

CATHOLIC FUNERALS

When someone dies who do I inform?

- ◆ The next of kin (if not present)
- ◆ The family doctor (if the person dies at home)
- ◆ The Priest
- ◆ The Funeral Director (if the family is using one)

In addition, if someone has died unexpectedly or in unusual circumstances, the police will need to be informed. Do not touch or move anything in the room/house.

Registering a death & other practical matters: what happens next?

The death will need to be registered within five days unless it has been reported to the coroner. Further details concerning these procedures can be found in a booklet available from the Department of Social Security. If the cause of death is clear, the doctor will issue a medical certificate and a formal notice confirming that he/she has signed the certificate. This notice gives information on how to register the death and will enable funeral arrangements to be made.

If the doctor reports the death to the coroner, there may be a delay while a post-mortem or inquest is carried out. The coroner's office will advise you on what arrangements may be made. If the family wishes to use a funeral director, it is quite proper to invite estimates from different firms. 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 Church's approach to death

When someone we love dies, there are many things to arrange, and the most important is the person's funeral. For Catholics, a Requiem Mass is offered as the best way of showing our continued love for the deceased in a rite which offers worship and thanksgiving to God, the Author of all life.

Since Christ has conquered death on the Cross, our sorrow is tempered by hope in the Resurrection. We trust that on the last day our mortal bodies will rise again to be with Our Lord. Our sins have been forgiven in Baptism and Confession, but the effects of sin still remain, and this is why we still have to undergo cleansing and healing – the love of God working to make us able to enter into His presence, as only those who are free from sin can do. We help the faithful departed by our prayers, the greatest of which is the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass.

Sometimes members of the deceased's family have fallen away from the practice of their Catholic faith and feel embarrassed or uncertain about asking for a Requiem Mass. The Church understands and the Priest will try to reassure them that there is no passing of judgement but together there should be the desire of doing what the deceased loved one would have wanted.

There is an alternative of a Funeral Service without the Mass which can be done by a Deacon.

What are the financial implications?

An offering to the Parish is discretionary, though customary, and this is usually included by the funeral directors when giving a quotation for their services. We advise an offering to the Parish of £200 for a Requiem Mass. Please note that additional fees are incurred for organists or singers if you choose to have music as part of the service.

A Mass for the dead is called a Requiem – meaning a Mass offered that they may rest in peace. These notes are intended to help the families or friends of those arranging a Requiem Mass in our church.

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 at Our Lady and The English Martyrs, Cambridge.

Vigil for the Deceased

It is a common Catholic practice that the body comes into Church the evening before the funeral. If you wish this to happen, you should tell the Funeral Directors who will try and arrange it with the Clergy.

The 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 readings and the hymns (if desired). You may wish to have an Order of Service printed for the funeral. The Funeral Directors can do this, but it must be approved by the 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. Our principal purpose at a Requiem is to pray for the deceased person.

Readings

The Priest can advise you in the choice of readings for the Requiem Mass. Only Scriptural readings are permitted. If family members or friends wish to read during the Mass, they should meet 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 deceased before Mass begins. This should last no more than three or four 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, a soloist or a choral quartet during the Mass. You can discuss this with the Director of Music (music@olem.org.uk or 01223 224854) who will advise you on some appropriate repertoire to commemorate your loved one. Starting rates for our musicians begin at £140 for an organist, £100 for a soloist or £40 per person for a consort of singers.

Symbols used in a Requiem Mass

Purple or 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 also stands nearby as a symbol of the Resurrection. The coffin should usually have a crucifix on it. The Church encourages us to show the faith of the deceased by placing on the coffin a prayer book or missal which they used during their life as well as a Rosary.

Symbols used for the Requiem Mass of a Priest is a chalice and paten and a stole which denote his priestly ministry. There may be a flower arrangement placed on the coffin, but it should not obscure the Crucifix from view.

Burial

After the Requiem Mass, the coffin is taken to the cemetery (or crematorium) where is then a brief service of committal. For those who choose cremation, they are reminded that the ashes of the

Deceased need to be buried in a blessed grave rather than scattered. Please mention this to the Funeral Directors so that they know there will be an interment of the ashes at a later date. They will arrange this with the Priest.

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. Masses can be arranged by contacting the Parish Office or visiting our Mass Intentions requests webpage: <https://olem.org.uk/mass-intentions/>

Useful Contacts

OLEM Parish Office | office@olem.org.uk | 01223 350787

Director of Music—Mr Nigel Kerry | music@olem.org.uk

