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The Order of Christian Funerals
National Bulletin on Liturgy
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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’s life of worship and prayer.

Editorial commentary in the Bulletin is the responsibility of the editor.

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The Christian Funeral

It has been approximately three years since the publication of the Canadian edition of the *Order of Christian Funerals*,¹ and we are still learning to use the rich resources that this liturgical book contains. We are also still learning to develop the ministerial skills and attitudes assumed or required to celebrate funerals well, help the dying, and journey with our bereaved sisters and brothers.

To assist the Canadian Church grow into the *Order of Christian Funerals*, a national conference on this subject, "Through Death to Life," was held in Ottawa in May 1992. This issue of the Bulletin is based in part on some of the presentations at that conference by two of the resource persons, Archbishop James Hayes and The Reverend Richard Rutherford. The content of one of the workshops, on parish bereavement ministry, is also included.

Richard Rutherford is professor of theology and pastoral liturgy at the University of Portland, Oregon. His doctoral research concerned the history of the funeral liturgy, and he is an acknowledged expert on the Order of Christian Funerals. Some of his publications are as follows:


"The funeral liturgy and the grieving process" *Assembly* 10 (1984) 238-240

"The Order of Christian Funerals: A study in bereavement and lament" (with Robert Sparkes), *Worship* 60 (1986) 499-510


Readers will also wish to consult the December 1989 issue of the *National Bulletin on Liturgy*, entitled "The Christian Funeral."

¹ (Ottawa: Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops 1990), 423 pages
Religious rituals are the human family's effort to deal with the puzzling mysteries of life. At no time is this human family more puzzled and distraught than when it faces the death of its members. So it is that in every part of the globe, in every culture and in every age of human history, there is some form of ritual response to death and a ritualized way of coping with its consequences.

When someone dies, what is our most frequent, common, and natural response? What does one think when someone dies? Is it not, "I don't know what to say." "I don't know what to do?"

The Order of Christian Funerals accepts the fact of death, and precisely because we cannot explain it or understand it, offers us rituals and symbols to help us deal with the inevitable mystery.

What must be done? It is a basic principle of liturgy that ritual dictates what must be done when decisions are impossible and when the community must assume responsibility for individuals who are unable to function because of what has occurred to them.

Journey or departure: The ritual setting in which the community of the church ministers to its dying, dead, and grieving members is not special or unique. It is found everywhere and among every kind of people. It is simply the symbolic ritual of a journey or departure. The funeral procession is the clearest expression of this setting, but there is more to it than that.

A journey involves more than travel. Any journey also entails preparation, accompaniment, farewells, departure, and a new situation resulting from the absence. Our reflection and study of the funeral rite invites us to deal with the various aspects of the death of a Christian and to understand and appreciate what the church has to offer. We cannot limit the ritual journey to the period from the time of death until the burial. The church in her loving care for her suffering, distressed, and grieving family has always gone far beyond those brief days of high emotional and ritual intensity.
Ministry to the Dying

**Abandonment and consolation:** To appreciate the full sense of what the Lord is saying to us through the liturgy of the Church, we should begin our journey with the sick person whose illness indicates that death may be imminent. Here is where the serious preparation for the journey begins. A person who is about to die almost always feels abandoned, isolated, alone. They are cut off from the contacts of active life and want someone to "be there" and to "hear" something. The pastoral liturgy of the church tries to cancel this solitude and isolation in various ways. It offers consolation. Look at the word: con-SOLA, con-SOLO. Isolation and solitude need consolation: someone to be with the one who is alone.

**Jesus in the church** is the one who comes at these moments in the person of fellow Christians. Jesus gives the gift of the Holy Spirit, the consoler, in the sacraments and in the prayers of the church.

**The Lord visits his people** to console them in preparation for the journey, by the rites of visiting the sick, by the sacrament of anointing, by viaticum which is the sacrament of the dying, and by the prayers of commendation of the dying person.

**The mourners:** These ministrations seem to be for the dying person, but the ones who are being left behind need preparation and assistance too. They have a journey to make as well. The dying person goes from the land of the living to the home of the departed. The mourners must move from the life of husband or wife or parent or daughter or son or close friend to the life of a person without these relationships. These are new, strange, irreversible, and usually frightening experiences. They are the kind of situations where we want someone who cares and understands to be with us – to CONSOLE us.

**Desolation:** For the dying persons especially, but for the others also, it is not only being alone, but also the fear of being abandoned. This brings on de-SOLA-tion. It may be a huge magnification, to immense proportions, of the infant's fear that the mother will go away and never come back. Children either learn to adjust and accept the separation, or they cry out in anger or sadness and make a fuss. They must learn to trust in the parents' return.

**Adults' outbursts of anger** may be a desperate plea not to be abandoned. Strangely, though, it is the angry protest made to show the need for people, that may drive them away.

**Dying and bereaved:** Because the experiences and the needs of the dying and the bereaved are so similar, we need to look at how we ought to care for the seriously ill before we look at the liturgy of the funeral rites.

**Keeping the secret:** The way in which we usually are forced to care for the seriously ill in hospitals often produces and increases the kind of isolation and loneliness that is their greatest fear. Add to this the elaborate and often shameful playacting that is performed to "keep the secret." The dying person must give no indication of what is known to be inevitable; the family, friends and caregivers must play their parts well too. There is a real conspiracy of deathly silence that is positively killing. The single biggest error is to "protect" the dying person from knowing.
Evasion and lies: All that effort and energy might have been used to comfort, console and support. Instead, it is organized to protect the lie! Consequently, isolated by evasion and lies, the patient is driven out of the community before his/her time.

Getting ready to depart: How different it is when patient, family, and friends are able to deal with what is actually dominating their lives. If we go back to the scenario of journey, the dying persons are able to say and do the things that are always required before a departure. Otherwise, there is always that remaining troubling question: "I wonder why (someone) didn't do, say, mention...?" How much more necessary and important are the words, thoughts, needs, attentions of the person who is about to make the journey out of this life. How much more satisfying, more Christian, more loving, to be able to say, "I was able to settle an old problem, explain a misunderstanding, correct a false idea, give or receive forgiveness."

The anointing of the sick then becomes a sacramental, gentle, reassuring, soothing, touch from the hand of Christ continued and made real by the presence of the members of the family, friends and community.

The viaticum, sacrament of the dying — literally "on the road with you" — is spiritual food for the journey shared by family members to say, "We're with you on the way!"

The prayers of commendation of the dying, which are consoling as well for the ones left behind, are also a sign of Christ's continuing presence. In the end all can say, "he or she died aware of being loved and accepted and understood."

The Mystery of Death

Then death comes. Surely we do not have to be convinced that "to everyone upon this earth, death cometh soon or late." It is inescapable, but it is still mysterious and hard to accept. "Preparation for death" never becomes easy. The early Christians expected an explanation from St Paul, and he wrote a long section of his first letter to the church at Corinth on the subject. He taught clearly about the resurrection, and then concluded by saying, "When you understand how a seed dies and produces new life, you will understand the mystery of death."

Our scientific age, with its demand to know and understand everything, is no more successful than any other in dealing with death. Unable to explain or control it, many simply try to deny death, to act as if death does not exist or will not occur, or in the end to defy it. This is a useless and a hopeless exercise.

Helping to cope: The Order of Christian Funerals, on the other hand, while it does not solve the mystery, does offer an approach and a response that is both useful and hopeful. It helps persons to cope with this deeply mysterious and upsetting event and it gives them hope to face the future supported by the faith and strength of a community.

Trying to deny death: We are only too familiar with the attitude, covered over with a hundred euphemisms, that tries to deny the reality of death. It is an
effort to live and act and appear to all the world as if death did not exist; to deal with the end of a person's life by denying it in every way. So, in the name of "not upsetting people" they refuse to have a funeral or to do any of the things usually associated with the death of a family member or friend.

Death is the final act of life: We need to help people realize that death is not a "disease," it is not the failure of medical treatment, it is not a mistake, it is not the result of things going wrong. It is our destiny. It is the final, crowning act of every life. It is the one thing we ought to do best of all. It is the time when one should be able to receive the best help and support from others.

Christian Burial

To reassure the living: The Christian rites which surround death and burial are not only to help the dying and the dead, but also to reassure the living that there is indeed something more: a new and better life where there is no more pain or weeping or any such thing.

What do we need to know? As we prepare to meet as Christians, members of the church, or just as neighbours, to help people deal with the reality of death, both before and after it occurs, what do we need to know? How much can we know? What and how shall we communicate? On what shall we base our attitudes?

A guide and resource: We should expect the book, Order of Christian Funerals, to give us some guidance here, and that is certainly the case. Various moments and situations are indicated as appropriate times for ritual prayer, and we are given many options from which to choose which will be appropriate.

Faith in action: But we need to keep in mind that what we have here is liturgy; and liturgy is theology in action. If theology is faith looking for understanding, liturgy is faith looking for action. What is the faith behind our liturgical celebrations of funerals?

Our rites should reflect what we believe, but they are not simply teaching tools or theology lessons. They are a very deeply human way of expressing the thoughts, attitudes, and feelings that words alone cannot communicate.

Are we hiding death? One of the first things we have to ask is whether our funeral rites really accept the absolute basic fact of death itself and its inevitability. Is there a danger that we will be caught up in the general attitude in society that wants to hide, cover up, and deny death?

This could happen in two ways. First, all our attention in our funeral rites is directed to the resurrection of Christ. That in itself is good and it is intentional; it is a correction of the former emphasis that saw death as a tragedy which opened the way for more suffering in purgatory. The emphasis on resurrection and on our sharing in the resurrection of Christ is correct and good. But for many people, resurrection is a strange and unfamiliar word. Are we putting death in the margin by this association? In the minds of many people, are we making the death they see, as unreal to them as the resurrection they do not see?
A momentous event: The other way in which we could be entering into the conspiracy to hide the reality of death, is that we fail to make it look like the momentous event that it is. Instead, we make it appear to be only a brief pause in the process of life, in which a Christian simply moves from life on earth to the risen life promised us in a kingdom still to come.

The funeral rite, in an effort to be sensitive to the feelings of family and friends, and also to teach the meaning of sharing in the resurrection of Jesus through baptism, may seem to side-step the issue of death, to concentrate entirely on resurrection.

The reality of death: To understand and appreciate the rites surrounding death and burial, we need to be aware, to the extent it is possible, of the reality and the meaning of death. When one visits ancient Christian sites or any cemetery, there are constant reminders in monuments, tombs, and inscriptions of people who died in the faith and for the faith. Why did these people die? Would it not have been more in keeping with the plan of a merciful God for them to have escaped torture and death like the three young men in the fiery furnace, as a reward for their faithfulness?

No human life without death: Mysterious as it may seem, that is not God’s plan. It was not God’s plan for Jesus nor for the followers of Jesus. No one will escape death. To talk about side-stepping death is really to deny the incarnation. Jesus became a real human, the kind of human that dies. If we say we believe that Jesus took human life, we are saying that Jesus accepted to die. There can be no real human life without death.

There are many testimonies that persons who chose to die for others or for a cause, have manifested a complete detachment from physical pain, fear, sadness, loss and revenge. It is as if they achieved maturity and control of their lives so nothing could shake them. They seem to have reached the perfection of what it means to be human.

Jesus is the finest example of all that. The gospels do not show us the failure of God’s power to accomplish its purpose, but rather a personal fulfillment of God’s plan. The death of Jesus reveals the summit of human freedom. Jesus was free to give all. “Into your hands, O Lord, I commend my spirit.” The cross is at the centre of our worship. “Lord, by your cross and resurrection you have set us free.”

The resurrection of Jesus was not a return to the life he lived with his disciples. He did not return to his former human existence, like Lazarus, to die again. He possesses an altogether new life. Now Jesus the human, is free to live and NEVER again die. The universal, impossible dream is fulfilled at last.

That is God’s promise and gift to the followers of Jesus: to be with him, to be like him, to be in him, in the resurrection. He makes those who share his life totally free, free to live and free even to die. The martyrs and others who gave their life for others understood this. So do millions of Christians as they approach their own death or the death of the persons whom they love or take care of.

Prayers after death: This is the setting in which and for which the funeral rite has been developed. Both the ritual for Pastoral Care of the Sick and Dying and the Order of Christian Funerals contain formulas for “prayers after death” which may be used in whole or in part or adapted to suit the occasion, when
the priest or parish minister meets the family for the first time after hearing of a death. This could be, for example, in the hospital, or at home when a visit is made to arrange for the funeral, or at the funeral home. Both family members and priest or other ministers are helped by ritual prayer at this time of high emotion and sensitivity. These prayers for the deceased person and for the family and mourner, are linked with a choice of scripture readings. In addition the ritual includes a litany that contains what I have always found to be a consoling prayer: "Come to his/her aid, you saints of God. Come to meet him/her, angels of the Lord."

**Mourners are not alone:** One of the clear, strong messages of the rite is in the prayer for the dead. Here for the first time, the family and mourners hear the departed referred to as one among the dead. "Eternal rest grant unto him/her, O Lord". It is the beginning of an important process which is one of the challenges of the funeral liturgy. More important, though, is the message through these prayers that the mourners are not alone, that the members of the faith community care about them and want to be with them in their loss.

**The Gathering in the Presence of the Body** is another example of a rite and prayers which may be used for an important moment in the process a family is going through. This rite, which may be new or unfamiliar to many, is of more importance in the common situation where death occurs in a hospital, and family and friends could not be present in any kind of meaningful way. The rite is intended to be carried out in an atmosphere of sensitive concern and confident faith, with particular attentiveness to the needs of the mourners. It will surely be appreciated by the family if the priest can be with them at this highly emotional moment, but that is not always possible and the rite may be led by a deacon or other parish minister. It should be noted that the family will want some time right at the beginning to be alone—in silence or in tears—before they are capable of sharing in ritual prayer. Their feelings must be respected.

**A chance to do something:** The moment and the prayers are significant in the journey process. Again, the family and mourners are brought face to face with the fact that a person dear to them and important in their lives, has died. This gives especially close individuals a chance to "do something" for the one who has died. They may want to place a religious symbol on the casket, to adjust a piece of clothing on the deceased, to make a gesture of affection, to touch the shoulder, or make a sign of the cross on the forehead. Any of these or similar things may be helpful to the ones who wish to do them as they begin to relate in a new way to the one who has died. It can be an important step in the process of acceptance of the fact of death.

**Important times:** Neither of these occasions were included in the former funeral rituals. They are times of high emotion and times when there is special need for consolation and quite often for reconciliation. They are times when individuals, especially the young, need to be helped to cope with their fear at the sight of death or at the sight of a corpse. With the social and technological changes in the way hospital personnel and morticians now deal with the bodies of the deceased, they could be important moments for adapting our funeral rites and practices.

**These or similar times of prayer** may fill a gap in the relationship between parish and family that is left because a priest so seldom is called to celebrate the sacraments in the home of a seriously ill person. People in this stage of
health are now more likely to be in hospital or in a residence for seniors or a nursing home.

