184-185.

Baptismal elements in the funeral liturgy: Several elements in the renewed funeral liturgy emphasize the relationship between the baptism and the death of an individual Christian: the white pall, the Easter candle, the blessed water, and the white vestments are reminders of baptism. These elements are explained in the Canadian ritual, and in the notes on pages 125-126, 129, below. As well, the prayer texts in the rite are now more strongly paschal in their wording.

Continuity of Rites

Today’s rites are more flexible, and are seen as part of a series of loosely connected celebrations marking the end of the individual’s pilgrimage. In all these rites, it is desirable to have the family and close friends gather around.

Seriously ill: The person receives the sacrament of the anointing of the sick, along with reconciliation if desired, and communion.

Dying: Viaticum is the sacrament for the dying. The person has the opportunity of being reconciled with God and the Church, of being anointed, and of receiving viaticum, according to circumstances. When the person is near death, we commend him or her to God, and pray that our friend may go forth to meet Christ the Lord. (See Bulletin 57, Rites for the Sick and the Dying.)

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Death: We commend and entrust our friend into the Father’s hands, and pray both for the one who has died and for those who are left behind.

A series of steps: The revised ritual for funerals provides for three distinct stages in the celebrations. The first stage centers around the home or funeral home, the second is in the church, and the third is in the cemetery. According to circumstances, one or more of these is omitted or repeated. There may be several celebrations in the first stage, and sometimes in the second. On occasion, the order of the stages may have been changed because of particular needs. The three stages are discussed in more detail in the next three articles.

Follow-up care: Both after the death and after the funeral, the parish community continues to bear some pastoral responsibilities toward the family.

Helpful reading:


Guidelines for Christian Burial (1977, Ontario Conference of Catholic Bishops, 67 Bond St., Toronto, Ontario M5B 1X5); also available in French, Guide pastoral des funérailles. See review in Bulletin 64, page 188.


Funeral ritual workshops, in Bulletin 40, pages 207-211.


Prayer vigils and wakes

The first step of the Catholic funeral ritual comes between the death and the funeral service. During this period, which may be short or long according to the circumstances of the particular situation and culture, the believing community gathers around the members of the bereaved family to support them by faith, love, prayer, and presence in their time of need.

Sometimes the rites of the first stage may be adapted and celebrated after the funeral and burial, or as an anniversary celebration or memorial rite.

A time of need: The family and close friends normally experience shock and grief when someone dies. This is true even when they have been expecting the person to die, but more so when death is sudden or unexpected. They have to grapple with and accept the fact that John or Maria has died, and is no longer with them as before. They have to accept that he or she is in a totally new way of life, in eternity. They have to work gradually toward realizing that they will have to carry on life without the one who has died.

Loving concern: When a family is touched by death, the relatives, neighbors, and friends quickly come to their aid. They reach out to the family members in various ways: by visiting, talking, listening, weeping. Some bring home cooking. Others step in and help around the house or farm in practical ways, doing chores, looking after babies, helping to prepare meals. Many others feel that they want to help, but don’t know what to do or how to express their deep but unvoiced sympathy.

Liturgy expresses our faith: In the liturgy we continue to express our faith and our love. In our prayers and rites, we come together to meet several needs and express both our feelings and our faith:

• Prayer: We pray for the one who has died, and ask God to have mercy on this person. We pray for his or her family and friends in their time of loss, grief, and sorrow. We pray for all members of the community as we try to live for God, and as each of us faces up to the fact and moment of our own death and entrance into eternity.

• Thanks: We give thanks to our heavenly Father for having called John or Maria to live among us, and for all the good things God has done in and through our friend. We thank God for the example, comfort, guidance, friendship, and joys we have experienced because our friend lived.

• Proclaiming our faith and hope: All people of faith will recognize our participation in these rites as a sign that we believe in the risen Lord Jesus, and that we share the hope that our deceased friend will be raised again by our savior.
Expressing our love: By taking part in the liturgical rites of the first stage, we are showing the bereaved family that we loved the person who died, and that we are giving them our sympathy and understanding in a spirit of Christian love.

Committing ourselves to further action: Christians back up their prayers and rites by action both now and in the future. As we take part in these celebrations, we need to ask ourselves about practical ways of expressing our love in acts of service and concern for the bereaved.

A Variety of Rites

Spirit of these rites: Coming as they do soon after the death, these rites should be filled with a spirit of faith, hope, and love. They should be a support to those in grief, and a source of consolation to their friends.

Scriptural basis: The rites used in the first stage of Catholic funerals are centered on the word of God. Their simplest form is that of listening to the word, reflecting on it, and responding to it in prayer and action.

Variety: Using this simple outline, the Church has developed a wide variety of services, and invites us to design others on these models. Among the various services that can be celebrated are these:

- Morning prayer
- Evening prayer
- Other hours from the liturgy of the hours
- Bible celebrations
- Penance celebrations
- Brief prayer services with family and friends
- A service at the end of the day
- Prayers before closing the casket
- A service before taking the body to the church
- Welcoming the family as they bring the body to the church

When the deceased was a member of a particular organization (such as the Catholic Women's League, Knights of Columbus, Scouting or Guiding movements), it may be fitting to celebrate a brief prayer service with members of the organization, using one of these forms.

Notes on our celebration: In any celebration, the prayer service may benefit from following some of these ideas:

- Ministries: Even in a family group, someone leads the celebration, another reads the scriptures.

- Participation: The members of the group — family or congregation — take part by listening, responding, singing, keeping silent at times, and by their postures and gestures.

- Leadership: Who can lead these services? Any member of the Christian community may do so. In the church or in public celebrations, it is usually a priest.

deacon, or recognized prayer leader. In the funeral home or family home, it may be one of these or a member or friend of the family — anyone who is able to lead the celebration with faith and dignity.

- **Music and singing** are part of the Christian way of worship, both in church services and in those celebrated in other places. Hymns are appropriate at the beginning and end of a celebration. Psalms should be sung when possible (see Bulletin 75, pages 181-182; Catholic Book of Worship II, choir edition, nos. 51 and 85). Guidelines and suggestions for music in wakes are included in CBW II, choir edition, nos. 48-49.

- **Place and time:** These celebrations may take place in the church, home, funeral home, community hall, or other suitable place according to the circumstances. The times are chosen to meet local needs and desires. In general, the rites of the first stage take place before the second stage. When an anniversary is planned, it may follow the format used in any of the prayer services of the first stage.

- **Four examples** of these services are given in the Canadian funeral ritual, Catholic Funeral Rite, nos. 17-51 and 78-109; the community's responses and songs are contained in Rite for a Catholic Wake.

- **Design of these services:** We may use rites given in the ritual or in other suitable publications, or we may design a scripture service for the occasion. Helpful notes on designing these services are given in Catholic Funeral Rite, pastoral notes 6e and 6f, pages 12-14. See also Designing a bible service, in Bulletin 81, pages 226-229 (an updated version of Preparing a bible service, in Bulletin 34, pages 140-143).

