

**These notes are intended to help the families or friends of those arranging a Requiem Mass in our churches.**

## **What to do**

The first step is to speak to the Funeral Directors. Tell them that the deceased person is a Catholic and that you wish to arrange the Requiem Mass. They will then contact the parish priest and fix a time and day. The Funeral Directors deal with all the costs.

## **Burial or Cremation?**

Burial has always been the tradition of the Church, because it expresses more fully the belief in the Resurrection of the Body. However, cremation is permitted, provided that it is not a deliberate statement contrary to Christian belief. The ash remains should normally be given the dignity of a burial.

## **Reception into Church**

The body comes into Church with a brief liturgy on the evening before the funeral. It is generally kept by those who frequented the church often in their lives. If you wish this to happen, you should tell the Funeral Directors.

## **Order of Service**

The texts of the Requiem Mass are laid down in the Roman Missal. There are some choices, which you may make: the scripture readings and the hymns (if desired).

You may wish to have an Order of Service printed for the funeral. The Funeral Directors may do this, but you should have it approved by the parish priest first.

The wording on the front of the Order of Service should always be "Requiem Mass for the Repose of the Soul of..."

Phrases such as "Celebration of the Life of ..." or "Thanksgiving for the Life of..." do not reflect Christian belief and should NOT be used for funerals that take place in church.

Our principal purpose at a Requiem Mass or Funeral Service is to pray for the deceased person.

## **Scripture Readings**

The priest can advise you in the choice of scripture readings for the Mass.

Only scriptural readings are permitted, from those laid out in the Lectionary of the Roman Catholic Church. These may not be amended in any way.

If there are family members or friends who wish to read during the Mass you should speak to the priest beforehand so that he can ensure that they know what to do.

The General Instruction on the Roman Missal states that, "At the Funeral Mass there should, as a rule, be a short homily, but never a eulogy of any kind."

The priest will preach during the Requiem Mass, and he may make some brief remarks about the life of the person. However, the main purpose of the homily is to preach the Gospel and to instil in us hope in the Resurrection.

It is better that no extra comments are made during the Mass. However, if the priest permits, then one person may make a brief statement about the eulogy at the beginning or end of the Mass. This should last no more than five minutes, and the text must be shown to the priest beforehand.

## **Music**

Only sacred music may be used in church and recorded music is never permitted. You may wish to have hymns during the Mass, but there is no obligation to do so. If you think that there will not be a good participation by the congregation it is better not to have any hymns. You should discuss the choice of hymns with the priest and any hymns chosen must be appropriate. Whether or not you have any hymns, the priest can arrange for an organist to play suitable sacred music.

## **Symbols used in a Requiem Mass**

Black vestments are worn as a symbol of grief. The coffin is sprinkled with holy water as a reminder of Baptism, and the Paschal Candle may also stand nearby as a symbol of the Resurrection. Incense is often used to remind us of our prayers rising to God on behalf of the deceased, and to reverence the remains that are a temple of the Holy Spirit. The coffin will usually have a crucifix on it. Other items such as flowers and flags must not go on the coffin inside the church, as they would distract from the Christian symbols and make too much of a distinction between different persons.

## **Burial**

After the Mass (or Funeral Service) the coffin is taken to the cemetery (or crematorium). There is then a brief service of committal.

## **Collections at Funerals held in this church**

Only collections to benefit this church and parish may take place inside the church.

If you wish to have donations for other charities given in remembrance of the Deceased, this can be done through the offices of the Funeral Director, but a collection may not take place at or in the church.

## **Masses for the Dead**

Our faith tells us that our relationship with someone who has died is not at an end and we can continue to help them by our prayers and sacrifices. We should ensure that Masses are said for our loved ones who have died, especially around the time of the anniversary of the death.

*Masses can be arranged through the parish priest using the envelopes provided.*