As we move to the next stages of the journey in the funeral liturgy, we come to occasions and practices more familiar to all of us. These are the wake or vigil, the funeral Mass and commendation or farewell, and finally, the commitment at the grave. These are the parts or movements in the *Order of Christian Funerals* that we are accustomed to.

**Ministry of the Church**

Before looking at the individual celebrations or parts of the rites, there is one general principle at the beginning of the *Order of Christian Funerals* that deserves special attention.

We generally expect ritual books to set down for us what the bishop, priest, deacon, or other ministers are required or expected to do — and books from the past described in great detail just exactly how they were to do it. The *Order of Christian Funerals* is quite different in this regard.

**Ministry of the whole church:** Very early in the General Introduction which precedes the individual rites and celebrations, the funeral rite has six paragraphs on "Ministry and Participation." What is made very clear in these paragraphs is that the ministry belongs to the whole Christian community. The responsibility rests with the whole assembly of the baptized. It is a clear and outstanding appreciation of Peter's words to the baptized community of his time, "you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood," to the Christian community of today. It takes us back not to Vatican II or to *Christifideles laici*, but back to the very beginnings of the church. Even in Roman times, there were lulls and interruptions in the persecution of Christians. They were tolerated by pagan rulers and citizens, not because of any sympathy for their faith, but because that faith moved them to care for their dead. Even before the Christian religion was tolerated, the large number of Christians who gathered in the cemeteries for rites of burial and consolation, were recognized as good people rendering a valuable service.

**Ministry of priests:** In very clear language, this is what the *Order of Christian Funerals* is asking of us again. These are the kind of things we read in the text. Paragraph 14 sets out the general principle: "Priests, as teachers of the faith and ministers of comfort, preside at the funeral rites, especially the Mass; the celebration of the funeral liturgy is especially entrusted to parish priests." It then goes on to say that "when a priest is not available, the rites of the funeral may be led by a deacon or by a layperson, authorized to act in the name of the Church community."

**A ministry of mutual charity:** This typically canonical sounding directive comes after what I consider to be a more sensitive pastoral statement in paragraph 8. "If one member of the Body of Christ, which is the Church, suffers, all the members suffer with that member" (1 Corinthians 12. 26). For this reason, those who are baptized into Christ and nourished at the same table of the Lord, are responsible for one another. When Christians are sick, their brothers and sisters share a ministry of mutual charity . . . when a member of Christ's
body dies, the faithful are called to a ministry of consolation to those who have suffered the loss of one whom they love . . . the Church calls each member of Christ's body — priest, deacon, layperson — to participate in the ministry of consolation: to care for the dying, to pray for the dead, to comfort those who mourn.

Responsibility of the whole community: "The responsibility for the ministry of consolation rests with the believing community. Each Christian shares in this ministry according to the various gifts and offices in the Church." (n. 9) The General Instruction goes on to remind priests and pastoral ministers of the necessity and importance of instructing the whole community of their responsibility, and how they may carry it out.

The ministry of consolation is based on the gospel, appropriately enough, and even the gospel text which should inform our ministry is given. It is John 11. 23-27, the story of Lazarus who was raised from the dead. The mourners are saying to us, in a way: "If you had been here, my brother would not have died." And the consoler — be that an individual, a community, or the whole Church, must reply, "Your brother will rise again . . . I am the resurrection and the life . . . the one who believes in me will never die." "The faith of the church, that is, the Christian community, in the resurrection of the dead brings support and strength to those who suffer the loss of those whom they love." (n. 9)

"Blessed are they who mourn". It is a strange word to find in the gospel. But it is right there with the peacemakers, the poor in spirit, and the pure of heart — though anyone going through the experience and the trial of mourning and grief will find it hard to call it a blessing.

Difficult to describe: It is practically impossible to look at mourning objectively, or even to describe it. The ones going through it — the only ones who can really tell us what it means, are not able to back up and look at it objectively. Perhaps that is why we say "we are in mourning." We are immersed in it. It surrounds us completely. But in discussing the funeral rite and what it implies, we need to look at how we can help people make the best of it and turn it into that blessing promised by the Lord.

Mourning involves having the strength of mind, will and emotions necessary to say goodbye to someone or something that we are going to lose. It is clear that life is filled with such losses. In the journey of life we cannot reach a new destination, a new port, unless we are willing to leave the old one.

Even though we understand it, it is still an exhausting task. In dealing with the dying, so often the tension leads to anger and tears; and yet we feel this must be concealed. We are told that it would be terribly demoralizing should a dying person see us weep.

Leaving and being left behind: In fact, however, mourning over human relations is reciprocal. Both the one who is leaving (by dying) and the ones left behind, are in grief and they need to share their mourning. In other words, they have to face death together.

A social aspect to mourning: Leaving personal feeling aside, experience shows that in all civilizations there is a kind of social aspect to mourning for the dead. Pagan societies saw a gradual progression in the process. For an initial period, the dead refuse to leave the world, they threaten to return. There then must be some kind of purification or exorcism to prevent this from happening.
(The Etruscans talked about killing the dead a second time.) In the third stage, the dead entered a new class - became an ancestor - a departed one. The reality of death finally was accepted.

**Three stages:** While we do not have any such idea of a gradual passage into becoming really dead, we do need to realize that there are three very distinct stages that mourners pass through.

- The first is one of numbness, shock, disbelief - a kind of confusion - an inability to grasp reality.
- The second, a real challenge, is the process of making the positive separation - to break the bonds.
- The third is to bring the dead person back into our lives as an ancestor, a saint, that is as a person who now exists in another way.

**These three stages** are recognized in the funeral rite and in the pastoral care that should surround it. The shocked disbelief is the situation dealt with by the prayers after death or on gathering in the presence of the body.

**The effort to make and accept the separation** is continued through the time of the vigil and reaches its peak in the self-giving which is part of the eucharist. It is expressed in words and gestures in the funeral procession and in the farewell of final commendation and made definite in the committal at the place of burial.

**The final stage of peaceful acceptance** that the departed is living another kind of life may occur more slowly. This points up a very important need for visits and contact from caring persons, especially priests or parish ministers, after the funeral is over. It is a strong reason to encourage some form of memorial celebration suited to the mentality and culture of the people and the community.

**To become a blessing:** For this mourning process to succeed in becoming a blessing in the gospel sense, the grieving persons need to realize first that life and death are mysteries. They are bigger than ourselves. That is, it is pointless and useless and harmful to keep asking "Why this?" "Why me?" "Why now?" Life is a gift. We do not create it, we do not take it. It is given to us. It is beyond our grasp to take it or to hold on to it.

**Love is stronger than death:** The other truth that is terribly important is that "love is stronger than death." "Death is strong, but love is stronger." Death, the final act of life, can truly be an act of love. At the same time, the bonds of love are not destroyed by death; the bonds of presence are broken but the ties of love can be transformed. They become mute, spiritual, if you like, but still real. The ones left behind continue to love the departed one, but they love in a new way, as the dead person lives in a new way. It is in being able to say 'Amen' to these realizations that mourning passes into a blessing - one that we might all desire to receive.
The Funeral Liturgies: An Overview

This and the following articles on the Order of Christian Funerals are based on presentations given by Richard H. Rutherford.

The Order of Christian Funerals is not simply a book; it is liturgy. Liturgy itself is not in books. The books simply collect and assemble rituals and prayers and become a resource for the liturgy.

Coming to life: Liturgy is what happens when the Christian tradition of worship, historically and at the present time, comes to life. Indeed, liturgy includes some things that are not yet in the books. “Not yet” in the books, because the books always have to catch up with where the liturgy actually is. For centuries Christians have cared for their dead. They have embraced and surrounded the mystery of death with pastoral care and liturgy.

Funerals and Faith

I love you: Liturgy is the faith in search of expression, in search of action, in search of a way of saying, “I love you.” The liturgy is the language of a love affair between a people and its God; between God and the people.

If liturgy is faith in action, then it is our faith that is at the heart and center of our activity when we bring the liturgy to touch the experience of human death. It is our faith that makes the Order of Christian Funerals different from many other death rituals in our North American society and throughout the world. Faith expressed and acted out in the Order of Christian Funerals, gives meaning to the mystery of death. That is, faith acted out in the Order of Christian Funerals opens our eyes and our hearts to what is meaningful in what otherwise seems a terribly meaningless fact of life. And so it is our faith which makes the difference.

Death is our destiny. It is the final crowning act of our lives. Death is a very harsh fact of life. Indeed it is the end of life as we know it. The mystery of the resurrection, “the paschal mystery,” celebrated in the liturgy, is not just Easter. It is also Good Friday. The paschal mystery is the death and the resurrection of the Lord. This is our starting point as we look at the faith that gives meaning to the mystery of death.

The mystery remains: To say that faith “gives meaning” to the mystery of death, is not to say that it resolves the mystery of death. The mystery remains; yet the mystery itself becomes meaningful. It is the difference between problem solving in the face of mystery and allowing the mystery to have meaning.
Death has meaning: In the face of death our faith gives meaning to the mystery. It enables us to see and to wrap our hearts around what is meaningful in that incredible mystery which has to do with the very end of life as we know it. The Order of Christian Funerals — faith in action — says that death is full of meaning for those who believe. Believe what? Through the death and resurrection of Jesus, God has glorified all of humanity. In the resurrection of Jesus God has glorified us as human beings. Our very mortal flesh-and-blood humanity is free to receive the unbounded love of God. God's love is limitless, boundless. We are glorified to be able to receive that love in all of its limitlessness.

God's future for us: Thus the Order of Christian Funerals, this faith in action, is about the future. It is eschatological. It is about God's future for us. And God's future for us is already present; it is "future present" in the liturgy. The future that God has for us is present in the gatherings we call vigils, the eucharist, when caring communities stand at the grave, and when they continue to be present to the people who are suffering loss through death. Vigils and eucharist and a caring community who, without really understanding but still believing, go on to wash the feet of grief-laden fellow travellers.

A Christian Worldview

A Christian spirituality: If this faith of ours is what makes the Order of Christian Funerals distinct as a Christian way of death, what makes this Order work as ritual, as symbolic action? Let's start with what makes any ritual, any of our symbolic actions work. First, we hold in common a certain Christian worldview, a Christian spirituality. It is a dynamic world view which includes relationships, beliefs, memories, values, hopes and commitments. We can think of it as a communal tapestry woven by all who have been in communion with God and one another because they share in Christ's Spirit through baptism. It is a complex and rich tapestry because people have been weaving it since the time of the earliest Christian communities. The designs in this tapestry have been woven from a variety of sources: the lives of Christians, the Scriptures, creeds, prayers, hymns, stories, symbols, art, and the rituals of Christian communities.

A common tapestry: These same sources continue to make materials available to Christians who use them to weave their own designs and in so doing to contribute to the ongoing creation of a common tapestry. One can think of this tapestry as providing materials for the Christian imagination, both in an individual and a collective sense. The imaginative activity of individuals is likely to be enhanced or diminished according to whether what is made available to them from the Christian spiritual tradition is enhanced or diminished.

Passing it on: We continue to pass on that tapestry so that it can be woven by the next generation to its next stage of development, as long as we keep those symbols alive and enriched. But we can diminish the tapestry. We can pull a thread, as it were, and start unravelling it when we fail to make those symbols available and fail to enrich the spiritual lives of individuals.

Values and memories: The context in which we experience death is similar to that kind of a tapestry. The Christian tapestry that we are talking about and the
tapestry of real life constitute the context of values and memories available to us. Death does not happen in a vacuum. It happens in a complex context of life. There are immediately practical necessities that have to be taken care of right away. There are the first calls to parish and mortuary; the family is called; there is the business with the cemetery, insurance – all the things that are treated in introductions to the grieving experience.

Ritual Expression

Surrounding the event of death are rituals. There are the human rituals of death and grief, such as those of gathering the clan and the separating of the clan. Further rituals concern the grave and surround the issue of dividing belongings.

There are community rituals of providing the funeral meal, and family rituals of sending “thank you” cards. Bereavement ministry groups and other pastoral ministry provide help with these practical necessities.

Religious and liturgical rituals: Among these rituals of death and grief there are also religious rituals, and some of these religious rituals are liturgical. There are religious rituals that are not necessarily liturgical, that people are engaged in as they try to make some sense of the death – to give meaning to this mysterious, meaningless event – to try to find the meaning in it. Here we are mainly concerned with liturgical rituals.

Just a beginning: In this enormous complex of events immediately around a death we see both the gift and the enrichment that the Order of Christian Funerals brings. We also see its limitations. Rituals go on long after the funeral rites have been concluded, as Christian ministry continues. What we do in the Order of Christian Funerals, even though it only surrounds a certain time-frame of this larger complex, models how to continue in our ministry beyond the funeral. It shows us how the church has given expression to the faith in liturgical action, and how we can go on in other ways to allow the faith to take action and further liturgical expression.

Pastoral Care

Essential to all of this is pastoral care, which really was there before the death occurred, because Christian life did not start with the death of this individual, and that life is not going to end when our ministry is finished, either. Life will go on, and pastoral care will continue to engage the Christian community as a whole.

Ministry groups such as bereavement groups are one way in which the responsibility of the community expresses itself. It is important to see this as part of the immediate context. The pastoral care of the church for people is the context that preceded the death and will continue on after the death. We think often about stages, as it were, or phases or layers through which people pass
as they deal with the experience of death in their lives, analogous to what happens when a person is dying.

**Preparation to die:** There is one difference, however. One of the things we see as we bring the pastoral care of the sick and dying in touch with the *Order of Christian Funerals* is that people on the way to dying, in the last stages of living, are preparing to die. They prepare to bid us farewell and to bring their lives to a close.

**Preparation to live:** People in the experience of bereavement are preparing to live. They prepare to live now in a different way and in a different relationship with the deceased, but still, to live.

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**A Rite of Passage**

**Three phases:** One way that ritualization takes place in our funeral liturgy is based on an understanding of the classic “rite of passage.” This is one of the ways rituals work. Classically the rites of passage are described in three stages or phases.

**The first phase** is one of separation. What happens during that time? A former experience, whatever it was, is left behind and we are no longer there. We are no longer whatever it was we were. In the present context, a person is no longer wife or husband, son or daughter. The person is widow or widower, orphan. Thus the former state is left behind. What we were is now no longer.

**Phase two:** That opens up for us what is described as kind of a great threshold period, a valuable time of being on the threshold. The term used for this period is liminality; one is neither fish nor fowl. Imagine yourself there. You are no longer what you were, but you are not yet what it is you are going to become.

**Phase three:** Finally, there is the moment of incorporation: we become who we are going to be now.

**The funeral process** described in the *Order of Christian Funerals* is analogous to these rites of passages. The funeral rites embrace three moments: time before the funeral liturgy, the central funeral liturgy itself, and then the time afterwards.

**Rite of separation:** In the human experience of the people whose lives are touched by this death, however, that whole thing more often than not functions simply as a rite of separation. It may model the direction that the rest of the transition goes, but as ritual the *Order of Christian Funerals* marks the moment in the process experienced as separation. It gives us some sense of direction as how to go through the in-between period and into life without the deceased. But the funeral rites themselves do not do that.