**Morning and Evening Prayer**

**Renewal of the Church's prayer:** One of the changes brought about by Vatican II was the renewed emphasis on the liturgy of the hours as the prayer of the whole believing community. In particular, morning and evening prayer are to be recognized as the *hinge or key hours* of our daily prayer, the beginning and end of each day's public worship. Religious communities have already restored morning and evening prayer in their daily rule of life, and parishes are invited to share in this form of prayer as well. (See Liturgy constitution, nos. 83-101.) Further notes on morning and evening prayer are given in Bulletin 58, Day by Day We Give Him Praise, pages 107-111; no. 72, pages 37-43; no. 75, pages 183-184; and no. 80, pages 154-159, 165-167.

**In prayer vigils and wakes:** Morning and evening prayer may be used as community praise of God, prayer for the dead, and prayer for the bereaved family and community. Morning prayer is celebrated only in the morning hours, and evening prayer just before supper or during the evening. These hours of prayer may be celebrated at home with the family, in the church or funeral home, or in another suitable place, and need not be restricted to the place where the body is laid out.

**Why not contained in the ritual?** When the Canadian ritual, Catholic Funeral Rite, was being prepared and issued in 1970-1973, the revised liturgy of the hours had not been published in English. At that time it was felt wiser to wait for a good pastoral experience of celebrating morning and evening prayer as living community prayer.
As a result of this experience, we now have an excellent format for celebrating these hours of praise and prayer. These are given in CBW II, nos. 61-79. The choir edition offers many pastoral notes and suggestions for other appropriate choices throughout the celebrations, and will be of great assistance to all who prepare, lead, and sing morning and evening prayer in celebrations for the dead and on other occasions.

Evening prayer: This hour is celebrated at the end of the day, as daylight is fading. We thank and praise our heavenly Father for the gifts he has shared with us during this day, and for the good he has accomplished in us and through us. We remember Jesus our Lord, who offered his evening sacrifice on the cross, and who offers our prayer to the Father. We pray that Jesus will remain with us during this night.

Celebration at a wake: At the end of the day, the Christian community comes together to praise the Father for building the kingdom through our work today; we also pray for the brother or sister he has called into eternal life. We ask forgiveness as we pray, offering our evening sacrifice of prayer in union with Christ’s sacrifice on the cross. We ask Christ our light to give eternal life to our brother or sister, and to bring our praise and prayer to the Father.

Outline: This outline may be developed locally. Psalms and hymns may be chosen from CBW II or from other sources. Readings may be selected from the Lectionary for Mass, nos. 789-799, or from other suitable scripture passages.

- Introductory rites
  - Hymn
  - Easter candle
  - Opening prayer

- Psalms
  - One, two, or three psalms; each followed by doxology
    - silent prayer
    - psalm prayer

- Word of God
  - Reading
  - Silent prayer
  - Response:
    - homily, meditation,
    - reflective music or singing

- Praise and intercessions
  - Gospel canticle
  - General intercessions
  - Lord’s prayer

- Concluding rites
  - Blessing
  - Sign of peace

Other notes: This may be a simple celebration, with a leader and a reader; or a fuller celebration, with vested ministers, incense, and processions. In every form of celebration, music is appropriate and helpful.

2 The Easter candle may be lighted during the singing of the hymn, or may be carried in procession.

3 The traditional gospel canticle in the Church’s evening prayer is the canticle of Mary, Lk. 1: 46-55; later in the evening, the canticle of Simeon may be used, as in night prayer: Lk. 2: 29-32.
Morning prayer: We celebrate this form of prayer at the beginning of the day, during the morning hours. We give glory and praise to our heavenly Father for creating the world, and for recreating us in Jesus Christ, whom he has raised from the dead. We ask our Father for his help in living this day with Jesus, and we offer our work to the Father for his glory.

• Celebration at a wake: In the morning, the Christian community praises the Father for raising his Son Jesus from the dead, and for giving us a share in his new life. Christ, the light of the world, has overcome the darkness of sin and the power of death: now we ask him to have mercy on our departed brother or sister. We also ask our Father to help us to live this day in his love.

• Outline:

  □ Introductory rites
  □ Psalms
  □ Word of God
  □ Praise and intercessions
  □ Concluding rites

• Other notes: As for evening prayer, page 122, above.

Additional hours: Religious communities, parishes, organizations, or families may wish to celebrate further hours of prayer for deceased members or relatives:

• Night prayer: At the end of an evening of watching, night prayer may be celebrated, as given in Liturgy of the Hours or Christian Prayer, or as found in Night Prayer.5

• Daytime hour: Prayer may be celebrated at midmorning, midday, or midafternoon, using the office for the dead and the complementary psalmody.

• Office of readings: Clergy or religious communities may celebrate the office of readings from the office for the dead or from the daily liturgy. This hour is one of reflection and meditation. It may be celebrated at any suitable hour, but should not try to replace morning or evening prayer by the larger community.

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4 In morning prayer, the Church sings the canticle of Zechariah, Lk. 1: 68-79. On occasion this may be replaced by Glory to God in the highest, or by an anthem such as “Holy is God” (CBW II, nos. 633, 630-632).

Other rites: Community devotions are to flow from the renewed liturgy and to lead us to it (Liturgy constitution, no. 13). The forms described in this article are all appropriate and in keeping with the reformed liturgy.

At other times: Rites for the first stage may also be used at other times, such as the anniversary of death, the birthday or wedding anniversary of the deceased person, family gatherings, or other suitable occasions.

Flexibility: The rites of the first stage are deliberately flexible and free in their format. They may be designed and planned to meet the needs of the bereaved family and the local Christian community. Whether short or long, formal or informal, at home or in church, they are intended to express this community’s faith in Jesus Christ, and their love for him and for all his members.

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Resources:


Rite for a Catholic Wake (1973, CCC, Ottawa).


WAYS OF USING THIS BULLETIN

There are several ways of using Bulletin 84 in your parish or community:

- **A source of positive ideas for better celebration**: Priests, deacons, musicians, liturgy committee members, and others may look for ways of improving their present preparation and celebration of funeral liturgies.

- **Preparing ministers**: If the community wishes to prepare some of its members to work with the bereaved (see pages 134-136), this Bulletin could be placed in the hands of each of these future ministers.

- **Ideas for discussion** in the parish bulletin, or with groups in the worshipping community, may also be found in this issue.

Extra copies of Bulletin 84, Funeral Liturgies, may be ordered from CCCB Publications Service, 90 Parent Ave., Ottawa, Ontario K1N 7B1.
Funeral liturgies

The second stage of the Catholic funeral rites is usually celebrated in the church. This stage consists of a reception or introductory rites, a liturgy of the word or eucharist, and the final commendation and farewell.

Reception or Introductory Rites

These rites vary somewhat according to the types of celebrations that take place, and to the times when they occur:

At an earlier time: In some parishes and in religious communities, the body is brought to the church rather than to the home or funeral parlor. In this case, after the rites of reception, other rites for stage one are usually celebrated.

• Rite of reception: When no other service follows immediately, a brief rite may be celebrated to welcome the family as they bring the body of the deceased to church: see the Canadian funeral ritual, nos. 196-201.

• Leadership: This rite would ordinarily by led by the priest, deacon, or other pastoral leader. When none of these is present, another person may be appointed to preside over the rite of reception.