**Memorial celebrations:** Other things that are important to do are memorial times, for example, at one month or one year or two years, or when the grave-stone is selected and placed, or on All Soul’s Day when people gather to remember, or on national days of memorial when people stop and remember
the dead of the community. These times become clearly important because, if in fact the *Order of Christian Funerals* is chiefly a rite of separation, then we set them in the period of bereavement, the time in-between. Neither the church nor our culture has anything left to mark the moment of re-integration.

**No longer the same person:** For example, even at the committal we are still by and large in the liminal period, when folks are in-between. They find it an experience of separation not only from their loved one but also from everything that that relationship meant to them. And they are no longer who it is they were. They are no longer entirely the same person they were before that death.

**The time of committal,** the funeral liturgy, and the vigil are still mostly rites of separation. The committal rite brings that time of separation to a close and launches us into the liminal period for which we have no rites (at least not in the *Order of Christian Funerals*).

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**Using the Liturgical Book**

**Options and alternatives:** The *Order of Christian Funerals* contains the normative pattern for the Roman Catholic funeral, but also many options and alternatives; it is a model and a resource book.

**What is normative** is the model, the usual, the ordinary, way of doing something. The pattern that we are looking at in the *Order of Christian Funerals* is the normative pattern against which we measure, or which we use to figure out, how any specific funeral should take place.

**The real life of the people** has to be where we start. And then we bring the collection of the liturgy to that life. When these two meet, the faith of the church takes expression in these very specific situations as liturgy, as worship, as the love affair of people with their God.

**Many rites:** In the *Order of Christian Funerals* we have one order but we also have many rites. There is still a great deal of flexibility possible with these rites. Some of the flexibility that happens regularly has been incorporated into the rite. For example, there are several opportunities for reception of the body at the church.

**Bishop Lahey's** letter of approbation (page vi of the Canadian edition) sets out the basic spirit of this liturgy of the church. The *Order of Christian Funerals* is the principle resource for the celebration of the Christian liturgy, but it is still a resource. Once we understand how to use it we can appreciate how other resources are also available to us and when it is appropriate to use them.
The Vigil

Giving meaning to the mystery of death: We mark the time between death and the central funeral liturgy at the church especially by celebrating the vigil liturgy. The core of the vigil is gathering around the word of God. God’s word is proclaimed so that we can reflect upon it and allow our imaginations to work with the mystery of death in order to give some meaning to that mystery.

Vigils are important: Just by examining the liturgical book, the Order of Christian Funerals, it is clear that this time between death and the funeral mass is quite important. In the Canadian edition, almost one hundred and twenty pages are devoted to models of vigil liturgies.

It is always important to begin with the introductions and pastoral notes that precede the liturgies in the Order of Christian Funerals. Thus we learn that:

At the vigil the Christian community keeps watch with the family in prayer to the God of mercy and finds strength in Christ’s presence. It is the first occasion among the funeral rites for the solemn reading of the word of God. In this time of loss the family and community turn to God’s word as the source of faith and hope, as light and life in the face of darkness and death. Consoled by the redeeming word of God and by the abiding presence of Christ and his Spirit, the assembly at the vigil calls upon the Father of mercy to receive the deceased into the kingdom of light and peace. (n. 83, p. 38)

The purpose of the readings at the vigil is to proclaim the paschal mystery, teach remembrance of the dead, convey the hope of being gathered together in God’s kingdom, and encourage the witness of Christian life. Above all, the readings tell of God’s designs for a world in which suffering and death will relinquish their hold on all whom God has called his own. The responsorial psalm enables the community to respond in faith to the readings and to express its grief and its praise of God. In the selection of readings the needs of the mourners and the circumstances of the death should be kept in mind. (n. 88, p. 39)

God’s future for us: Throughout the entire funeral liturgy we are about the business of the future; the whole of the funeral liturgy is really an eschatological celebration. It has to do with God’s future for us. This principle applies to the vigil as well.

The Easter vigil is a paradigm or model for the funeral vigil. How do both of these vigils work? “Vigil” means a time of waking, a time of keeping watch, a time of waiting. But this waiting is not a passive experience but a time of active engagement. We act out in preparatory ways what is about to happen. We anticipate the future in order to be able to celebrate the coming of Easter in its fullness. The Easter vigil is a period of very active waiting.

What it is we are looking forward to in the Easter vigil? What are we waiting for? What are we celebrating? The answer is clear: it is resurrection.
So it is in the funeral vigil as well. We look forward to resurrection, to life beyond life, to life beyond the pain of the present moment. Within each concrete pastoral situation, we name and celebrate and support faith in the resurrection (to the extent that is possible in the circumstances). Acknowledging both the death and the Lord and the dead of the loved one, we try to celebrate liturgically what faith in the resurrection means for the mourners and other worshippers. We try to say: this is God’s future for us, and that is what we are waiting for.

New relationship with the deceased: We also make ourselves receptive to what it is we are waiting for. At the level of human experience, part of what is happening for the bereaved is seeing and dealing with the dead person. This is among the first encounters with the reality of the death, the beginnings of coming to accept the reality of that death. One of the things the liturgy is doing is saying that this person is dead, and that we remember this person as dead. We enter into a new relationship with this person as deceased, as a member of the communion of saints. This acceptance is important even at the purely human, therapeutic level.

What God is doing: Where the Order of Christian Funerals makes a difference is that it takes that human reality and spotlights it with the religious imagination of our faith. The readings and the symbols that we use throughout the vigils help make us receptive to what God is doing, as well as what we will eventually come to do. God’s future is what God is doing. We believe in the resurrection of the dead. Making ourselves receptive to what God is doing has something to do with making ourselves receptive to the unbounded, limitless love that God offers to us.

The caring community: What we are waiting for in the vigil is God’s love. And we come to experience this through the love and support of the Christian community. This is one very practical way in which the caring community of the church fleshes out and gives expression to the larger mystery of the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

A shattered love affair: At the vigil, people — and especially the immediately bereaved — cannot help but be processing a number of things. One of these is beginning to come to grips with the fact that this person is actually dead. Both intellectually and emotionally, this takes a while. People who watch with their deceased loved ones need the time of the vigil because their love affair has now been shattered. They find that the members of the church come out for no other purpose but simply to be there for them. They are there to show their support; they are there simply for the bereaved. God’s future for us is that the caring church community is going to be there for us; at the vigil the bereaved see this happening around them.

Our story in the story of Jesus: During the vigil we read and share the word of God. How does the word function as a light for us regarding God’s future? It speaks to us because our story has happened before — in Jesus Christ. Here we learn and make our own the message that we can trust the God of our future. God has through history, and definitively and climactically in the death and resurrection of Jesus, proclaimed that in this great mystery of death, death does not have the last word.

Death does not have the last word: One of the ways in which our faith brings some meaning to the meaninglessness of death is to say in faith, that
this death – with all its harshness and all of its reality – does not have the last word. Jesus was crucified, died and laid in that tomb the night of his death, but God says that death is wrong. “I am the God of the living.” The disciples experienced the living God in the Risen Jesus.

Jesus was not raised in order to die again, as Lazarus was. We are not dealing here with the resuscitation of a corpse. We are dealing instead with a complete and total transformation of life. The life that we began in baptism is the life that does not end. This is the message that we hear in the scriptures.

God’s limitless word: Again, in the vigil liturgy we need to open ourselves up and make ourselves receptive to the limitless love that God offers to us. Unless we open ourselves by way of acts of love, acts which enflesh the means whereby God’s love is made available to people, we will never understand the cross.

SUMMER SCHOOL FOR LITURGICAL MUSICIANS

The tenth annual Summer School for Liturgical Musicians will take place at St. Joseph’s College, University of Toronto from Monday, August 2 to Friday, August 6, 1993.

Participants will have an opportunity to explore the role of music in the mass, the rite of Christian funerals, devotional prayer celebrations, themes in the lectionary and understanding the psalms. These sessions will be of particular interest to organists, choral directors, guitarists, cantors and choir members. Join us as we celebrate our tenth anniversary.

For further information call or write:

ONTARIO LITURGICAL CONFERENCE
Summer School for Liturgical Musicians
2661 Kingston Road
Scarborough, Ontario, M1M 1M3
(416) 208-7913
The Funeral Mass

The central part of the Order of Christian Funerals is the funeral liturgy, which usually is the funeral mass. Thus the heart of the funeral rite is word and eucharist, in which we profess our faith in the paschal mystery of Jesus Christ. This is what makes the Catholic funeral special. We bring the celebration of the paschal mystery to touch the burial of this one particular person and the bereavement of these particular mourners.

The normative pattern for the funeral liturgy includes reception of the body at the church, word and eucharist, final commendation, and finally procession to the place of committal.

The purpose and meaning of the funeral liturgy is well enunciated in the rite itself:

At the funeral liturgy the community gathers with the family and friends of the deceased to give praise and thanks to God for Christ's victory over sin and death, to commend the deceased to God's tender mercy and compassion, and to seek strength in the proclamation of the paschal mystery. Through the Holy Spirit the community is joined together in faith as one Body in Christ to reaffirm in sign and symbol, word and gesture that each believer through baptism shares in Christ's death and resurrection and can look to the day when all the elect will be raised up and united in the kingdom of light and peace. (n. 297, p. 170)

Giving thanks to God: This is more than just celebrating the life of the deceased person. At this point in the liturgy we give thanks to God. For what? For the victory of life, for the gift of a life that is worth living. We thank God that life begun in baptism still lives, even after death. God is alive, and we are alive in God.

We then commend the deceased to the mercy and compassion of God. Finally, we offer the consolation of the faith, because the community is present so that the bereaved will not be alone. In part this is psycho-social support; in addition, it is the consolation of the faith.

Eucharist means gratitude, and gratitude in the eucharist is what happens when our heart moves through the gift to the giver, who is God. We have accepted the gift of Christ's victory over death, and we move to praise and gratitude to God who has given us this precious gift.

The consolation of the faith that people gain from the funeral liturgy is rooted in the paschal mystery of Jesus Christ; it is also the proclamation of the same paschal mystery. We proclaim Christ's death and resurrection both in spoken word – the liturgy of the word, and in acted sign – the liturgy of the eucharist.

God's part in life: We are about the business of what God is doing now and in the future. God's future is what the paschal mystery is all about. And so we are about the business of recognizing God's part in life and in life after death. The healing, the liberation, the transformation, the salvation that we are talking
about is God's future. When we speak of the healing that God gives us we are talking about even healing death. And the healing of death means going through it. Jesus did not avoid death to get to glory. But he embraced death precisely that the will of God could be achieved. A seed dies, it drops to the ground, and gives life.

Liturgical of the Word

The purpose and meaning of the liturgy of the word are well enunciated in the rite itself:

The reading of the word of God is an essential element of the celebration of the funeral liturgy. The readings proclaim the paschal mystery, teach remembrance of the dead, convey the hope of being gathered together again in God's kingdom, and encourage the witness of Christian life. Above all, the readings tell of God's design for a world in which suffering and death will relinquish their hold on all whom God has called his own. (n. 304, pp. 171-172)

A faith statement for all: Our funeral liturgy is for the church as much as it is for the bereaved, though the bereaved are our chief focus at this point. More is going on than good social work or psychological care. The liturgy is a faith statement that touches not only the mourners but also the rest of the church. We care for each other, and learn what to expect when our time comes. We can count on the church being there, alive and supportive.

Prayers of intercession: The readings and preaching lead to the general intercessions. These show that we love God so much that we can also trust that God will be there for us and answer our prayers. We do not just say "Thank you," we also say, "Help me." Help me with future things, with this gift. There is a continuity here; we praise God, and then that praise flows over into petition. It says, we trust you, we love you enough to know that all the things you have done in the past guarantee that we can ask you for help now.

Liturgy of the Eucharist

And then comes the liturgy of the eucharist, well described in the rite itself:

At the funeral Mass, the community, having been spiritually renewed at the table of God's word, turns for spiritual nourishment to the table of the eucharist. The community with the priest offers to the Father the sacrifice of the New Covenant and shares in the one bread and the one cup. In partaking of the body of Christ, all are given a foretaste of eternal life in Christ and are united with Christ, with each other, and with all the faithful, living and dead: "Because there is one bread, we who are many are one body, for we all partake of the one bread" (1 Corinthians 10. 17). (n. 310, pp. 172-173)
We are renewed and nourished spiritually. In partaking of the body of Christ, we are the body of Christ. All are given a foretaste of eternal life. In Christ we are united with Christ, with each other, and with the faithful living and dead. It is our first proclamation in the eucharist that we are alive with the deceased person. He/she is a part of the communion of saints now.

Sharing a meal: We are provided with spiritual nourishment. What does that mean? Nourishment of course is related to the image and symbol of food, of eating and drinking at a common meal. We are nourished when we dine and share a meal with others. This is different than gulping fast foods. When we share a common meal, the common food that we share binds us together. And the meaning of what we are celebrating comes together in the common food.

The food that we share in the eucharist is nothing else than the very body and blood of the Lord Jesus given for us. Think of the faith-claims and faith statements we are making! The meaning of this meal is the victory of the life of the dead person, which is not undone by even our most devastating experience of desolation, human death.

In the eucharist we proclaim the paschal mystery as often as we do this until the Lord comes in glory. In this present moment, we enter into what God has done in Jesus in the past, and what God promises to do in the future. We proclaim the death and resurrection of the Lord, until he comes in glory. We continue to proclaim this until it comes to its fullness in the kingdom.

We participate in that paschal mystery in each funeral liturgy by way of the death of the particular person who has died. This death is a very real experience of the paschal mystery; the paschal mystery is present in this death.

Belief in the paschal mystery is unquestionably the principle metaphor of our Catholic faith in the face of death. This is spelled out in the Introduction to the Order of Christian Funerals.

At the funerals of its children the Church confidently celebrates Christ’s paschal mystery. Its intention is that those who by baptism were made one body with the dead and risen Christ may with him pass from death to life. In soul they are to be cleansed and taken up into heaven with the saints and elect; in body they await the blessed hope of Christ’s coming and the resurrection of the dead.

The Church, therefore, offers the eucharistic sacrifice of Christ’s Passover for the dead and pours forth prayers and petitions for them. Because of the communion of all Christ’s members with each other, all of this brings spiritual aid to the dead and the consolation of hope to the living. (n. 1, p. xii)

As they celebrate the funerals of their brothers and sisters, Christians should be intent on affirming their hope for eternal life. They should not, however, give the impression of either disregard or contempt for the attitudes or practices of their own time and place. In such matters as family traditions, local customs, burial societies, Christians should willingly acknowledge whatever they perceive to be good and try to transform whatever seems alien to the Gospel. Then the funeral ceremonies for Christians will both manifest paschal faith and be true examples of the spirit of the Gospel. (n. 2, p. xii)
The mystery of the death and the resurrection of the Lord is embodied in the ministry and participation of the church in the *Order of Christian Funerals* and in many dimensions of pastoral care, both by parish ministers and by the entire local church community.

**Making sense of death:** We need to recognize pastorally that death, not only resurrection, is at the heart of this mystery. We believe in the resurrection of Jesus, and hope in our faithful participation in that new life which is beyond the limitations of our mortality. We hope that this offers us a way of making sense of death.

**By belief in the resurrection of Jesus,** and hope that our faithful participation in that new life that is beyond the limitations even of our mortality, death is healed. Our faith does not absolve death, resolve the mystery, undo it, pretend it does not exist. But it helps us give some meaning to death and to see the meaningfulness that it can have for us as Christians.

**Knowing, believing, hoping:** It is important to recognize our own mortality, even though it is a threat to our identity because we do not know that there is going to be anything else. We believe as Christians, and hope as Christians, but we do not know. Death is what we know; resurrection is what we believe in and hope for.

**Nowhere else,** perhaps, are we closer to a human experience that we can share so fully with the human Jesus of Nazareth, than in death.
We have arrived at the time after the funeral liturgy, a time of continuing bereavement and reintegration.

Procession to the Cemetery

Link between church and cemetery: First there is the procession from the church to the cemetery or place of committal; this is an important link with the funeral liturgy. Even though, in our society, we rarely can have a real procession, the ritual and mental transition from the funeral mass to the burial is very important.

The procession unifies what goes on at the cemetery with what has already transpired in the church. The carrying of the casket out of the church as a community is the beginning of what happens in the cemetery.

Processional music: One way to reinforce and support this unity is to use the same music for the procession out of the church and the beginning of the committal at the cemetery.

Form a procession: When people arrive at the cemetery they often do not know what to do or where to go. It is helpful to gather them into a somewhat orderly procession to the grave rather than leave individuals and small groups of mourners to make their own way. It also helps at this point to sing, “May the angels lead you into paradise,” if that is what they sang while they were leaving the church.

Reflection and prayer: People may be invited to keep the time of “procession” from the church to the cemetery as a time of reflection and prayer, even though they are driving. A card that has a verse or two of scripture on it, or a psalm, or a prayer from the Order of Christian Funerals, might be provided. People may be invited, in their cars, to keep this time as one of reflection on the funeral and Christian meaning of death, on the life of the deceased, and as one of prayer.

The Committal

The meaning and purpose of the committal is well expressed in the rite itself:

In committing the body to its resting place, the community expresses the hope that, with all those who have gone before marked with the sign of faith, the deceased awaits the glory of the resurrection. The rite of committal is an expression of the communion that exists between the Church on earth and the Church in heaven: the deceased passes with the farewell prayers of the community of believers into the welcoming company of those who need faith no longer but see God face to face. (n. 379, p. 217)
Symbol in the funeral liturgy comes to us in two forms: the spoken word, and acted sign. We surround the central act of committal with prayers, but the acted sign is the burial or committal itself. The rite explains:

The act of committal takes place after the words of committal . . . or at the conclusion of the rite. The act of committal expresses the full significance of this rite. Through this act the community of faith proclaims that the grave or place of interment, once a sign of futility and despair, has been transformed by means of Christ's own death and resurrection into a sign of hope and promise. (n. 382, p. 218)

New life in Christ: Again, we proclaim our belief that death is not the end of life. We believe in the anticipated glory of the deceased person. This life that we have seen come to an end is not undone; the end is not the end. This person lives in Christ through the death and the resurrection of the Lord. Participating in the life of the Lord, this person still lives.
Related Rites

**Around the central celebrations** of God's word and the time of waking – the vigil liturgy – we have several smaller, less formal, but nonetheless supportive rites. These include Prayers after Death, Gathering in the Presence of the Body, Transfer of the Body to the Church, Prayers at the End of the Day, and even other devotions such as saying the rosary by parish groups.

**Prayers after Death**

**For adaptation:** The liturgical book provides a model, which will need to be adapted to fit the circumstances.

The rite provided here is a model of prayer that may be used when the minister first meets with the family following death. The rite follows a common pattern of reading, prayer, responsory, and blessing and may be adapted according to the circumstances. (n. 55, p. 21)

**To comfort the mourners:** Here we are very close to the actual event of the death, and there is a small and intimate gathering of the persons most closely connected to the person who has just died. The presence of the minister and the calming effect of familiar prayers can comfort the mourners as they begin the process of grieving.

**The actual experience:** Even if there has been a long time of anticipatory grief, this is not the same thing as actually experiencing the death of the person whose death you are expecting.

**A spirit of calmness:** The rite is quiet and prayerful, simple, low-key, and calm. What we are trying to do in the imagination here is provide a spirit of calmness, the kind of calm that God's presence and God's promise for the future provides. It is in the calming breeze that the prophet met God.

**The first pastoral visit** is not just a matter of finding out what we need to know to plan the funeral. Rather, it is to make God's presence available, to make the church available to these people. The rite explains:

The initial pastoral visit can be important as the first tangible expression of the community's support for the mourners. A minister unfamiliar with the family or deceased person can learn a great deal on this occasion about the needs of the family and about the life of the deceased. The minister may also be able to form some preliminary judgments to help the family in planning the funeral rites. If circumstances allow, some first steps in the planning may take place at this time. (n. 57, p. 21)

**Bringing community:** The heart of the matter is that we are bringing community to these bereaved people. Ritualy we do that by saying something about our faith; we read God's word and say together the Lord's prayer. In addition, we begin and end with the sign of the cross. The rite is simple; the important thing is to make it "quality time."
Gathering in the Presence of the Body

For the family: Usually this takes place at the funeral home, but it may be celebrated elsewhere as well. What happens normally is that after the body has been prepared in the funeral home, the first people to see the body are the family. Often they will be present a half-hour before public viewing begins, and they will have an opportunity to pray alone during that time.

Leadership: It is best if this short rite can be lead by the priest or other parish minister. If necessary, however, a Catholic funeral director may have to step in and help.

The liturgical book explains the meaning and purpose of this rite:

This rite provides a model of prayer that may be used when the family first gathers in the presence of the body, when the body is to be prepared for burial, or after it has been prepared. The family members, in assembling in the presence of the body, confront in the most immediate way the fact of their loss and the mystery of death. Because cultural attitudes and practices on such occasions may vary, the ministers should adapt the rite. (n. 67, p. 29)

Through the presence of the minister and others and through the celebration of this brief rite, the community seeks to be with the mourners in their need and to provide an atmosphere of sensitive concern and confident faith. In prayer and gesture those present show reverence for the body of the deceased as a temple of the life-giving Spirit and ask, in that same Spirit, for the eternal life promised to the faithful. (n. 68, p. 29)

The minister should try to be as attentive as possible to the particular needs of the mourners. The minister begins the rite at an opportune moment and, as much as possible, in an atmosphere of calm and recollection. The pause for silent prayer after the Scripture verse can be especially helpful in this regard. (n. 69, p. 29)

Prayers at the End of the Day

Appendix II of the Canadian edition of the Order of Christian Funerals provides suggestions for “prayers at the end of the day,” for example, following the vigil for the deceased and the period of visitation.

People usually are tired – numb, almost – and these prayers are intended to call their day to an end, give them permission to go to bed, and give them some kind of reassurance before they have to take leave for the night.
An excellent article by Richard H. Rutherford, "Honoring the Dead: Catholics and Cremation" appeared in Worship (vol. 64, November 1990, pages 482-493) and has been reprinted as a leaflet by Liturgical Press, Collegeville, Minnesota 56321. It considers the liturgical, pastoral and anthropological questions that surround this practice, which is relatively new for Roman Catholics. It also indicates ways in which Catholic thinking about cremation and the funeral rites are evolving in North America at the present time.

In Canada, Appendix IV of the 1990 edition of the funeral rites presents the thinking of the bishops at the time this liturgical book was published. It is anticipated that our understanding of this situation will evolve with time and experience, and that more will be said about this in due course.

The following is the full text of this part of the Canadian edition of the Order of Christian Funerals.

Appendix IV: Cremation

The full celebration of the Christian funeral consists of three principal rites: "Vigil for the Deceased," "Funeral Liturgy," and "Rite of Committal." Whenever possible, the celebration of all three rites in the presence of the body of the deceased is recommended. It is the responsibility of the minister, in consultation with the family and friends of the deceased to select prayers, readings and ritual elements appropriate to the particular needs of the mourners.

The Christian belief in eternal life and the resurrection of the body has traditionally found expression in the care taken to prepare the bodies of the deceased for burial. The prayers and gestures of the funeral rites likewise affirm the Church’s reverence for the bodies of its deceased members as temples of the life-giving Spirit. The long-standing practice of burying the body of the deceased in a grave or tomb in memory of Jesus whose own body was placed in a tomb continues to be encouraged as a sign of Christian faith.

However, Christian funeral rites may also be celebrated for persons who choose to have their bodies cremated, unless it is evident that they have acted for reasons which are contrary to the Christian way of life. In most cases, cremation will take place following the celebration of the funeral liturgy. In particular circumstances, it may be necessary for the cremation to take place prior to the funeral liturgy. The following notes are provided to assist parish priests and those associated with them in their ministry of consolation as they prepare the funeral rites for those who have chosen to be cremated.

The ashes of the deceased should be reverently buried or entombed in a place reserved for the burial of the dead. Liturgical rites should not accompany any method of disposal of the ashes which is not in harmony with the Christian tradition.
When cremation takes place following the funeral liturgy.

It is recommended that cremation take place following the funeral liturgy. In this case, the “Vigil for the Deceased” and related rites and prayers are celebrated as they are provided in this ritual.

The funeral liturgy is celebrated as given in this ritual. At the conclusion of the funeral liturgy the rite of final commendation and farewell takes place. The alternate form of the dismissal is used (no. 347).

When the rite of committal is celebrated, the alternate form of the words of committal is used (no. 611 on page 410). When the rite of committal with final commendation is celebrated, the signs of farewell (holy water and incense) are omitted and the alternate form of the words of committal is used.

When cremation takes place before the funeral liturgy.

The “Prayers after Death” and the “Vigil for the Deceased” may be adapted and celebrated before the funeral liturgy. Normally, the interment of the ashes will take place before the celebration of the funeral liturgy. In this case, the rite of committal with final commendation is celebrated. The signs of farewell are omitted and the alternate form of the words of committal is used (no. 611 on page 410).

Following the committal, the family and friends of the deceased gather for the funeral liturgy. Prayers which make reference to honoring or burying the body of the deceased are omitted in favor of the alternate prayers provided in the ritual.

The funeral Mass is celebrated as given in this ritual with the exception of the introductory rites pertaining to the greeting of the body and the rite of final commendation. Following the prayer after communion, a blessing is given and the people are dismissed in the usual way.

When the funeral liturgy outside Mass is celebrated, the introductory rites pertaining to the greeting of the body and the rite of final commendation are omitted. Following the Lord’s Prayer, a blessing is given and the people are dismissed in the usual way.

Funeral liturgy in the presence of the ashes.

By virtue of an indult granted by the Congregation for Divine Worship (prot. no. 99/18, December 3, 1984) the celebration of the funeral liturgy – including the eucharist – in the presence of the ashes of the deceased is permitted in Canada under the following conditions:

1. that the cremation is not inspired by motives contrary to Christian teaching, according to the Code of Canon Law, Canon 1176.3;

2. that each ordinary will judge whether it is pastorally proper to celebrate the liturgy for the dead, including the eucharist, with the ashes present, taking into account the concrete circumstances in each case, with respect for the spirit and content of the current canonical norms.

Only when particular circumstances and the pastoral judgment of the bishop recommend it, in an individual case, are the ashes to be present during the funeral liturgy. In this case, a small table covered with a white cloth is to be
prepared in front of the altar in a suitable place. The ashes, in a worthy vessel, are placed there before the liturgy. The ashes should not be placed on or near the altar, and the place chosen for them should be distinct from the place the body of the deceased usually occupies during the funeral liturgy. The paschal candle is not used.

After the people have assembled, the funeral Mass is celebrated as given in this ritual with the exception of the introductory rites pertaining to the greeting of the body. Prayers which make reference to honoring or burying the body of the deceased are omitted in favor of the alternate prayers provided in the ritual. Following the prayer after communion, the rite of final commendation takes place. The signs of farewell (holy water and incense) are omitted and the alternate form of the dismissal is used (no. 347).

When the funeral liturgy outside Mass is celebrated, the introductory rites pertaining to the greeting of the body are omitted. Following the Lord's Prayer, the rite of final commendation takes place. The signs of farewell (holy water and incense) are omitted and the alternate form of the dismissal is used (no. 347).

The rite of committal is then celebrated. The alternate form of the words of committal is used (no. 611 on page 410). When the rite of committal with final commendation is celebrated, the signs of farewell (holy water and incense) are omitted and the alternate form of the words of committal is used.

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Music for Funerals

The *Order of Christian Funerals* assumes that the several funeral rites will be musical liturgies.

Music is integral to the funeral rites. It allows the community to express convictions and feelings that words alone may fail to convey. It has the power to console and uplift the mourners and to strengthen the unity of the assembly in faith and love. The texts of the songs chosen for a particular celebration should express the paschal mystery of the Lord's suffering, death, and triumph over death and should be related to the readings from Scripture. (n. 30)

Since music can evoke strong feelings, the music for the celebration of the funeral rites should be chosen with great care. The *Catholic Book of Worship* contains many appropriate and familiar hymns and acclamations. The music at funerals should support, console, and uplift the participants and should help to create in them a spirit of hope in Christ's victory over death and in the Christian's share in that victory. (n. 31)

Music should be provided for the vigil and funeral liturgy and, whenever possible, for the funeral processions and the rite of committal. The specific notes that precede each of these rites suggest places in the rites where music is appropriate. Many musical settings used by the parish community during the liturgical year may be suitable for use at funerals. Efforts should be made to develop and expand the parish's repertoire for use at funerals. (n. 32)

An organist or other instrumentalist, a cantor, and, whenever possible, even a choir should assist the assembly's full participation in singing the songs, responses, and acclamations of these rites. (n. 33)

The following are useful references on the subject of music at funerals:

Michael Marchal, *Parish Funerals* (Chicago: Liturgy Training Publications 1987), especially chapter 8 and appendix B.