• Other rites from stage one may be celebrated between the reception and the funeral rites: see pages 119-124, above.

Immediately before a service of the word: If the body is brought to the church and a liturgy of the word is celebrated right away, the reception rite may be included in the introductory rites of this bible service. After the community gathers, the one who presides meets the family at the door of the church. After greeting them and praying with them for a moment, he or she leads them into the church. An opening prayer concludes the introductory rites, and the liturgy of the word continues.

• Leadership: As described above.

When Mass is celebrated right away: In Canada, the priest goes to meet the family at the church door. He greets them and prays briefly with them. As the entrance hymn is being sung, he leads them through the assembled community to the front of the church, and the Mass begins as usual. See Catholic Funeral Rite, nos. 52-54, 57.

Pall: In all these forms of the rite, the casket is covered with a white pall. Words are not necessary at this moment. The rite (no. 13f) provides ideas that may be included in the homily or at other times in catechesis on the baptismal aspects of Christian death (see page 117, above). When the catechumenate was flourishing in the early centuries, the newly baptized were clothed in white robes immediately after
their baptismal bath. The practice of using linen wrappings for the body of a deceased Christian could be interpreted as continuing this baptismal symbolism. Today, the white pall reminds us that it is baptism that joins the living and the dead with Christ our Lord.¹

**Funeral Eucharist**

**Spirit of the celebration:** The celebration is paschal in its tone, referring frequently to the resurrection of Jesus our Lord, and to baptism, by which the dead person and the rest of us share in Jesus' resurrection (Rom. 6: 3-11). Our faith in Jesus and in his final victory over the power of death helps us to bear the sorrow of our friend's death: through our tears, we are able to look up to the Father with trust and love.

**Choice of texts:** There is a wide variety of readings and prayer texts provided in the liturgical books:

- **Lectionary:** The 1969 lectionary gives a wide selection of readings and psalms in nos. 789-799.

- **Sacramentary:** There are also many alternatives and options provided in the sacramentary for funerals: in the Canadian edition, see nos. 457-495; a sample of general intercessions is given in no. 588. Five prefaces (nos. 77-81) are also available.

- **Ritual:** The Canadian ritual provides many texts, references, options, and alternatives to cover a variety of pastoral situations.

- **Selecting suitable texts:** The family is encouraged to help select suitable texts for the funeral Mass and other rites. This should be done early in order that the homilist may have adequate time to prepare the homily in relation to the scripture readings and other rites.

Catholics do not use non-scriptural texts as readings in the celebration of the Mass: we cannot be asked to give the assent of our Christian faith to such texts.

**Readers:** Those who read the first two readings should be trained readers who are able to proclaim the word of God with faith and clarity. Family members or close friends may be chosen to read, but only if they have been trained to do this work, and do it regularly in their own community of faith.

**Music:** In the funeral Mass, music is encouraged as a way of deepening participation and of adding solemnity to the celebration. Guidelines for music in the Mass are given in CBW II, choir edition, nos. 80-103; pastoral notes, hymns, and other useful references for musicians are given in CBW II, choir edition, nos. 48-54. The Alleluia is sung at the gospel acclamation outside Lent; the Lamb of God follows the usual Sunday form: there is no special form for funerals.

**Homily:** The homily at a funeral Mass is based on the readings of the bible which were proclaimed during the celebration. When these have been chosen because they have a common theme suitable for the particular circumstances, the priest

is able to help the people present to understand a little more fully the truths God is teaching us in his word.

In the homily, the priest helps his listeners to see death and their sorrow and grief from God's point of view. The readings show how God has acted in the life of his people in the past; the homily helps this assembly of his people to understand that God wishes to act in their lives now in a similar, though perhaps more spiritual way.

A Christian understanding of death as a sharing in the death and rising of Christ, and a gospel attitude toward death as the invitation to enter into the joy of the Lord, are gradually deepened by all the funeral rites, including the homily.

- **Response in faith**: The presiding priest's aim is to lead this group of people to a response of faith and a willingness to accept God's will; in this way they will be led to live according to his plan for us, which guides us on the way to eternal life.

The homily should be concerned with the word of God as it applies to the listeners. It is important to help believers and non-believers alike to realize that God's word is being spoken now to them, in order that they might be led to respond in faith and to live according to the word and example of the Lord Jesus.

- **Sources of the homily**: The homily flows mainly from the scriptures and the liturgy, and from the life of the celebrating community:

  - The scripture texts proclaimcd in this celebration, particularly the gospel, are the principal source for the homily, where the mysteries of our faith and the guiding principles for Christian living are explained from the scriptures.

  - The liturgy provides rites and texts that can be a source for our preaching, since much of the liturgy derives its meaning from the scriptures (see Liturgy constitution, no. 24).

  - The life of this community — and the meaning of this person's death — is also a source of our preaching, since the people's daily response to the work of the Holy Spirit is a sign of God's continuing work among us. (See Liturgy constitution, nos. 35: 2 and 52. Bulletin 60, *Liturgical Preaching*, is also a useful resource.)

- **No eulogy**: The ritual reminds us that a eulogy is not to be given with or in place of the homily. The word eulogy comes from the Greek (*eu*, good, and *logia*, words, messages), and means high praise of a person given in a speech. Such talks, if given at all, belong in a funeral banquet more than in the liturgy. Catholic tradition does not single out the person who has died; today some priests seem to want to canonize a person at his or her funeral Mass. In the funeral of a priest, the practice of a eulogy is too common, a leftover perhaps from preconciliar practices. (The alleged reason is that this is supposed to promote vocations! Most of those present are long past the age of having a new one.)

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2 Pope John Paul II suggests three characteristics of the homily: it should be biblical, Christological, and ecclesial. See *Notitiae*, vol. 18, no. 187 (January 1982): pages 79-81.

• **Concern for those who do not practise:** The funeral rite asks priests to be especially aware of people who seldom or never take part in the eucharist, or who seem to have lost their faith, but who — on the occasion of a funeral — assist at liturgical celebrations and hear the gospel. Priests must remember that they are ministers of Christ's gospel to all.4

• **Helpful reading:** A study of the funeral readings is contained in “Lectionary for Funerals,” by Reginald H. Fuller, in *Worship* (vol. 56, no. 1, January 1982, The Liturgical Press, Collegeville, MN 56321); see pages 36-63. He points out why a eulogy is not the proper work of the priest (see pages 36-37).

**Other celebration notes:** The singing of the *Alleluia* and of the *Lamb of God* are mentioned above. At the preparation of the gifts, the idea of bringing forward objects that “symbolize” the interests or work of the one who died is not in keeping with the spirit of the Mass of burial: see Bulletin 70, pages 191-192.

• **Eucharistic prayer:** All four eucharistic prayers have commemorations of the living and the dead. In the second and third prayers, there is a special paragraph for the dead, to be inserted into the prayer (see GI, no. 55g).

One of the eucharistic prayers for Masses with children is appropriate when a school child dies, since many of those present for the funeral Mass are children; when a baby dies, however, the majority of the people present for the Mass would be adults, and so one of the first four eucharistic prayers is used.