"The Order of Christian funerals," *Pastoral Music* 14 (December-January 1990) (whole issue)

*Catholic Book of Worship* III

The following selections from *Catholic Book of Worship* III will be suitable for use at funerals.¹

¹ These suggestions were provided by Sister Loretta Manzara during her workshop at the May 1992 national conference on the Order of Christian Funerals.
All Creatures of Our God and King
All My Hope on God Is Founded
All People That on Earth Do Dwell
All You Who Seek a Comfort Sure
Alleluia, Sing to Jesus
Amazing Grace
Arise and Shine
Arise, Shine Forth Your Light Has Come
Arise, Your Light Is Come
Be Not Afraid
Blessed Are The Pure in Heart
Blest Are They
Christ, the Lord Is Risen Today
Crown Him with Many Crowns
Day Is Done
Eternal Father, Strong to Save
Eye Has Not Seen
For All the Saints
For You Are My God
God, Our Help and Constant Refuge
God Whose Glory Reigns Eternal
I Know That My Redeemer Lives
I Lift My Eyes to the Quiet Hills
In Paradisum
Healer of Our Every Ill
Jesus Christ is Risen Today
Jesus, Remember Me
Lift High the Cross
Like a Shepherd
Lord God, You Now Have Set Your Servant Free
Lord of All Hopefulness
Lord of the Living
Love Divine, All Loves Excelling
May Flights of Angels
Now Fades All Earthly Splendor
Now from the Heavens Descending
Now Know We Not the Meaning of Life's Sorrow
Now Thank We All our God
Now the Green Blade Rises
O God of Wisdom, God of Truth
O God, Our Help in Ages Past
O Jesus, Lord, Increase our Faith
O Lord, You Died That All Might Live
Praise, My Soul, the King of Heaven
Rest in Peace
Saints of God
Salve Regina
Sing a New Song
Sing With All the Saints in Glory
Shelter Me, O God
Songs of the Angels
The Land of the Living
The Lord, My Shepherd Rules My Life
The People Who in Darkness Walked
The Strife Is O'er
There's A Wideness in God's Mercy
Tell Out My Soul
This Day in New Jerusalem
To Jesus Christ, Our Sovereign King
Tree of Life
Ubi Caritas
We Know That Christ Is Raised
We Lift Our Eyes unto the hills
We Praise You, Father
Word of God, from Mary's Womb
You Are Near
You Are the Way

In addition, there are music settings for the following psalms: 23, 42, 63, 84, 103 and 138.

Promoting the celebration of funeral liturgies with music will be an on-going challenge and opportunity for parish musicians.
In order to promote the participation of both the Catholic faithful and guests at the liturgies of Christian burial, the National Liturgical Office has published an excellent participation book entitled, "Vigils and Related Rites from the Order of Christian Funerals." This contains an extensive selection of music, and is intended, among other things, to promote congregational singing at the funeral liturgies.

The participation book gives the order of service for the following services:

- Prayers after Death
- Gathering in the Presence of the Body
- Vigils for the Deceased (models A-K, plus Vigil for the Deceased with Reception at the Church, plus Vigil for a Deceased Child)
- Transfer of the Body to the Church or to the Place of Committal
- Funeral Liturgy outside Mass (for an adult; for a child)
- Office for the Dead (morning prayer, evening prayer)
- Prayers at the end of the Day.

In addition, it provides the texts that are used by the people (but not those used by the presider and other ministers).

Music is in place throughout the book for singing by the people. For example, antiphons, verses for responsorial psalms and gospel canticles are provided. Finally, there is a selection of twenty-six hymns that are appropriate for the funeral liturgies.

This is an excellent resource. It ought to be of general use in parishes and funeral homes.

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Parish Bereavement Ministry

Cheryl McQueen

Cheryl McQueen is a registered nurse who is employed by the Sisters of St. Joseph in Hamilton as overall Coordinator/Consultant for Parish Bereavement Ministry in seven parishes in the Diocese of Hamilton. For further information she may be contacted at: Bereavement Services Support and Education, Mount St Joseph, 354 King Street West, Hamilton, Ontario L8P 1B6, (416) 529-3409 or (416) 628-6008. Here she describes the program developed by her and the parishes with which she ministers.

This is a parish-based ministry responding to the immediate practical needs of the impending and recently bereaved while offering and providing emotional support as they learn to cope with their loss.

In the General Introduction of the new Order of Christian Funerals, it states: "when a member of Christ's Body dies, the faithful are called to the ministry of consolation to those who have suffered the loss of one whom they love... The Church calls each member of Christ's Body - priest, deacon, layperson - to participate in the ministry of consolation: to care for the dying, to pray for the dead, to comfort those who mourn."

This ministry brings the believing parish community together as a family to provide comfort, care and prayers for those suffering sorrow. It evangelizes by demonstrating our faith in action, as we, who are baptized in Christ, reach out to one another. In doing so, the compassion of Christ is mediated by our parish community to those who are suffering by offering them love, consolation and hope as they attempt to perform their tasks of daily living. It also reaches out to those marginalized Catholics in their time of grief by making them feel part of the mainstream community.

This ministry, in essence, motivates the people in the parish and community to comfort those who mourn, provides follow-up, establishes parish-based grief support groups and gives permission to memorialize the life and death of their loved ones. It allows them to use other individual God-given gifts to reach out to those who are mourning and assist them in the healing process of grief. As a ministry it carries out the church's call to care for all its members.

History

In preparation for their 135th Anniversary year, the Hamilton Congregation of the Sisters of St. Joseph suggested establishing a permanent project to commemorate this event. A task force comprised of Sisters in Pastoral Care at St. Joseph's Hospital Hamilton was set up to study the feasibility of such a project. What evolved was a Congregational commitment to establish a ministry for the bereaved that would somehow be part of a parish structure.

In September 1988, the Sisters employed Cheryl McQueen, a registered nurse, to co-ordinate their efforts and initiate this project.
Father Ron Synnott, pastor of St Augustine's Parish in Dundas, Ontario, was the first to express an interest in implementing a bereavement programme in his parish. Together, he and Cheryl developed a questionnaire that would assess the needs of the recently bereaved. Parishioners, who had suffered a death in their immediate family during the last two years, were interviewed by telephone. The results were correlated and analyzed. The end result was a definite expressed desire to establish a parish support system that would provide immediate practical help to the bereaved at the initial time of the funeral.

The recognition of this need resulted in the establishment of a Bereavement Committee, who through teams and volunteers, would provide a wide variety of practical services such as funeral receptions, babysitting, housesitting, and transportation.

Throughout the next three years, Father Ron Synnott, Cheryl McQueen and the parishioners on the Bereavement Committee of St. Augustine's regularly evaluated the needs of the bereaved parish families while providing them with this loving, supportive environment.

The bereaved, the true “experts” in grief, shared their experience of how loss affected them in all levels of functioning—physical, emotional, social and spiritual. They wanted a parish centered source of support that would play a vital role in their healing process of grief. What evolved was a holistic workable model that in time gave birth to Parish Bereavement Ministry, now being exercised in a number of parishes.

Foreword

This ministry was the result of three years of constant brainstorming and consultation on the part of the clergy, coordinator and teams. It was concluded that based on this extensive evaluation of progress and results, this ministry should be introduced into a parish in a step-wise fashion. As confidence and experience grow, the team can then expect the programme to include the other areas of bereavement ministry.

Bereavement Coordinator

In order for the Bereavement Ministry to be successful it is necessary for the parish priest and staff to select a coordinator who expresses an interest in bereavement, has a desire to see it succeed, and demonstrates excellent communication and organizational skills. The person should also have some understanding of the grief process, be a good listener, accept people as they are, be able to keep information confidential and have a good rapport and working relationship with the parish priest, staff and parishioners.

The responsibilities of the coordinator include:

• assessing the needs of the bereaved at the time of death
• implementing action to satisfy those needs when possible
• coordinating the activities of the teams and volunteers
• establishing a model of regular follow-up for the family and friends of the deceased
• referring, when necessary, the bereaved to a support group
• organizing the annual Memorial Mass.
Bereavement Committee

The Parish Bereavement Committee consists of teams and volunteers who donate their time and services to assist the grieving family from the time of the initial notification of death, through the days prior to the funeral, the day of the funeral and the time immediately following.

They provide practical help to the grieving families by offering services such as these:

- housesitting or babysitting services
- transportation to church/funeral home/cemetery
- meeting out-of-town relatives at the airport and transporting them to their residence
- luncheon at the home or at the parish centre
- running of errands.

Bereavement Teams

The Bereavement teams can vary in number and size; however, four teams with four to five people on each team is usually the norm for a parish of approximately 1500 families and 30-35 funerals a year. Each team takes its turn in rotation hosting a funeral reception. For example, if team I is hosting a funeral reception today then team II becomes the “team on call” for the next funeral. The person in charge of the team is called the team leader and is responsible for organizing the team into action prior to and on the actual day of the funeral.

Bereavement Volunteers

There are people from the parish at large who have volunteered to donate the food items necessary for each funeral reception. They also may volunteer such services as babysitting, housesitting, laundering bereavement linens etc.

Initial Contact and Visitation

The initial contact for the notification of death is usually the parish priest. He then notifies the coordinator, who in turn contacts the team “on call”. In order to ensure proper information regarding the death, an information work sheet is provided for accurate documentation.

The coordinator makes the initial telephone contact with the family of the deceased, to convey sympathy on behalf of the parish. A date and time that is convenient to both parties for the initial visit is arranged between the family and coordinator. The coordinator visits the family, usually bringing a tray of assorted baking and a parish bereavement “calling card”. This card, left with the family provides information on the services offered by the parish bereavement committee and provides contact telephone numbers.

Reaching out to the bereaved in their time of crisis can create a special trusting relationship. Later on, it becomes easier for the grieving family to turn to the Bereavement Coordinator as one whom they have already trusted and one in whom they can confide. In the months ahead, they know they will have someone there for them as they walk through their journey of grief.
**Funeral Liturgy**

Within a few hours of notification of the death, clergy and/or the Bereavement Coordinator make a house call to not only assist the family in the funeral planning but to bring a caring community presence to the bereaved.

(In some parishes, where the coordinator has taken the required “Workshop for Lay Presiders” based on the *Order of Christian Funerals* and where no priest or deacon is available, the layperson may preside at the vigil and at the rite of committal.)

The vigil service should include the family’s favourite scripture passages, hymns and prayers and a personal reflection on the life of the deceased, so that the emphasis is on the celebration of the deceased person’s life. The choice of readings helps the bereaved family accept the reality of death as they express their feelings of sadness and hope.

The committal service at the cemetery is the final ritual in which the family can express a last goodbye. Again, the family should be encouraged to personalize this service.

Rituals are necessary for family and friends of the deceased. They provide opportunities for the expression of grief. Also they help the bereaved to accept the death of their loved one, and the sharing of grief with the parish family both expresses their love for the deceased, and begins the healing process.

**Funeral Reception**

Death of a loved one causes confusion and chaos. Reaching out to the bereaved during their crisis, by offering the services of a funeral reception, alleviates worry and anxiety and provides them with a dependable built-in parish support system. This reception can be held either at the parish hall or in the private home of the members of the family of the deceased. The reception teams take their turn in rotation hosting the funeral receptions. They rely heavily on people from the parish at large who, on a rotational basis, donate the various food items necessary for the reception. The teams meet in the parish hall about three to four hours prior to the funeral. The amount of time is dependent on the number of people attending the funeral reception.

The teams provide the following services:

- preparing assorted sandwiches, tea, coffee and juice
- preparing and arranging fruit and vegetable trays
- arranging the tables in a professional fashion
- greeting the family and friends of the deceased as they enter the hall
- informing the family of the ongoing parish-based support systems.

By being a presence to the grief-stricken at the time of the funeral, the teams and volunteers from the parish at large, demonstrate the care and concern of the parish community.

**Follow-Up**

Following the days after the funeral, and once the reality of the death of a loved one sets in, the bereaved can become overwhelmed by their pain and intense loneliness. They feel isolated in their grief, and are at times so overtaken by their sorrow that they tend to withdraw. It is important at this time to provide physical and
emotional support, on a regular basis, with those who are mourning, by either tele­
phone or personal contact. A needs assessment has been established to deter­
mine what assistance the congregation can provide to the bereaved. Their needs 
can vary from practical assistance in day-to-day living to a desire to reach out to an 
individual or a group for continued emotional support.

Self-Help Support Groups
Self-help may be defined as a group of individuals whose primary purpose is to 
empower themselves and each other to deal with a challenging, unusual, or difficult 
life circumstance. The bereaved gather together for emotional and social support 
as they share with one another the grief that they are experiencing. Self-help 
groups provide a safe confidential place to express feelings, to feel cared for, to 
feel accepted, to ask for help and to normalize grief.

Having an ecumenical, parish-based grief support group reaches out to both 
parishioners and non-parishioners. They meet on a regular basis and learn how to 
deal with, reconcile themselves to, and resolve their grief in an atmosphere of 
friendship, confidentiality and compassion. In a time of crisis, both the churched 
and the unchurched, turn to the local congregation for consolation. To provide this 
consolation the facilitator of their groups may be either a professional or a 
bereaved person, who, in turn, has resolved his or her own grief.

Examples of support groups:
• widows
• widowers
• bereaved children
• bereaved siblings
• ethnic groups
• perinatal support group (parishioners who have lost babies prior to full term or 
shortly after)
• bereaved teens and youths

Spiritual Retreats – Days of Reflection
One of the needs of the grieving families was an expressed desire to partake in 
regular spiritual retreats or days of reflection, with the focus of discussion on 
bereavement. To some the journey through grief questions their faith and belief in a 
higher power, and shakes the very foundation of their being. In their brokenness, 
those suffering sorrow and loneliness reach out to each other, seeking love, heal­
ing and hope. In all of us, there is an innate desire to love and to be loved, and to 
be in union with our God who is alive in us. This inborn desire, a gift from God, is 
given to all people, regardless of whether or not they have a formalized religion. 
These days of spiritual reflection, open to all Christian traditions, allow the 
bereaved to discover those riches within themselves and to unite themselves with 
each other and with their God.

During this time, the retreatants usually get in touch with their emotions and may 
need individual therapy. It is advisable to have the coordinator and/or team mem­
bers who understand the grief process on hand, to provide emotional support, 
comfort and understanding.
Link-Up

A link-up between all parish support groups has been established to enable the widows from all parishes to get together for companionship. Through the year they enjoy barbecues, parties, and various trips to interesting places in Southern Ontario.

Memorial Mass

In grief, healing will occur when there is the support of a caring community, that is on-going and allows for memorializing the lives of those lost in death. In order to receive the strength to go on with the routines of daily living, it is necessary for the bereaved to review and relive the memories of the deceased friend or relative. This allows them to come into contact with, verbalize and normalize their feelings, and to let go of some of the pain that grief and mourning can bring. The Memorial Mass provides the liturgical opportunity by which this can be accomplished. It gives the bereaved permission to grieve openly and it allows the parish community to show its continued support and understanding.

November, the month of All Souls and of Remembrance Day, is a perfect time to celebrate a Memorial Mass. Experience has shown that either a Saturday night Vigil Mass or the actual feast of All Souls is the best time for this celebration.

Approximately six weeks prior to the Mass, personal invitations and R.S.V.P. to the Mass and reception are mailed to those families, who according to parish records, have lost a loved one in the last two years. Although there is no time limit on grieving, two years provide a practical guideline for mailing invitations. The R.S.V.P. informs the coordinator and teams with the numbers of friends and relatives attending both the Mass and the reception. This information will aid in determining the amount of food and refreshments needed for the reception.

Four weeks prior to the Mass the readers, eucharistic ministers and gift bearers are selected. To make the Mass more meaningful, the pastor and coordinator should select people from those parish families who have experienced the death of a loved one in the last two years.

At the beginning of the Mass, the pastor or presider will call upon a pre-selected bereaved parishioner to light the Easter candle. This symbolizes the celebration of Christ’s death and resurrection and memorializes the lives of the parishioners’ loved ones who have died in the last two years.

At the general intercessions all the names of the deceased members of the parish community, for whom this Memorial Mass is celebrated, are mentioned.