The kiss of peace may be given as usual, according to the priest's pastoral judgment of the circumstances. The Mass ends with the prayer after communion, and the rite of commendation and farewell follows, as described below.

• **Concelebration:** In the past decade, some families are beginning to think that the number of concelebrating priests is a measure of the honor in which the deceased person was held. Perhaps it would be better for priests to concelebrate at funerals only when they are connected with the family (by pastoral work, relationship, or close friendship). The regulation of concelebration in the diocese is the responsibility of the bishop (GI, no. 155).

**Funeral Without Mass**

Sometimes the second stage of a funeral celebration takes place without the eucharist. This may be done for various reasons:

• **Final days of Holy Week:** From Holy Thursday morning to Easter Sunday evening, the eucharist is not celebrated at a funeral. A service of the word is celebrated, as described below.

• **Pastoral judgment:** “Some people question the anomaly of having the community celebrate the eucharist for the funeral of a person who in life refused to celebrate with the community. Wise pastoral judgment must continue to be used in each case, keeping in mind that the eucharist is celebrated for the community's salvation as well as for the deceased” (see *Catholic Funeral Rite*, no. 7c, page 15).

4 *Rite of Funerals* (see footnote 3, above), no. 18; see also *Catholic Funeral Rite*, no. 2c, page 8.
**Celebration**: See Canadian funeral rite, no. 55. The celebration takes the form of a service of the word:

- **Reception**: See Canadian funeral rite, nos. 52-54.
- **Introductory rites**: Entrance song, symbols, opening prayer (rite, nos. 136-168).
- **Liturgy of the word**: As it would be celebrated during the eucharist, or using a bible service: readings, silence, response in song, reflection or homily, prayer of the faithful.
- **Commendation and farewell**: As in rite, nos. 61-67; see below.

**Music**: Notes on music are given in CBW II, choir edition, no. 60.

**Leadership**: See above, pages 120-121, 125.

**Vesture**: A priest or deacon wears alb and white stole, and may wear a white cope. A recognized lay minister uses street clothes or other garments approved by the bishop for these occasions.

### Final Commendation and Farewell

This brief rite of farewell concludes the funeral Mass or service of the word. It expresses our love for the person who has died, and brings hope and comfort to the mourners. It consists of these rites:

- **Prayer**: All are invited to pray for the one who has died. The time of silent prayer is important.
- **Symbols**: The white pall is already on the casket from the beginning of the celebration, and the Easter candle is burning brightly. Now the presider sprinkles the casket with blessed water as a reminder of baptism. It is through baptism that we share in the resurrection of Jesus and that we are united in both life and death to the person who has died. Incense is a sign of honor to God and of our respect for the body of the deceased as a temple of the Holy Spirit.
- **Song of farewell**: The Roman ritual hopes that this will be the high point of these concluding rites. This song needs to be sung by all to be effective. Music is provided in CBW II, nos. 56-58. Every parish should make a point of learning at least one of the songs.
- **Prayer of commendations**: With faith and confidence, we entrust our brother or sister to God our Father (rite, no. 65).
- **Dismissal**: The leader ends the celebration by this brief invitation for all to leave in the peace of the Lord Jesus (no. 66).
- **Final chant**: A psalm or hymn may accompany the procession with the body to the church door (no. 67).

**Music**: See CBW II, choir edition, nos. 55-59.

**At the cemetery**: When this rite of commendation and farewell is celebrated at the cemetery, a special order is followed: see Canadian funeral ritual, nos. 189-195.
Prayers in the cemetery

The word “cemetery” comes from the Greek koimeterion, sleeping place, and is derived from koimen, put to sleep, and -terion, a word ending referring to location. “Cemetery” is a Christian term, indicating our faith in the resurrection of the body.¹

In the ancient Roman and Jewish world, cemeteries were placed outside the cities and towns (see Lk. 7: 12), and were respected by all.

Around 215 in Rome, Hippolytus writes that cemeteries are open to the poor. Those who dig the graves are to be paid, and bricks have to be bought for building tombs above the ground level. In the case of the poor, the bishop is to pay these costs from donations given to the Church.

- Catacombs: These were underground caves, hollowed out in the soft tufa — a porous form of limestone — outside the city of Rome. They were used as burial sites, but not as churches during the times of persecution.²

Rites in the Cemetery

Normal rite: The usual celebration in the cemetery is given in the Canadian ritual, nos. 68-77, and follows this order:

Invitation to prayer  
[Blessing of the grave]  
Committal of the body to the earth  
General intercessions  
Lord’s prayer  
Prayers for the assembly  
[Optional rites]  
[Hymn]

Commendation and farewell: When this rite cannot take place in the church for some reason, it is combined with the rite of burial in the cemetery. The Canadian ritual provides a simple solution to the rather complicated directives of the Roman ritual: see Catholic Funeral Rite, nos. 189-195.

¹ See the trial of Dionysius and others in the 250s, described in Eusebius: The History of the Church from Christ to Constantine, translated by G.A. Williamson (1975. Augsburg Publishing House, 426 South Fifth St., Minneapolis, MN 55415); see Book 7, nos. 11 and 13; see pages 295 and 299.

Some notes on celebration: According to local circumstances, which may vary greatly between city and rural parishes, small towns and suburbia, there can be many different ways of celebrating:

- **Blessing of the grave:** In Catholic cemeteries which have been blessed, the blessing of the individual grave is not necessary. In cemeteries which have not been blessed, the priest or deacon blesses each grave at the time of burial. A choice of two formulas is given in place in the ritual (adults, no. 70; children, no. 128). Blessed water may be sprinkled in silence on the grave “if it is the custom.” While it would seem that this practice comes from a time when the water was seen as a protection against evil (see page 108, above), it may easily be interpreted now as a reminder of baptism.

- **Optional rites:** The Canadian ritual provides four optional rites at the end of the service in the cemetery. Any or all of these may be used, according to local customs:
  - Versicle: This is a simple prayer for the deceased.
  - Sprinkling with earth: The priest, and sometimes others, may sprinkle sand or earth on the casket. The words in the ritual are based on Gen. 3: 19.
  - Prayers for the faithful departed: Several prayers are indicated in the ritual. Others may be chosen.
  - Dismissal: The two formulas in the ritual may be adapted if desired. Each provides a simple but definite way of concluding the rite.

- **No burial during winter:** In many rural parishes, burials are not possible once the frost has made the earth as “hard as iron.” The casket containing the body is usually brought to the cemetery chapel, where the usual prayers of the third stage are said. Then the body is stored in the locked vault until spring.

- **Spring burials:** When the frost is gone and the ground is dry enough, the graves are opened and the caskets are buried. In some communities, the families are invited back for the burials, and the third stage rites are repeated; in other communities, the burials take place with only the priest and the gravediggers present.

- **Burial in another place:** When the body is being sent to another city, various rites may be celebrated in the two places:
  - In the place from which the body is being shipped: It may happen that no rites are celebrated in the place of death, especially in the case of a traveller. Or the first and second stages may be celebrated.
  - In the place to which the body is being sent: When the body has arrived, rites from the first and second stages may be celebrated, even if they were celebrated in the other city, or the third stage alone may take place, as the body is being buried.