The congregation is then invited to participate in the general intercessions by calling aloud the names of their deceased loved ones. This allows for all to remember and grieve openly those friends and relatives who are not necessarily members of the parish. This simple ritual has a profound effect on all attending the Mass.

Following the Mass, everyone is invited to the parish hall for a reception hosted by members of the Bereavement Committee.

Information sheets on all aspects of the bereavement program have been prepared and are made available to parishioners and bereaved persons.
Questions
About Confirmation

Just as the contemporary church is raising questions about its practice of first holy communion, so too are we asking questions about confirmation. This was discussed by the Canadian bishops at a recent meeting, for example.

Order and age: Should confirmation follow first communion, as now is the usual practice, or precede first communion? If the latter, should it immediately follow baptism, immediately precede first communion, or come at some other time between baptism and first communion? And in all cases, why? What does age and sequence have to do theologically with the meaning of confirmation and with the meaning of Christian initiation?

The usual present practice is baptism in infancy, then first communion around age seven, followed by confirmation some years later. We have to admit that we slipped into this practice somewhat unintentionally when the age of first communion was moved to a younger age at the beginning of this century. This seems to have been done without adequate historical knowledge, and without thinking through the theological implications thoroughly. The change in the age of first communion was made without much consideration being given to confirmation, which for the most part simply stayed at the age it had been prior to this time, often around age 12.

Reaffirmation: We have also been influenced in recent years by the Reformation understanding of confirmation as an occasion for persons baptized as infants to publicly profess their faith as adults (or adolescents). In doing so they thereby confirm — or affirm — their baptismal faith in the midst of the community. This is the view of confirmation of many Anglicans and Protestants, and it has seemed attractive to some Catholics as well.

Finally, there is a concern for teenagers, for their liturgical and sacramental life, and for their catechesis.

Arguments for the more traditional sequence of baptism followed by confirmation and then first communion, include the following points.

• This sequence respects what we now know of the origins of confirmation in the liturgy of baptism. Originally, it was the conclusion of the baptismal liturgy.

• Theologically as well as structurally, the content of confirmation is closely related to that of baptism. The more we separate them, the more we have to find a rationale for confirmation that differs from that of baptism, and the more difficult we find this to be.

1 See, for example, "Questions about First Communion" National Bulletin on Liturgy 25, no. 131 (Winter 1992) 245-249

2 Some of Archbishop James Hayes' thoughts on this matter have been published in Celebrate 32 (January-February 1993) 21-24
• The traditional sequence was the constant tradition of the church until this century. In Roman Catholic thought, confirmation has never been considered a rite of passage or a rite of baptismal reaffirmation. It became to some extent a rite of maturity only after knowledge of its origins were lost.

• It is the constant understanding of the church that eucharist is the completion and culmination of Christian initiation, not confirmation. It is eucharist, not confirmation, that sacramentally expresses full incorporation into the body of Christ.

• In present practice, confirmation receives greater emphasis in terms of preparation and catechesis than does first communion. Yet confirmation is less important theologically, and should therefore receive less attention.

• Reflection on the character of the liturgical ministry of bishops is leading some to think that bishops ought to concentrate on celebrating the eucharist with their diocesan church, rather than spend so much time with confirmation. Are bishops ordained to confirm, or to preside at eucharist?³

Dialogue with the Eastern Orthodox Churches

The traditional sequence is of the greatest importance to the Eastern Churches, who have told us that they consider our usual practice to be a scandal and an impediment to improved ecumenical relations. Frederick R. McManus, a Roman Catholic participant in the International Orthodox-Roman Catholic dialogue reports:

Both Orthodox and Catholic members of the commission, however, express [great] concern with a third divergence in Christian initiation: the widespread inversion of the traditional sequence of confirmation and eucharist. Put differently, the unity and order of sequence of the three sacraments of Christian initiation may still be vindicated even when they are celebrated separately, with a time lapse between the baptism of a child and his or her confirmation and first eucharistic communion. But the unity and meaning of initiation may be seriously undermined when the sequence is inverted, so that confirmation follows first communion and confirmation appears to be treated as the climax and completion of initiation. [This] issue seems to be the principal instance of Catholic-Orthodox divergence articulated in the dialogue so far: a disciplinary and pastoral difference perhaps, but one at variance with the doctrinal tradition of both churches.⁴

The official Catholic-Orthodox dialogue document states:

37. Christian initiation is a whole in which chrismation is the perfection of baptism, and the eucharist is the completion of the other two.

40. The early pattern included the following elements: 41...catechumen[ate], 42...baptism, 43...confirmation or chrismation,

³ See William Syklstad, "What is the right question about confirmation age?" Origins 21 (April 9, 1992) 701-705, and reference 2.

44...eucharist, during which the newly baptized and confirmed were admitted to the full participation in the body of Christ.

51. ...In certain Latin churches, for pastoral reasons, for example in order to better prepare confirmands at the beginning of adolescence, the practice has become more and more common of admitting to first communion baptized persons who have not yet received confirmation even though the disciplinary directives which called for the traditional order of the sacraments of Christian initiation have never been abrogated. This inversion, which provokes objections or understandable reservations both by Orthodox and Roman Catholics, calls for deep theological and pastoral reflection because pastoral practice should never lose sight of the meaning of the early tradition and its doctrinal importance. It is also necessary to recall here that baptism conferred after the age of reason in the Latin church is now always followed by confirmation and participation in the eucharist.5

Official Documents

Official documents tell us both how the church sees the relationship of confirmation to the other sacraments of initiation, and the matter of the age of children receiving confirmation. The passages quoted are among those collected by the late Mark Searle.6

Connection with the Rest of Initiation

Constitution on the Liturgy, 71.

The rite of confirmation is also to be revised in order that the intimate connection of this sacrament with the whole of Christian initiation may stand out more clearly; for this reason it is fitting for candidates to renew their baptismal promises just before they are confirmed.

Confirmation may be conferred within Mass when convenient; as for the rite outside Mass, a formulary is to be composed for use as an introduction.

Paul VI, Apostolic Constitution Divinae consortium, 1971 (DOL 2499, 2502):

The sharing of the divine nature received through the grace of Christ bears a certain likeness to the origin, development, and nourishing of natural life. The faithful are born anew by baptism, strengthened by the sacrament of confirmation, and finally are sustained by the food of eternal life in the eucharist . . . .

This makes clear the specific importance of confirmation for sacramental initiation, by which the faithful "as members of the living Christ are incor-

5 "Faith, Sacraments and the Unity of the Church," by the Joint International Commission for Theological Dialogue Between the Catholic Church and the Orthodox Church, Origins 17 (April 14, 1988) 743-749, especially 748-749

6 The Church Speaks about Sacraments with Children: Baptism, Confirmation, Eucharist, Penance, with commentary by Mark Searle (Chicago: Liturgy Training Publications 1990)
porated into him and configured to him through baptism and through con­
firmation and the eucharist." In baptism, the newly baptized receive for­
giveness of sins, adoption as children of God, and the character of Christ
by which they are made members of the Church and for the first time
become sharers in the priesthood of their Savior. Through the sacrament
of confirmation those who have been born anew in baptism receive the
inexpressible Gift, the Holy Spirit himself, by whom "they are endowed . . .
with special strength." Moreover, having been signed with the character
of this sacrament, they are "more closely bound to the Church" and "they
are more strictly obliged to spread and defend the faith, both by word and
by deed, as true witnesses of Christ". Finally, confirmation is so closely
linked with the holy eucharist that the faithful, after being signed by bap­
tism and confirmation, are incorporated fully into the body of Christ by
participation in the eucharist.

Sacred Congregation for Divine Worship, Introduction to the Rite of Con­
firmation, 1971 (DOL 2510-11):

1. Those who have been baptized continue on the path of Christian initia­
tion through the sacrament of confirmation. In this sacrament they receive
the Holy Spirit whom the Lord sent upon the apostles on Pentecost.

2. This giving of the Holy Spirit conforms believers more fully to Christ
and strengthens them so that they may bear witness to Christ for the
building up of his Body in faith and love. They are so marked with the
character or seal of the Lord that the sacrament of confirmation cannot
be repeated.

13. Confirmation takes place as a rule within Mass in order that the fun­
damental connection of this sacrament with all of Christian initiation may
stand out in clearer light. Christian initiation reaches its culmination in the
communion of the body and blood of Christ. The newly confirmed there­
fore participate in the eucharist, which completes their Christian initiation.

Code of Canon Law 879:
The sacrament of confirmation confers a character. By it the baptised
continue their path of christian initiation. They are enriched with the gift of
the Holy Spirit, and are more closely linked to the Church. They are
made strong and more firmly obliged by word and deed to witness to
Christ and to spread and defend the faith.

Code of Canon Law 866:
Unless there is a grave reason to the contrary, immediately after receiv­
ing baptism an adult is to be confirmed, to participate in the celebration of
the Eucharist and to receive holy communion.

Age for Confirmation

Rite of Confirmation

11. Adult catechumens and children who are baptized at an age when
they are old enough for catechesis should ordinarily be admitted to confir­
mation and the eucharist at the same time as they receive baptism . . .
Similarly, adults who were baptized in infancy should, after suitable prepa­
ration, receive confirmation and the eucharist in a common celebration.
With regard to children, in the Latin Church the administration of confirmation is generally delayed until about the seventh year. For pastoral reasons, however, especially to strengthen the faithful in complete obedience to Christ the Lord and in loyal testimony to him, episcopal conferences may choose an age which seems more appropriate, so that the sacrament is given at a more mature age after appropriate formation.

In this case precautions should be taken so that children will be confirmed at the proper time, even before the use of reason, where there is danger of death or other serious difficulty. They should not be deprived of the benefit of this sacrament.

Code of Canon Law 891

The sacrament of confirmation is to be conferred on the faithful at about the age of discretion unless the Conference of bishops determines another age or there is danger of death or in the judgment of the minister a grave cause urges otherwise.

Ministry to Adolescents

Concern for youth: Perhaps the main reason for celebrating confirmation with older children or adolescents, some years after their first holy communion, is the intention of ministering to young women and men of this age – an age in which many seem to leave the church and in which they need so much support and care.

To be completely honest, this commendable concern for teenagers often has little to do with the theological content of the sacrament of confirmation. In fact it is an occasion on which young people can be pressured into attending catechetical classes, it is an attempt to keep them from leaving the church (at least for a few more years), and parents and pastors hope that it will forestall pre-marital sex on the part of the youngsters.

These are legitimate needs, both of families and of the church, but they have little to do with confirmation, and confirmation by itself is unlikely to meet these needs. Would it not be better to name the real needs and find ways of meeting them, without forcing the liturgy of confirmation and the process of preparation for this celebration, to do things they are not meant to do?

Many liturgies needed: In addition, confirmation happens only once, whether at the beginning of adolescence, in the middle, or at the end of this period. But teenagers surely need the church’s ministry throughout their adolescence. Putting all our eggs in the one basket of confirmation does not do justice to the needs of the young people, nor does it allow local church communities to be sufficiently creative in finding opportunities for ministry.

Penance celebrations: Teenagers may also need several different kinds of liturgical celebration. Penance celebrations may be appropriate, as youngsters know that they offend others, feel inadequate and imperfect, and are aware of their woundedness. They also need affirmation, whether in penance celebrations or other liturgies, for they also feel sinned against, and their poor self-esteem needs a boost.
Other special liturgies might be celebrated with teenagers through the period of adolescence, whether in schools or in the parish. These would provide opportunities for the use of music that they like (so long as it is compatible with the liturgy), drama and other forms of expression that might be suitable for them.

Every Sunday: Of great importance will be efforts to integrate teenagers into the regular liturgies of the parish. They should feel at home every Sunday; an annual "teen" mass is not enough. Preachers and music ministers should be aware of the needs of adolescents (and other segments of the parish population). They might also be integrated into the regular liturgical ministries, always taking into account the shyness that often characterizes these young people.

Baptismal covenant: If affirmation of faith by teenagers is seen as a value, there are many occasions when this can be done, and it can be done more than once during adolescence. We in fact all renew our baptismal commitment each Sunday (through both the creed and eucharistic prayer), at Easter, at each celebration of baptism, and whenever we use the rite of blessing and sprinkling of water. If individuals or small groups want to affirm their baptismal faith at the Sunday eucharist, this surely can be accommodated.

Rites of passage? Finally, if we as a Christian community feel that a rite of passage or puberty rite is needed for teenagers, or a rite that recognizes social maturity at age 16 or 18, then let us create such rites. We are free to celebrate any special moment in a person's life. But such rites are not confirmation, and confirmation does not have such meanings. This was the case in some regions of Canada when solemn communion was celebrated at the end of elementary school.

Ministry to adolescents should have a high priority in the life of the church. Confirmation, however, is not the appropriate vehicle for this. Surely we can be more creative!

Selected Reading

Gerald Austin, Anointing with the Spirit. The Rite of Confirmation: the Use of Oil and Chrism (New York: Pueblo 1985)

The Church Speaks About Sacraments with Children: Baptism, Confirmation, Eucharist, Penance, with commentary by Mark Searle (Chicago: Liturgy Training Publications 1990)


James A. Wilde, ed., When Should We Confirm. The Order of Initiation (Chicago: Liturgy Training Publications 1989)

James A. Wilde, ed., Confirmed as Children, Affirmed as Teens. The Order of Initiation (Chicago: Liturgy Training Publications 1990)
Liturgical of the Hours for Passion (Palm) Sunday

On Passion (Palm) Sunday we rightly focus our attention on the Procession and on the proclamation of the Passion of our Lord Jesus Christ. The Liturgy of the Hours for this day is very rich and deserves our attention and contemplation.

In general, Morning Prayer speaks about the entrance of Jesus into Jerusalem, while Evening Prayer I and Evening Prayer II speak about his passion, death and resurrection. However, this distinction has several exceptions.

The antiphons, responsories, intercessions and readings of morning and evening prayer for Passion (Palm) Sunday are wonderful resources for our prayer and meditation. In this presentation, texts that refer to the two themes of this Sunday are given separately.

Entrance into Jerusalem

The antiphons tell the story of the procession and its meaning for us:

Praise to our King, the Son of David, the Redeemer of the world; praise to the Savior whose coming had been foretold by the prophets.

The great crowd that had gathered for the feast cried out to the Lord: Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. Hosanna in the highest.

God grant that with the angels and the children we may be faithful, and sing with them to the conqueror of death: Hosanna in the highest.

Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord; peace in heaven and glory in the highest.

With psalms let us welcome the Lord as he comes, with songs and hymns let us run to meet him, as we offer him our joyful worship and sing: Blessed be the Lord.

The reading for morning prayer is from Zechariah 9. 9.

Rejoice heart and soul, daughter of Zion!
Shout with gladness, daughter of Jerusalem!
See now, your king comes to you;
he is victorious, he is triumphant,
humble and riding on a donkey,
on a colt, the foal of a donkey.
The intercessions begin:

As Christ entered Jerusalem he was greeted as King and Messiah. Let us adore him, and joyfully praise him: Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.

The intercessions themselves tend to speak of Christ's victory and the entire paschal mystery.