- **At any time,** it makes no sense to say the graveside prayers of the third stage in the church or funeral home: they are intended for use only in the cemetery.

**Leadership:** In the third stage of the funeral rites, it is usually a priest or deacon who leads the celebration. A recognized prayer leader may also be chosen in their absence.
Cremation

History: Both cremation and burial were practised in the Roman empire when Christianity was founded, but burial — the lot of the poor — was becoming more common. Christians preferred burial or entombment because the body of Christ was placed in a tomb. In the nineteenth century in Europe, cremation began to be promoted once more. Since some non-believers saw this as a way of denying [or even preventing!] the resurrection of the body, the Church reacted strongly against the practice of cremation.

Today: Few people promote cremation for anti-faith reasons; more common ones are humanitarian or environmental. Since May 8, 1963, the Holy Office has removed the general ban against cremation.

Rites: The funeral rites of stages one and two, in the home and church, are celebrated as usual. Prayers and rites for the third stage are given in the Canadian ritual, nos. 184-188; see also pastoral notes, no. 13. These may be celebrated in the crematorium.

○ Note: The rites used over the body of a dead Christian — such as sprinkling and incensing — are done because by baptism this body became the temple of the Holy Spirit. It is not considered correct or appropriate to use these rites over the ashes. When the body has been cremated before the funeral Mass, the usual Mass is celebrated, but without the commendation and farewell: the Mass ends with the final blessing and dismissal.4

○ Disposal of ashes: It is best to bury these as a sign of respect. This may be done using the rites of the third stage (nos. 184-188). Disposal of the ashes by dropping them from an aircraft may be seen as more Hollywood than hallowed; putting them among the tulips or roses in the garden at home or in one's favorite park shows a lack of appreciation for the meaning of a Christian cemetery.

Other Notes

Mass funerals: Sometimes, in the case of a disaster — a fire killing a family or a large number of people; a bus, plane, or train accident; a disaster at sea; an explosion; a hurricane, flood, or tidal wave — special arrangements may need to be made:

○ Ecumenical planning: When people of various denominations are among the victims of the disaster, the clergy, choirs, and members of their Churches will be involved in preparing and celebrating a community funeral rite. Catholic families who wish Catholic rites for their dead may have these celebrated at another time before or after the common burial rites.

○ Public building: When many people are involved, it may be better to have the community rites celebrated in a public building, such as an arena, civic hall, stadium, or other large structure.


4 See reply in Notitiae. no. 126 (January 1977), page 45.
• **Mass burial:** Where bodies are recognizable, they may be given individual burial. When the bodies cannot be clearly identified, they may be buried in a common grave, with a rite prepared and celebrated by ministers of the different Churches involved.

**Burial at sea:** The rite follows the normal rites of the third stage, but the words of the committal prayer (no. 72) may be slightly modified: *We commit his (her) body to these waters.* A reference to Rev. 20: 13 may be appropriate at some time during the rite.

**Denying death:** Particularly in large cities, there is a tendency to deny the reality of death. When the mourners come to the cemetery, sometimes they are ushered into a “chapel,” at a safe distance from the stark reality of a freshly dug grave. When they do go to the graveside, the dirt removed from the grave is carefully covered with artificial grass. The starkness of death, open grave, dirty shovels, gravediggers: we need these realities as an aid to accepting the truth of death. “Let’s pretend” is no way for Christians to act in the face of death.

**Cemetery Sunday:** Some families, communities, and parishes have the practice of observing one day a year — at a fixed date, or when the weather is suitable — for visiting graves in the cemetery. Families visit the graves of relatives and friends, and pray for them and for all the dead. At a public ceremony, a liturgy of the word or eucharist may be celebrated. Some suggestions for prayer and celebration on such an occasion are given in *A Book of Blessings* (1981, CCCB, Ottawa, Ontario K1N 7B1), page 318.

* * *

**On the last day,** Jesus will call all to rise again: the good will enter eternal life, and the evil will enter into judgment (Jn. 5: 28-29). We have been nourished with the bread and drink of eternal life (Jn. 6: 54-58): if we have died in the love of Christ, we will be raised to share his glory.

In the cemetery, the bodies of the dead rest until they hear the call to rise again. By our respect for our cemeteries, we proclaim: *We believe in the resurrection of the body, and in everlasting life.*

* * *

**Helpful reading:**

Several articles on cemeteries are included in *Reforming the Rites of Death,* edited by Johannes Wagner: *Concilium,* no. 32 (1968, Paulist Press, New York and Glen Rock, NY).
Ministries to the bereaved family

Someone in the parish dies. People move into action, help the family through the days between death and burial, talk a bit about the funeral, and then life goes on as usual. Nothing much changes about the way the parish prepares for funerals, celebrates them, or follows them up.

*Is that the way it is in your parish?*

**Need of a special ministry?** Is there need in your parish to call some people to serve others when a member of their family dies?

- **Areas of concern:** Such a ministry could be available to the bereaved family during two main periods:

  - Between death and funeral: During this time the family has to make a number of decisions concerning funeral arrangements, plan or accept various celebrations (including selection of readings and choice of trained readers), and choose a place of burial. As well, the family may need help at home in taking care of infants, handling farm chores, or other special needs. Comforting those who mourn is one of the works of Christian mercy (see Bulletin 42, page 23; no. 53, page 116). How can the parish help its members be more sensitive to the needs of mourners, and more able to be of help to them?

  - After the funeral: Visiting the widow or widower; arrangements for memorials of various kinds (see pages 137-138); month’s mind and anniversary celebrations.

**Advance planning:** One of those things that many busy pastors intend to do some day is to help people plan better for the spiritual and liturgical side of funerals. Too many activities prevent them from doing much about this until the next funeral comes along, and then there isn’t time.

A small group of people could be invited to come together for a meeting or two to discuss the problems and needs of planning funeral celebrations, and to begin educating the parish community about today’s Christian funeral rites.

**Members:** The group would involve a person or two from the liturgy committee, some members of families who have had a death in the past year or so, parents who have lost a child, other interested persons, a priest or deacon. They could meet several times while discussing the needs of the community in the light of this issue of the Bulletin, and decide whether or not they should begin to set up a group to handle this ministry. In this case, they would consult the parish council.
Education: Some areas in which people of the parish may need guidance and formation are suggested here. Others may be added according to local needs.

- **Easter attitudes:** Helping people to recognize that our death is the final entering into the paschal mystery of Christ: see page 100, above. Our faith in the resurrection of the body and in eternal life must color all our practices.

- **Baptismal spirituality:** Our baptism links our life and death with the life, suffering, death, and resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and with the life and death of each Christian: see page 117, above.

- **Symbolism:** A bible or New Testament, a cross or crucifix may be placed on the pall during the funeral rites. Some further points are discussed in the pastoral notes of the Canadian funeral rite, no. 13g.

- **Variety of celebrations in stage one:** This variety is described in pages 119-124, above. Which ones of these celebrations (we are not limited to one) could be used in some funerals in this parish?

- **Wake in the church?:** The possibility of having the wake in the church the night before the funeral Mass could be explored. Is there an area in the church which could be used for this? What effects would this have on other regularly scheduled celebrations?

- **Alternatives for celebrations in stage two:** See pages 125-129, above. Do some of these apply at times in your community?

- **Working for better celebrations:** Some ways include developing the nucleus of a choir for wakes and funerals (see Canadian funeral ritual, no. 12b, page 19), training several groups of servers, having trained readers — all able to come to funerals celebrated during the day.

- **Costs and display:** Members could discuss costs of funerals, using educational materials provided by local undertakers, and share these with others. Are local practices tending to a display that is alien to the spirit of Christian funerals?

- **Church and provincial regulations:** Both Church and government (at the municipal and provincial levels) have regulations concerning burial and cemeteries. These could be studied as they apply to the people of this parish community.

- **Resources:** Some useful resources for the study group:
  - Pastoral notes: In the Roman ritual; and in the Canadian funeral ritual, Catholic Funeral Rite, pages 7-26.

  - Guidelines: Those issued by the bishops of Ontario are mentioned on page 118, above, as are guidelines for the Archdiocese of Milwaukee. Does your diocese have similar guidelines?

  - Helpful reading is given at the end of this article and throughout this issue of the Bulletin.

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Other concerns: Perhaps the study group may have some suggestions to make to the parish liturgy committee on the celebration of November 2 and November 11 in the community; on ways of marking the anniversary of death in a family and in the parish; on visiting the local cemetery as a parish group once during the year, or of encouraging families to do so in larger centers.

* * *

Helpful reading:


BULLETINS FOR THIS YEAR

After consultation with the Episcopal Commission for Liturgy and the National Council for Liturgy, these topics have been chosen for the National Bulletin on Liturgy for 1982:

* No. 82: January Eucharist: Worship ’81
* No. 83: March Steps to Better Liturgy
* No. 84: May Funeral Liturgies
* No. 85: September Advent in Our Home
* No. 86: November Lent in Our Home

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Remembering

How will I be remembered when I am dead? How can we remember John or Maria? These questions come naturally to us. This article discusses some positive approaches toward remembering those who have gone before us, marked with the sign of faith in Christ our Lord.

Mass Stipends

The following notes are taken from the minutes of the National Council for Liturgy, meeting April 27-29, 1977:

6f Stipends (see 1976: minute 3p): The stipend question is a big one, involving or touching several disciplines. It is also a touchy question that no one likes and no one wants to tackle. In its discussion, the Council noted the following points:

• Some dioceses are beginning to drop “stole fees” for the priest in baptism and other sacramental celebrations. Any offerings made by the people go directly to the parish or other charitable cause, such as the missions. This is a good step forward.

• Stipends have to be seen in their theological context. A stipend was justified by the medieval concept of the “fruits” of the Mass. It is considered as a donation to cover the material needs of the celebration (yet currently, these are usually taken care of by the parish or community, not the priest); the donor is a real participant in the Mass celebrated for his or her intention, and yet the donor’s benefits depend on his or her dispositions, active participation, and presence.

• Terminology: A better word than “stipend” would help it to be understood more correctly. Some people are still talking about “buying a Mass,” or asking, “how much does a Mass cost?” Terms such as offerings, Mass offerings, donations would help to avoid some errors.

• Some reasonable alternatives are needed to the stipend system. Among those discussed by the Council members:
  
  □ In the mind of the people, a Mass offering is an external sign of their inner gift to God. Their gift includes much more than money. If the stipend system is replaced, some other means must be available to express their inner giving in an external way.

  □ Instead of a “reservation system” for Masses, the idea was mentioned of diptychs or a book listing all the names of those for whom this Mass is being offered. One member described how one parish solved the November remembrances of the dead: a dignified book was placed on a stand near the sanctuary, and all could write in the names of their dead. The idea was popular, and no money was involved.

  □ Other gifts or expressions of sympathy could be developed: besides gifts for the needs of the poor, hymn books, a sacramentary or lectionary, or other liturgical books could be donated to the church in memory of a deceased person. (In the past this has been done with chalices, vestments, windows, statues, communion railings, and other material needs.) The idea of a living memorial remaining in continual use merits further exploration.

  □ It is desirable for the donor to be present and to participate fully when the Mass he or she offered is being celebrated. Having “absentee donors” is not the best way.

  □ “What about the missionaries?” This question is always mentioned when stipends are discussed. Apparently many of them depend on stipends for their living. In the average parish in the more affluent parts of Canada, only the “leftover” stipends are channelled to the missions. A better solution would be

1 The National Council for Liturgy is an advisory group to the Episcopal Commission for Liturgy and the National Liturgical Office, English sector.
to give all the stipend money to the missions as a straight gift after the Masses have been celebrated. The whole question of mission support by parishes needs much more attention and examination of conscience.

- **Salary system:** One of the roots of the stipend system is the manner in which the salary of the diocesan clergy is computed. If an adequate salary were paid, increased at least by the amount of Mass stipends normally received each month, the stipends could be given directly to the parish. This has already been done in some cases of stipends for sacramental celebrations in some dioceses.

- The Council is aware that support of the clergy is a necessary part of the life of the Church on earth, but hopes that a better way than stipends can be developed. With these minutes the Council hopes that diocesan senates, pastoral councils, and liturgy commissions will begin to discuss the question more fully in its practical, local implications.

Are there some areas for discussion that your community could consider?

**Other Memorials**

**Living memorials:** These are gifts, given in memory of the deceased person, to benefit the living. Such gifts include:

- **Gifts to organizations that serve:** To medical research organizations (e.g., Canadian Heart Fund, Canadian Cancer Society); to youth organizations (e.g., Boy Scouts of Canada, Girl Guides of Canada); scholarships; money to libraries to purchase books. Catholics might also wish to have gifts made to missionary work (e.g., The Catholic Church Extension Society of Canada), or to their own diocesan funds for education, seminary training, or other good causes.

- **Gifts to the parish:** After consulting with the pastor and the parish council, special envelopes could be made available for people who wish to offer gifts to the parish in memory of the dead. Such gifts could include a lectionary or sacramentary; hymnals;2 bibles, New Testaments, or psalm books for the community or groups in it; vestments; other needs for worship. On occasion, a sanctuary lamp may be burned in memory of the person, or flowers donated in his or her memory.

**Other memorials:** As well as giving cut flowers and plants, which last for such a short time, people may wish to consider other gifts:

- **Memorial cards:** Prepared with the consent of the family, these should be in keeping with the Church's paschal faith, and not be gloomy in tone.

- **Tombstone or memorial plaque:** Friends may wish to share with the family in having a modest stone or plaque. Some sign of our belief in resurrection and salvation through Jesus Christ should distinguish our tombstones from those of people who do not share our Christian faith.

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2 Gummed two-color bookplates are available for memorial donations of copies of *Catholic Book of Worship II*. They are of an attractive design, and read: *This book has been donated by — in memory of —.* These bookplates may be obtained in packages of 100 from CCCB Publications, 90 Parent Ave., Ottawa, Ontario K1N 7B1.
Brief book reviews

Parish Path Through Lent and Eastertime, by Dan Coughlin, Ron Lewinski, and Gabe Huck (1981, Liturgy Training Publications, 155 East Superior Street, Chicago, IL 60611): paper, 72 pages. $2.25 (six or more, $1.50 each).^1

This book is written for the liturgy team and parish staff. It sets out to emphasize the baptismal elements of Lent, as required by the Liturgy constitution, no. 109, and to show that the liturgy of Lent and the Easter season provides an adequate program for parish renewal each year. The 40 days of Lent and the 50 days of the Easter Season are focussed on the Easter vigil. This booklet explores the paths of Lent and Eastertime, and offers a non-eucharistic liturgy for one gathering a week in Lent.