You longed to gather to yourself the people of Jerusalem, as the hen gathers her young.
Teach all peoples to recognize the hour of your visitation.
Hosanna to you, Son of David, King of the ages.
Hosanna to you, victor over death and the power of darkness.
You went up to Jerusalem to suffer and so enter into your glory.
Lead your Church into the paschal feast of heaven.

The Passion and Cross

The antiphons first speak with the voice of Jesus. They then tell the story of the passion and its meaning for us.

Day after day I sat teaching you in the temple and you did not lay hands on me. Now you come to scourge me and lead me to the cross.
The Lord God is my help; no shame can harm me.
The Lord Jesus humbled himself by showing obedience even when this meant death, death on a cross.
Christ was scourged and treated with contempt; but God's right hand has raised him up.
The blood of Christ washes away our sins and makes us worthy to serve the living God.
Christ bore our sins in his own body on the cross so that we might die to sin and be alive to all that is good.

In the responsories we sing:

We worship you, O Christ, and we praise you.
Because by your cross you have redeemed the world.
By your own blood, Lord, you brought us back to God.
From every tribe, and tongue, and people and nation.

The intercessions begin:

Before his passion, Christ looked out over Jerusalem and wept for it, because it had not recognized the hour of God's visitation. With sorrow for our sins, let us adore him, and say: Lord, have mercy on your people.
The Savior of mankind by dying destroyed death and by rising again restored life. Let us humbly ask him: Sanctify your people, redeemed by your blood.
The intercessions themselves speak of the Christian life:

Do not forsake those who have forsaken you.
Turn our hearts to you, and we will return to you, our God.
Through your passion you gave grace to the world.
Help us to live always by your Spirit, given to us in baptism.
By your passion, help us to deny ourselves.
And so prepare to celebrate your resurrection.

You made your cross the tree of life
Grant its fruit to those reborn in baptism.

Savior of mankind, you came to save sinners
Bring into your kingdom all who have faith, hope and love.

Redeemer of the world, give us a great share of your passion, through a
deeper spirit of repentance, so that we may share the glory of your resur-
rection.

May your Mother, comfort of the afflicted, protect us.
May we console others as you console us.

Look with love on those who suffer because of our indifference.
Come to their aid, and turn our uncaring hearts to works of justice and
charity.

You humbled yourself by being obedient even to accepting death, death
on a cross.

Give all who serve you the gifts of obedience and patient endurance.

Transform the bodies of the dead to be like your own in glory; and bring
us at last into their fellowship.

The opening prayers sum up the mystery of this great Sunday.

Almighty, ever-living God,
you have given the human race Jesus Christ our Savior
as a model of humility.
He fulfilled your will
by becoming man and giving his life on the cross.
Help us to bear witness to you
by following his example of suffering
and make us worthy to share his resurrection.
We ask this through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,
who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,
one God, for ever and ever.

Almighty Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,
you sent your Son
to be born of woman and to die on a cross,
so that through the obedience of one man,
estrangement might be dissolved for all men.
Guide our minds by his truth
and strengthen our lives by the example of his death,
that we may live in union with you
in the kingdom of your promise.
Grant this through Christ our Lord.
Saints’ Names from the Hebrew Scriptures

In addition to celebrating our birthday and the anniversary of our baptism, some of us like to celebrate our “name day” as well. In fact it is an ancient Christian custom to remember the feast day of the saint whose name we bear.

In some cases we have to do some research to find out on what day our “name saint” is remembered in the calendar of the church. Only a limited number of saints are listed in the present liturgical calendar. Many more names are given in the Roman Martyrology,¹ and reference works such as Butler’s Lives of the Saints² are treasuries of information regarding saints and their feast days.

Finding the right day to celebrate one’s name day is particularly difficult for those of us who bear the names of the holy women and men of the Hebrew Scriptures or Old Testament. The names of a few Hebrew men are included in the Roman Martyrology, but no women.

A version of the Martyrology was published in 1526, however, that included an extensive collection of Old Testament personages.³ One Richard Whytford, a brother of the Order of St. Bridget (of Sweden), living in the monastery of Syon in London, England, translated the standard Martyrology of his day from Latin into English. To the “regular” text, he added the names of many other persons whose feast days were celebrated in a less formal manner by the people of his time.

Whytford spoke of these Old Testament persons as “saints,” and paid them the same respect as he did saints of later times. Many of the names he included are not in common use today, however; we do not give children names such as Methusalah or Arphaxat.

The following list, taken from Whytford’s version of the Martyrology, gives all of the women of the Hebrew Scriptures that he recognized as saints, plus biblical men whose names are still in common use today. The list begins in January and proceeds through the year. In some cases he adds comments about individuals or groups of persons. The spelling of names has been modernized for clarity.

¹ The Roman Martyrology, trans. R. Collins (Westminster: Newman Bookshop 1946). A revised, post-Vatican II version of this book has not yet been completed.
³ The Martiloge in Englysshe after the Use of the chirche of Salisbury and as it is redde in Syon with addicysons. Printed by Wynkyn de Worde in 1526. Ed. F. Procter and E.S. Dewick (London: Henry Bradshaw Society 1893)
23 January. The feast of our first parents, Saint Adam and Saint Eve.

5 February. The high patriarch and priest Saint Abraham, unto whom was made the first express promise of our savior and salvation.

• Saint Sarah his wife
• Saint Isaac the patriarch, son and heir unto Abraham, that was born when his father was of the age of 100 years, and his mother Sarah 80
• Saint Rebecca his wife
• Saint Jacob their son
• Saint Rachel and Saint Leah his wives.
• Saint Joseph, [who] was sold into Egypt and ruled all the land and brought thither his father, brothers and all his kin, whose lineage was brought thence by miracle over the reed sea.

1 May. In Egypt, the feast of the prophet Jeremiah (Jeremy), a martyr of the Old Testament, that of the people was murdered with stones cast upon him in a great heap and so died at a place called Taphnas.

1 July. On mount Hor, the feast and deposition of Saint Aaron, the first priest of the old law, that was consecrated by Moses.

• The feast also of Miriam (Mary) the prophetess, sister unto Moses and Aaron, that as Moses was leader of the men and among the children of Israel, so was she of the women.

13 July. The feast of Saint Joel and Saint Esdras the prophets.

1 August. At Antioch, the martyrdom of the seven holy brothers, the Mac­cabees, and their mother . . . .

• The feast also of Saint Solomon, son unto king David.

20 August. The feast of Saint Samuel the prophet.

28 August. The feast of Saint Daniel the holy prophet.

• The feast also of Saint Susanna (Susan), whom Daniel delivered from the deadly accusation of the false judges. (In the present Roman martyrology, Daniel is commemorated on 21 July.)

1 September. The feast of Saint Jesus Nave, called also Joshua, that next after Moses was captain and duke of the children of Israel.

• The feast of Saint Gideon the prophet.

1 September. The feast of Saint Rahab, the common woman that lodged and saved the 12 searchers.

• Saint Deborah the prophetess that with her husband Barak was the third Judge of Israel
• Saint Sampson the 11th Judge
• The feast also of Saint Ruth the holy widow.
4 September. The feast of Saint Moses the prophet and leader of the children of Israel out of Egypt.

14 September. The feast of the famous widow Saint Judith that for the deliverance of the people of God put herself in great danger and yet by the help of our Lord she slew Holofernes and accomplished her holy purpose.

- The feast also of the holy widow the queen Saint Ruth
- The feast of Saint Esther a queen also.

9 October. The feast of the holy patriarch Saint Abraham. (See 5 February as well.)

29 December. At Jerusalem the feast of Saint David king and prophet.

- At Bethlehem the feast of Saint Jesse, father unto Saint David the prophet, and a man of noble blood and holy conversation.

- The feast also of Saint Nathan who in the time of David and Solomon was the prophet of God.

Neither in 1526 nor today is this list an “official” one. However, it remains a pious and creative use of the Christian imagination that challenges us to think of ways of celebrating the heritage of the Hebrew Scriptures, especially for those of use who bear one or another of these names.
On Liturgical Correctness

Today we sometimes hear questions such as “What is liturgically correct?” or “Is this or that liturgically correct?” Alternatively, one hears statements made with great certainty: “This or that is (or is not) liturgically correct.” What are we to think of this expression, which is based on the phrase “politically correct” that is in such common use today?

A poor view of liturgy: It seems to this writer that the term “liturgically correct” expresses or assumes a very poor view of what liturgy is all about, and ought to be vigorously avoided. It seems to assume or express the following:

- That liturgy is all about rules and regulations. If one learns all these rules, then one can do liturgy correctly, and one knows all about liturgy.
- That there is only one right way to celebrate our liturgies.
- That one should approach liturgy with a “law and order” kind of attitude.
- That only experts in the rules and regulations can pronounce on authentic liturgy, and that all experts agree on every point.
- That one should not think about or reflect upon our liturgical practices and books, and certainly never question them.
- That neither pluralism nor cultural adaptation is legitimate; we all have to do everything the same way.
- That there are no tensions, let alone contradictions, within the liturgy.
- That there are, or should be, liturgical police officers to make sure that we are all doing it right.

Rubricism: All this speaks, not of liturgy, but of rubricism — a preoccupation with the “how” of liturgy and with the rules and directions offered in the liturgical books. This was an attitude that was common in the pre-Vatican II era, when liturgical books and textbooks were filled with endless lists of “how to do it”, but one could only rarely find a “why.”

Vatican II intended to repudiate and put an end to rubricism, and it is sad to find it creeping back again. An important part of the post-Vatican II liturgical renewal is precisely to emphasize liturgical principles — the “why” behind our liturgical celebrations. The rubrics (“how”) grow out of these principles and are secondary and subservient to the basic principles. Thus chapter 2 of the General Instruction of the Roman Missal gives us principles and tells us the meaning and purpose of the different parts of the eucharistic liturgy. Only then comes chapter 4, which gives detailed directions.

The General Instruction also begins and ends with sections that tell us that adaptation is absolutely required:

Therefore it is of the greatest importance that the celebration of the Mass, the Lord’s Supper, be so arranged that the ministers and the faithful who take their own proper part in it may more fully receive its good effects. (2)

This purpose will best be accomplished if, after due regard for the nature and circumstances of each assembly, the celebration is planned in such a way
that it brings about in the faithful a participation in body and spirit that is con-
scious, active, full, and motivated by faith, hope and charity. The Church
desires this kind of participation, the nature of the celebration demands it, and
for the Christian people it is a right and duty they have by reason of their bap-
tism. (3)

The pastoral effectiveness of a celebration will be heightened if the texts of
readings, prayers and songs correspond as closely as possible to the needs,
religious dispositions, and aptitude of the participants. This will be achieved by
an intelligent use of the broad options described in this chapter. (313)

**Tensions:** These principles calling for adaptation quite naturally are in tension with
the rule that priests are not to change anything.

**There is a place for rubrics:** in fact they are quite necessary. But they serve the
liturgy; they are subordinate to the basic principles. Rubrics alone cannot give life.

**Liturgy is not a set of rules:** it is not simply doing this or that correctly. Liturgy is a
way of living, a kind of relationship with the Triune God and as well, a way of being
in relationship with all women and men. Liturgy is giving glory to God, who in scrip-
ture has denounced formalism and rubricism over and over again. Liturgy is open-
ing ourselves to the transforming action of the Holy Spirit. Liturgy is entering into the
death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. All this is minimalized or contradicted by the
spirit of “liturgical correctness.”

**The people of God:** Finally, “liturgical correctness” denies the good sense and
Christian spirit of the people of God. It favors a class of “experts” who know what is
correct and not correct; who have a superior knowledge and who are “above” the
common folk. We need to remember, that whatever additional liturgical formation
and catechesis we all need, we have all been baptized as priests, prophets and
kings in Jesus Christ; we all are temples of the Holy Spirit, and we all are children of
God.

**How we live:** Finally, as our worship can never be perfect, we are called upon con-
stantly to evaluate it, reflect upon it, and improve it. Our criteria here are not how
well we follow the rules — though these are not unimportant — but how well we live
the gospel of Jesus Christ during the week.

**Liturgists and Terrorists**

**Today** one also runs into the following dialogue, which is supposed to be a “joke.”

What is the difference between a liturgist and a terrorist? You can negotiate
with a terrorist.

**One sometimes hears this** from persons who have been badgered by rubricists —
the folks who are worried about liturgical correctness. Unfortunately, liturgists are
confused with rubricists, and while they should be condemning the rubricists, they in
fact mock the liturgists. There is a big difference.

**Alternatively,** one hears this from persons who think they know all they need to
know about the liturgy, and who want to do everything their own way — not the
church’s way. Often they know little about liturgical principles, and just want to “wing
it.” They use this “joke” to avoid listening to real liturgists who want to draw the
teaching of the church to their attention.

In neither case is it funny.
Antiphons at the Washing of Feet

Ancient Christian custom suggests that we sing during the washing of the feet at the Evening Mass of the Lord's Supper on Holy Thursday. In the past Christians sang a series of short antiphons, though today we often use some appropriate hymn.

Roman Missal of 1970

Five of the six antiphons in our contemporary sacramentary tell the story of the footwashing in John 13; the sixth is from 1 Corinthians.

1 The Lord Jesus, when he had eaten with his disciples, poured water into a basin and began to wash their feet, saying: this example I leave you. (compare John 13. 4, 5, 15)

2 Responsory: Lord, do you wash my feet?

Jesus said to him: If I do not wash your feet, you can have no part with me. (Responsory)

So he came to Simon Peter, who said to him: (Responsory)

Now you do not know what I am doing, but later you will understand. (Responsory) (John 13. 6, 7, 8)

3 If I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, then surely you must wash one another's feet. (John 13. 14)

4 Jesus said to his disciples: if there is this love among you, all will know that you are my disciples. (John 13. 35)

5 I give you a new commandment: love one another as I have loved you. (John 13. 34)

6 Faith, hope, and love, let these endure among you; and the greatest of these is love. (I Corinthians 13. 13)

Roman Missal of 1570

Most of the same antiphons were also used in the pre-Vatican II missal. However, this liturgical book contained the following antiphons as well.

A new commandment I give unto you: That you love one another, as I have loved you, says the Lord.

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Antiphon:
Where charity and love are, there is God.

Verses:
The love of Christ has gathered us together.
Let us rejoice in him and be glad.
Let us fear and love the living God,
And let us love one another with a sincere heart.

Antiphon:
Where charity and love are, there is God.

Verses:
When therefore, we are assembled as one,
Let us take heed, that we be not divided in mind.
Let malignant quarrels and contentions cease,
And let Christ our God dwell in the midst of us.

Antiphon:
Where charity and love are, there is God.

Verses:
Let us also with the blessed see
Thy face in glory, O Christ our God.
There to possess an immense and happy joy
For infinite ages of ages. Amen.

Medieval Sources
The medieval missals and sacramentaries contained a much larger variety of antiphons and verses. Of these, several are based on the accounts of the woman who anointed Jesus, rather than on the anointing of the disciples by Jesus.

In diebus illis
One is an almost exact quotation from Luke 7. 37-38. This was used in a number of medieval liturgical books.