Parishes which take the lenten and Easter seasons seriously will benefit from using this booklet in their planning. Recommended for liturgy committees, clergy, religious, and catechists.

Paschal Mission 1981 (1981, Liturgy Training Publications, 155 East Superior Street, Chicago, IL 60611): paper, illustrations. 8½ by 5½ inches, 46 pages. $2.50 (10-29 copies, $1.90; 30 or more, $1.50 each).

In this publication, the Archdiocese of Chicago offers us a combination prayerbook and workbook for Lent and the Easter season. A simple form for daily prayer between Ash Wednesday and Pentecost is outlined. Each Sunday lists the readings assigned in the lectionary, and provides a meditation and some questions. Weekday readings are indicated, and there is space provided for writing down personal reflections.

This booklet is intended to help individuals, families, and groups benefit from the renewal aspects of the lenten and Easter seasons. An updated issue is ready for year B, 1982, and one will be prepared for year C. Recommended as a helpful resource.


In the past two decades, many of the major Christian Churches have come closer to one another in their liturgical celebrations and in their theology of worship. Dr. Newman, a professor of worship at Emmanuel College in the University of Toronto, quotes Roman Catholic, Orthodox, Anglican, and Protestant writers in this brief study, as he seeks to help members of the United Church of Canada to see the benefit and importance of celebrating eucharist each Sunday. At the Reformation, attempts were made to move from yearly to weekly communion; as a compromise, quarterly communion services were held with services of the word on other Sundays.

It is only in this century that Catholics have returned to the practice of the early Christians of receiving communion in each Sunday celebration. We should rejoice to see a similar move in other Christian Churches. Study of this book will help us all to understand our common heritage better. Recommended for clergy, liturgy committees, and liturgy students.

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1 Prices for U.S. publications are given in U.S. dollars, unless otherwise noted.
Keeping Lent and Eastertime (1981. Liturgy Training Publications. 155 East Superior Street, Chicago, IL 60611): paper, approximately 4 by 5 inches, illustrations, 22 pages. $1.00 (25-99, 75¢; 100-499, 50¢; 500 or more, 35¢ each).

This is a little prayerbook with simple forms for morning, evening, and night prayer during the Easter cycle, from Ash Wednesday to Pentecost Sunday. Lists of readings are given for the Sundays and weekdays of Lent and Easter seasons, as well as table prayers for these times. A useful booklet for encouraging prayer and reflection by individuals and families. Recommended.

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The Three Days: Parish Prayer in the Paschal Triduum, by Gabe Huck (1981, Liturgy Training Publications, 155 East Superior Street, Chicago, IL 60611): paper, 6½ by 10 inches, illustrations and diagrams, 123 pages. $5.95 (five or more copies, $4.75).

This book replaces Holy Week in the Parish, and offers many practical suggestions and helps to celebrate the Church's present rites. It explores the liturgies from Holy Thursday evening to Easter Sunday, and looks at problems and ways of solving them. Very clearly it shows planners, ministers, and clergy how to bring out the power and beauty of the liturgy by being faithful to the rites and their meaning. Also included are patterns for adult baptismal garments, and ideas for making the Easter candle and eucharistic bread.

Strongly recommended as a valuable guide for liturgy committees, ministers, and clergy.

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The Institute of Liturgical Studies meets each year in the week before Ash Wednesday. This booklet contains the eight papers given at the 1980 Institute, and is the first of an annual series. The talks cover the theology, history, ethics, and contemporary pastoral renewal of Christian initiation in the Churches. The speakers include well known teachers of liturgy in the United States.

Double-space typed copy has been reduced for easy reading. Articles are clear and concise, and will be found useful for discussion by parish liturgy committees, clergy, and students of liturgy. Recommended as a good introductory study.

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A mother shares 25 two-page reflections on different moments in the life of her growing family. Birth, school, sickness, celebrations, and other important moments bring reflections and moments of prayer that may be shared by other families. This simple, light, and reverent book is recommended for parents, and for the clergy and catechists who serve them. We hope the author will write further booklets of this type in the years to come.

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This is vol. 2, no. 1 of *Liturgy*. Previous issues were reviewed in Bulletins 77, 81 and 83. This issue speaks lovingly of good food, of feasting, of fasting. Families and communities are invited to reflect and revel, to pray and to work for social justice. Biblical, pastoral, and family perspectives help the reader to enter into the articles easily and joyfully. Two pages of Italian recipes from Calabria are included. "Bread and Wine, the Eucharistic Bread," is by Dr. J. Frank Henderson, chairman of Canada's National Council for Liturgy. Photographs, decorative designs, and uncluttered layout add to the pleasure of this book.

Recommended for liturgy committees, catechists, clergy, liturgy students, and for families who want to grow in feasting and fasting with the people of God.

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**Meeting House to Camp Meeting: Toward a History of American Free Church Worship from 1620 to 1835**, by Doug Adams (1981. Modern Liturgy-Resource Publications, Box 444, Saratoga CA 95070; and The Sharing Co., PO Box 2224, Austin TX 78768-2224): paper, about 6 by 9 inches, bibliography, index, 158 pages (reproduced from typescript). $6.95, plus $1.00 for postage and handling.

In this well written study, Dr. Adams provides us with a clear introduction to the origins and development of Free Church worship in the United States. Free Churches include Puritans, Separatists, Baptists, Quakers, and some Methodists and Disciples of Christ. He points out the riches of their earlier worship patterns, including frequent communion, preaching on social issues, and strong lay involvement in preaching and in prayer. Going beyond the narrow restrictions imposed in the nineteenth century, the author opens new areas of research for Catholic and Protestant students in the strong liturgical roots of Free Church worship. This interesting book is recommended for all who are interested in liturgical and ecumenical studies.

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A small but simple book which can introduce us to the spiritual life and invite us to take part in it: this is the big promise made by the author at the beginning of this book. He writes it for Christians who seek peace of mind in order to hear God's call, and for others who seek spiritual freedom. Using our Lord's words, "Do not worry" (Mt. 6: 31), he looks at the bad effects of worry in our life, and at Jesus' offer of new life in his Spirit. Nouwen concludes by showing us how two spiritual disciplines, solitude and community, will free us from our worries and help us to be open to the Spirit in his work of creating us anew. Recommended for all who want to grow in the life of the Spirit of God.

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The author is a lay member of the Eastern Orthodox Church, born in Russia and living in Finland. He shares the riches of the Eastern tradition of liturgy and theology with the reader, and helps us to appreciate the power of prayer, silence, and material creation in our lives.

Every Christian who is seeking to grow in love of Jesus can benefit from reflective reading of this sincere book. Its 26 brief chapters of three to five pages offer many helpful thoughts for meditation and action. Printing and binding help to make it a pleasure to hold and read. Recommended.

The author combines his experience as a pastor and as a psychologist in this book for those who preach the message of Jesus in the Christian pulpit. Aware of the meaning and power of words, Dr. Jackson helps the preacher to understand the psychology of the one who speaks and of those who listen. Modern needs, scriptural insights, and the practical preaching of Jesus himself are combined in a positive presentation for today’s homilist. Careful reading of this book, a chapter at a time, will reward the preacher with ideas on which he or she can reflect with benefit. Recommended as a beneficial book for all who are preaching the word of God.

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Dr. Beare is professor emeritus of New Testament studies in Trinity College at the University of Toronto. In this volume he brings together the results of many studies of Matthew’s gospel. The introduction describes the background, dating, authorship, and structure of the gospel. He provides a translation of each section, and a detailed commentary on it. It is similar in this way to The Anchor Bible, vol. 26 on Matthew, although Beare’s layout is more condensed. Those who preach will find this a useful book, especially in year A, the year of Matthew, and any other time that selections from this gospel are proclaimed.

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A Hebrew scholar looks at the older books in the Hebrew scriptures (which we know as the Old Testament), and leads us to explore these works as examples of the art of narrative or story-telling. He describes the artistry that goes into the discourses, the choice of words, the repetitions, and the juxtaposition of events and dialogues: “The religious vision of the Bible is given depth and subtlety precisely by being conveyed through the most sophisticated resources of prose fiction” (page 22).

Well written and clear in its examples, this book provides an interesting and illuminating introduction to narrative art in the scriptures. The book will be of particular interest to all who want to grow in their appreciation of the human arts that have contributed to the artistic editing of the scripture texts. Those who preach from the Old Testament pericopes in the lectionary will also be helped by a study of the human artistry with which God’s word is clothed. Recommended.

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The Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults, the “RCIA” of this book’s subtitle, has been among us for ten years now, but we are merely beginning to understand its meaning and its widespread implications for parish life and sacramental living. Fr. Dunning explores the catechumenate in history and its shape today, and helps us to grasp it as a process. At each step of the catechumen’s journey, the book speaks about the candidates, the ministers, and the liturgies and catechesis involved. An introductory chapter looks at the basic assumptions underlying the catechumenate. Helpful diagrams are included here and there in the book.

Three earlier books from this series were reviewed in Bulletin 74. pages 143-144. This one will be of great practical value in helping clergy, catechists, seminarians, and liturgists to understand and promote the catechumenate and its principles in today’s parishes. Strongly recommended.

The material in this book was originally presented as a series of articles in The Michigan Catholic. The author, now Bishop of Saginaw, has given us 23 concise, thoughtful, and practical sets of reflections that will help lead us to better liturgies. His emphasis on reverence is coupled with an easy-to-read style. Every parish and religious community would benefit greatly if copies of this little book were in the hands of clergy, ministers, and liturgy committee members, and available to the community. Recommended.


This book offers a step-by-step description of a way to invite Catholics who have dropped out from active membership. After preparations, six evenings are offered for discussion about God, self, Church, prayer, Catholic life, and joy with Jesus. One-page worksheets are provided for duplicating for use in these sessions. While we cannot approve of the idea of usurping the Sunday readings and homily for this project over six weeks, the rest of the program offers some positive ideas for concerned parish communities. Recommended.


Fr. Duffy begins by asking this embarrassing but penetrating question of us and our liturgy: Why is there so much worship and so little commitment? (page xii). He leads us to show our commitment of faith in the way we live and serve, and encourages us to let this life be reflected in our liturgies. Sincere worship gets involved in our experience of life at its different stages. We must not use our rituals as a way of avoiding saving contact with God's redeeming presence. As we reflect on the meaning of the sacraments of initiation, on eucharist, and on reconciliation, we are helped to see that it is God's presence, "if honestly welcomed and proclaimed, which prevents us from becoming content with our limited self-gift" (page 181).

This is a book that needs careful reading by clergy, catechists working in the catechumenate and in other forms of adult education, and by liturgists, even if it is the only book they read this year. Recommended.


This review looks at vol. 2, no 1, January 1982. This issue contains three articles: a review essay on the meaning of Christian priesthood and on the admission of women to holy orders, by the editor; a translation of the second part of an article by René Kieffer, on Christ's resurrection and ours in Pauline thought; and Easter in the early Church, by the editor. The editor also reviews 13 books.

Fr. Sabourin is a scripture scholar, well known for his book, The Psalms: Their Origin and Meaning. The articles in this issue of RSB are well written, and bring together for the reader a broad approach to the topics. The book reviews vary from the length of this review to about twice as long, and cover scriptural and theological books. The typeface is clear, but the pages seem crowded, and one article runs into another: a larger type for article titles might help. Recommended for clergy who want to continue to be exposed to current thinking and recent books in the fields of theology and scripture; it will also be helpful in college and community libraries.
Alive in His Mercy: for Individuals Celebrating the Sacrament of Reconciliation, edited by Jerome Herauf (1981, Novalis, PO Box 9700, Terminal, Ottawa, Ontario K1G 4B4): paper, 5¼ by 7 inches, photographs, 56 pages. 95¢, bulk prices for 10 or more.

Prayers and scripture readings help the penitent to reflect and to be open to the work of the Spirit in bringing us back to God's love. The format and variety of optional prayers and forms are clearly laid out, and prayers of thanksgiving and reflections are helpful for those who want to continue to renew their lives. Adults will benefit from using this book.

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This booklet contains nine brief services for use by families and individuals during the time between death and the funeral service. The fact that readings are included in place will encourage people to read along instead of calling for readers who can proclaim God's word with faith. Helpful for private use.

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"Parents are the first teachers of the faith to their children; the home is the little Church where the faith is first shared." Mrs. Curran takes familiar thoughts like these and helps parents to make them happen in their homes, with their children. This classic book, now in its fourth revision since 1970, is for parents who learned the "old" way, but who want to share the faith as lived by the Church today. Positive, practical, and filled with faith and joy, this book is highly recommended to parents, catechists, and clergy.

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First, We Pray: A New Agenda for Parish Liturgy, by David E. Nowak (1980, Celebration Books, PO Box 281, Kansas City, MO 64141): paper, photographs, 42 pages, $1.95.

Liturgy is prayer, coming from our hearts and our lives. Those who plan and lead liturgies need to be people of prayer, able to share their faith, prayer, and life with all the community. As we celebrate liturgical time, we proclaim the saving mystery of Jesus, and work with him to build the kingdom and save the world. Recommended as a reflection book for liturgy committees and clergy.

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* Organ accompaniment, about 8½ by 11½ inches, 57 pages: 1£2.75.
* Cassette: includes St. Benedict Mass, and about half of the music from this supplement: 1£4.50.

This is a supplement to the Irish hymnal of a few years ago, Alleluia! Amen! It contains the St. Benedict centenary Mass (1980), and 19 hymns and psalms for Mass, office, and other occasions. Many of the compositions are Irish, and some are from other parts of Europe. The cassette is clearly recorded, and presents the music well. Choirs and school groups may wish to use this music for special occasions.