(In those days), a woman in the city, who was a sinner, having learned that he [Jesus] was eating in the Pharisee’s house, brought an alabaster jar of ointment. She stood behind him at his feet, weeping, and began to bathe his feet with her tears and to dry them with her hair.

Mulier quae erat
A less commonly used version of the same passage reads:
A woman in the city, who was a sinner, brought an alabaster jar of ointment, and standing behind him, near the Lord’s feet, began to bathe his feet with her tears, and dry them with her hair.

1 Hermanus A. P. Schmidt, Hebdomada Sancta. 2 vol. (Roma: Herder 1956-1957), II, 763-777


Maria ergo unxit

Another quite commonly used antiphon is based on John 12. 3; this skips over the words, “took a pound of costly perfume made of pure nard.”

Mary therefore...anointed Jesus’ feet, and wiped them with her hair. The house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume.

Accept Maria

This antiphon appears only in liturgical books belonging to English monasteries of women: the Benedictine sisters of Chester, and those of Barking Abbey, near London. It begins by quoting John 12, and uses the words omitted in the antiphon just quoted. It then uses material from Luke 7, with some freedom; the final text seems a little confused.

Mary took a pound of costly perfume made of pure nard, and anointed the feet of Jesus, and she wiped them with her hair, standing behind him, near the feet of the Lord, and the sinful woman kissed and washed the Lord’s feet.

Mittens hec mulier

In Matthew and Mark, the woman who anointed Jesus anointed his head, not his feet. This part of the story is therefore not appropriate for the washing of feet on Holy Thursday. One English monastery of women, however, used the end of the story from these gospels. The following is based on Matthew 26. 12.

By pouring this ointment on my body she has prepared me for burial. Truly I tell you, wherever this good news is proclaimed in the whole world, what she has done will be told in remembrance of her.

Sinite mulierem

This antiphon, also used at Barking Abbey, is based on Mark 14. 6.

Let her alone; why do you trouble her? She has performed a good service for me.

(We do not know if the quotation continued.)

Two other antiphons were used at Barking Abbey that seem to refer to Mary of these gospel stories, Emit Maria and Felix Maria. However, they have not yet been traced to specific scripture passages.

This glimpse of the richness of our musical tradition for the footwashing of Holy Thursday, may inspire us in our choice of music today.

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2 J. Wickham Legg, ed., The Processional of the Nuns of Chester (London: Henry Bradshaw Society 1099)
The Vigil of Pentecost at the Rio Earth Summit

Rebecca Larson

Lutheran Pastor Rebecca Larson, formerly of Saskatoon and Edmonton, now lives in Geneva, Switzerland where she is on the staff of the World Council of Churches (WCC). She was part of the WCC delegation to the Global Forum of the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil last spring. Prior to the Summit itself, the WCC had a separate meeting at the town of Nova Iguacu. One of Pastor Larson’s responsibilities was planning worship for this and related gatherings. At the end of the meeting the WCC delegates were invited to the cathedral for the celebration of the Vigil of Pentecost. Her description of this experience is reproduced here, with permission. She writes:

The overnight Pentecost vigil which was the culmination of our WCC meeting in Nova Iguacu, is a tradition which has been practiced for some years in the diocese of Duque de Caixias. The people of this community are poor, mostly black, and attend some dozens of parishes surrounding the cathedral. Their bishop, Dom Morelli, a liberal and ecumenical Roman Catholic and, as I discovered, an extremely charismatic leader, had invited us to participate in the vigil and use the Sunday Pentecost worship as our concluding service for our meeting.

The vigil was limited to 750 participants – about 150 of us, members of the Brazil Council of Churches, national and local committee members of our meeting and some 400-plus representatives of base Christian communities in the surrounding parish.

The vigil itself began at 10:30 p.m. in the cathedral, in shadows. There was some last minute scurrying for seats and headphones as we had transported all of the translation equipment, including the booths, so that we could have simultaneous interpretation for our people (English, Portuguese and Spanish). When all was settled, our little candle was carried forward in silence.

The Paschal Candle was lit, the lights raised, and we launched into the first of numerous lively songs which can only be described as a Brazilian samba version of a “singspiration.” Our groups bounced and clapped and raised our hands with the rest of them.

What followed was a welcome, a series of introductions, and then a symbolic embracing of the community by all those groups who had done the work for the vigil. Accompanied by song, those responsible for food, music, liturgy, medical care, infrastructure, etc. formed a circle around the outside of the pews and everyone sang and danced their thanks to them. It was hard to fall asleep since the singing was led by a very loudly amplified female voice, and the dancing was nonstop.
This led into a penitential rite presided over by the President of the Lutheran World Federation, Dr Brachmeier. (My job in all this was to identify, recruit, brief and keep track of the 30 odd WCC people who were at different points participants in leadership roles. It was tricky with such a press of people, and not really knowing myself what to expect or what would happen. Besides, it was all taking place in Portuguese.)

The penitential rite was organized around testimonies given by different sectors of the community — women, youth, labour, and — a touchingly beautiful one — “old people.” For each, prayers were offered and forgiveness sought for the communities’ failures in meeting their needs.

The sharing of the peace concluded this first part. Dozens of flasks of perfumed oil were passed around. People were to anoint one another (this word wasn’t used) with the perfume of Christ, all the while dancing and singing a Portuguese song recalling the disciples gathered in Jerusalem on Pentecost as were the people gathered there in the church.

Then, it was time for lunch (a good thing as many of us felt like nodding off by then) — about 1:30 a.m. after a long and strenuous final day of our meeting. Imagine serving 700 bowls of hot chicken soup (with typical white Brazilian bread) within about 20 minutes, or of recruiting the people to cook, serve and clean up. It was delicious and, of course, planned for the purpose of giving all of us our second wind.

Liturgy of the Word

When we returned to the cathedral it was again shrouded in shadow. From the back, seven torches burned brightly. To the accompaniment of really riotous singing, the torchbearers moved forward surrounding a woman holding the Bible aloft while dancing vivaciously but beautifully, followed by seven other wildly dancing women, all of whom were, typical in Brazil, wearing the scanty dress of the samba dancer. We came to describe this scene as “liturgical samba.” I was very proud of one of our delegates, an African bishop of the Episcopal church from Madagascar whose job it was to stand, vested, at the altar, and to receive the Bible with a properly reverent look on his face, kiss it, hold it aloft, and pass it to the reader (an ordained woman from the Anglican church in Brazil) who, flanked by seven flaming torches, read the Gospel. Again, lots of singing and dancing.

The meditation began with two women from our group giving reflections on the work of the Holy Spirit in their lives. The first, Tatiana, is from Moscow, and spoke of how the Holy Spirit had kept the church alive during the communist regime. The second women, Ruth, is from India. She is a Dalit woman, an “untouchable”, and spoke of how the Holy Spirit gave Dalit women a sense of personhood and dignity despite the social degradations and menial tasks which marked their daily lives.

The high point was a 40 or so minute reflection by Leonardo Boff, the liberation theologian who has spent the past year working with theology of creation and environment issues.

After the meditation there were lots of lights, singing and dancing as we all moved again to the cavernous parish hall for another break, and all the
bananas and fresh oranges we could eat. Again, this break was designed to revive dropping spirits, but was most appreciated by those who stayed in the cathedral to stretch out on the now empty pews for the half hour break.

Procession of Fire

It was now 4:30 a.m. In the front courtyard of the cathedral a huge bonfire (unlit) had been built, about 12 feet high. A procession of clergy, including Emilio Castro, the WCC General Secretary, was led by the seven torches to surround the wood. Seven prayers to the Holy Spirit were offered, interspersed with seven songs, still led by the loud voice on a mike system which now boomed out of a truck and must have awakened the whole city. The 700 participants stood around and would continue standing until the service finally ended at 8:30 a.m.!! After the prayers the fire was lit with the seven torches, and from the fire individual candles for all of the participants were lit as well.

More singing while the mike/sound van led the procession – clergy and torches first, followed by the candles flickering in the dark. It was really quite amazing and deeply moving to walk through the broken streets with their sagging buildings, passing at each corner other processions from other churches waiting to join ours, singing our lungs out in appalling Portuguese and carrying candles with all of their latent symbolism within the international community as well as in Brazil.

By dawn we reached the square, swallowed up into a sea of people, for the concluding part of the service. The WCC people participated in the blessing of symbols of the earth (water, earth, plants, fruit, stones, rocks) in different languages, with all the exotic pageantry and folkloric that we could muster. The women in saris and Caribbean dress were swamped for autographs. Meanwhile there was the blessing of seven huge baskets of bread, which was done in Hungarian. (By this time there were thousands of people stretching down the streets as far as you could see.) The bread was shared in what we all were careful to agree was not a Eucharist. We were terribly tired, as we were still on our feet, and the service stretched on and on and on. Finally, Emilio Castro preached briefly, our letter to the churches was read and distributed to representatives of the continents.

We headed for home, had a quick breakfast, and collapsed on our beds, thankful that there were fewer mosquitoes if you sleep in the day, and praying that it would not get too hot. An unforgettable Pentecost!

The four scriptural accounts of the Last Supper remind us of the different emphases that can be made concerning the eucharist. The rich variety of themes that are found in the Patristic writings and in Christian literature remind us of the wealth of theological understanding of the eucharist. This volume traces the practice and understanding of the eucharist in the first 1500 years of Christianity.

The author helps contemporary Christians to rediscover the vast treasure of the eucharist by highlighting the approach of the various epochs of history in order that we do not remain with our limited or biased understanding.


This volume which was noted in a previous edition of the Bulletin is a compendium of prayers and psalm-prayers which flow from Scripture. Originally published in Ireland, it is now available in a US edition.

These prayers have many uses: as meditation after reading Scripture, as concluding prayers for the General Intercessions at Mass, or in conjunction with the Liturgy of the Hours.


Part of the task of liturgical renewal is to let ritual speak. Yet, this is very difficult when the congregation is not comfortable with its bodily existence and when a "spirituality" denies a role to ritual. On the opposite side of the coin is the use of empty ritual which has very little connection with the congregation. In this volume, the author shows that good ritual has the power to deliver both sides of religious experience: immanence and transcendence. What results is an excellent work in a clear readable style that will help the reader to develop a healthier attitude to symbol and ritual. The book is filled with concrete examples which illustrate the points the author makes.


In a busy world, a collection of short and to the point writings is always appreciated. This volume contains 10 homilies on the Mass that are up-to-date, clear and to the point. It also contains material for bulletin inserts and discussion questions.

Preaching the Mass is not teaching the Mass. The primary function of the homily is not to impart reformation, but that those who have gathered may do so more deeply and fully. In this, the book is most successful.


Very often liturgy is a distinct field of study from the sacraments. As the author points out, liturgy very often ignored any doctrinal depth to its subject, and the study of sacraments failed to take seriously any note of the fact that its subject had a liturgical face.

The writings of the author centre around the challenge to weave together the many faces of the Church at prayer: the doctrinal, the historical, the biblical, the effectiveness and the celebration of liturgy. In this vein the author writes that the
sacraments are the liturgy of the Church: to study the liturgy, is to study the faith of the Church.

As usual, the author writes in a clear and insightful style.


David Power has chosen for this collection of his works, articles which deal with worship and cultural sensitivity. The author’s experience in international settings provides a background for his reflection. His premise is that theology is a bridge between liturgy and culture.

The author offers theological reflection on a variety of topics in a readable fashion. The last section on “Forms of Worship” contains much for reflection.


This volume in Pastoral Press’ series on Worship is a reprinting and editing of some of Kenneth Stevenson’s writings on the eucharist, marriage and “Ashes and Light.” The section on the eucharist examines intercessions, eucharistic offering and sacrificial, inclusion/exclusion at the eucharist. On marriage, the author looks at historical lessons, the prayers of blessing and the present rites of marriage. The section entitled “Ashes to Light” looks at the Origin of Ash Wednesday, ceremonies of light, especially the Easter Vigil and Candlemas.

Stevenson’s writing is scholarly and personal. At times the reader is made to feel as if the author is conducting a tour through history.


This volume is a sequel to Liturgies of the Future: The Process and Methods of Inculturation (1989, Paulist Press) and reviews the different technical terms expressing the relationship between liturgy and culture before proceeding to discuss the questions of sacramentals, popular religiosity, and liturgical catechesis. Inculturation is a popular theme today, hopefully not just as a passing fad, but a genuine, long-term field of study and practice. For if liturgy is to relate to the religious experience of the Church, it must speak to and interact within a particular culture and with popular religiosity.

The text is very readable, but as the author points out, this is a new area of liturgy that still contains a lot of uncertainties. Fellow liturgists are invited to enter into these reflections to make liturgy alive and relevant to our time.

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The Canadian Liturgical Society and the Hymn Society in the United States and Canada will conduct a conference on July 4-8, 1993 in Toronto. The Themes: JUSTICE IN WORSHIP, WORD, AND SONG. Leading worship leaders, clergy, musicians, and liturgical artists will present a stimulating program which will include new hymnal showcases, public hymn festivals, and twenty-two small group sessions on all aspects of worship and hymn singing. The major addresses will be:


The Development of a Feminist Perspective in Poetic Art Forms – Ruth Duck

The Three-Year Lectionary and Hymnody – Marilyn Kay Stulken

Native North American Expressions – Stan MacKay

Conference events will be held at Toronto churches and the Ryerson Polytechnic Institute and are open to all interested persons.

For complete information, call The Hymn Society, 1-800-THE HYMN.

For additional information:

W. Thomas Smith
The Hymn Society in the United States and Canada
Box 30854
Texas Christian University
Fort Worth, Texas 76129
Telephone: 1-800-THE HYMN or
(817) 921-7608

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Announcing...

*Catholic Book of Worship III*

Now that the manuscript is nearing completion and the job of typesetting has begun, it is possible to give a more accurate date of presentation. The choir edition will be released for sale in the summer of 1993. Work on the pew edition will begin soon and a publication date of late 1993 or early 1994 is planned. Both editions will have more pages than previously announced.

**Weekday Lectionary (NRSV) – Available in the fall of 1993**

The third edition of the Weekday Lectionary will be printed in 2 volumes: using sense-lines as in the Sunday Lectionary.

A – *Advent to Pentecost: (November-June)*

It will include the ferial and sanctoral readings from the First Week of Advent to Pentecost, including the Sanctoral cycle for this period and the Commons.

B – *Ordinary Time: (June to November)*

It will include the ferial readings from the Sixth Week of Ordinary Time to the Thirty-Fourth Week, including the Sanctoral cycle for this period and the Commons.

**Lectionary for Ritual and Various Celebrations**

This separate volume of readings for Ritual Masses and Various Occasions will be published in early 1994. It will contain the readings for the Sacraments of Initiation, Healing, Marriages, Ordinations and Funerals, plus Masses for various occasions, including Votive Masses.

**The Book of the Gospels**

The first Canadian edition of the Book of the Gospels will contain the gospels for all Sundays, Solemnities and Feasts, Ritual Masses, Commons and Select Masses for Various Occasions. To be published in early 1994.