



Archdiocese of Cape Town

Office of the Auxiliary Bishop of Cape Town

To all Clergy and Religious Houses in the Archdiocese

For some time now, there have been difficulties associated with the celebration of funeral liturgies and in order to resolve these, we looked at Church protocols and liturgical requirements and have come up with the attached guidelines. We hope that these will be helpful both to clergy and laity alike.

We gratefully acknowledge our CPD office and others who have made meaningful suggestions in the development of the document.

With every good wish for continue blessings during the Jubilee year.

+ Sylvester David
OMI

Bishop S. David OMI
VG/Auxiliary Bishop



17 January 2025

Recommendations/Requirements for the Celebration of Requiem Masses and Funeral Services in the Archdiocese of Cape Town

- **Requiem Mass or Funeral Service:** In consultation with the family/those planning the Mass/service a decision needs to be made whether there will be a Requiem Mass or a Funeral Service. A Requiem Mass should be considered if the deceased was a practicing Catholic, the family and a fair portion of the congregation are practicing Catholics or will find it meaningful. The priest should consider offering Mass for the deceased on another occasion if it is decided that there will be a Funeral Service.
- **Local and cultural traditions:** In parishes where there are existing guidelines with regards to the nature and location of the funeral (Requiem Mass, funeral service or service at the home) and the presiding minister (priest, deacon or lay funeral minister), these should be adhered to; provided that they do not contradict any other provisions of this policy.
- **Live streaming of Requiem Masses/Funeral Services:** In keeping with Archdiocesan policy, no live streaming of liturgies is permitted in the Archdiocese of Cape Town. Where it is deemed necessary by the Parish Priest/Administrator, audio visual recordings may be implemented.
- **Viewing/paying respects before the start of the Mass/Funeral Service:** In some parishes the culture is that the casket is opened to allow for viewing by mourners. The family/those planning the service should arrange for the undertakers to bring the casket to the church and position it in the foyer 30 minutes before the start of the requiem Mass/Funeral service, whether the casket is open or remains closed.
- **Tributes/Eulogies:** A service of tributes/eulogies could be considered before the start of the actual Requiem Mass/Funeral Service. This service could also take place at the home, where this is an existing practice. A **brief** eulogy can be offered at the start of the actual Requiem Mass/Service in addition to this service of tributes. Where there is an existing practice of only having tributes and the eulogy prior to the Requiem Mass/Funeral Service and/or at different time or location, this may continue. There is no penitential rite in a Requiem Mass/Funeral Service.

The service of tributes should end ten minutes before the start of the Requiem Mass/Funeral Service. The casket should remain in the foyer of the church during the service of tributes to allow for the recommended blessing of the body of the deceased at the beginning of the Requiem Mass/Funeral Service at the entrance of the church as per the rites.

The eulogy at the beginning of the Requiem Mass (directly after the entrance and before the Opening Prayer) should be no longer than 2 or 3 three minutes. A family member or a close friend should be asked to prepare a eulogy, written out, which covers the relational aspects of the person's life, rather than just biographical information. This eulogy should not be a sermon.

- **Pall Bearers:** Pall bearers can be asked to bring the casket to the front of the church after the blessing of the casket at the beginning of the Requiem Mass/Funeral Service, and to take the casket out of the church at the end of the Requiem Mass/Funeral Service.
- **Hymns:** A few hymns/instrumental music can be arranged for before the start of the Requiem Mass/Funeral Service and two to four hymns during the Requiem Mass/Funeral Service. Hymns chosen for the Requiem Mass/Funeral Service should be appropriate hymns and not secular songs.
- **Flowers:** Apart from the flowers which the family may wish to arrange on top of the casket, it is possible to put bouquets of flowers in the church, if the family wishes to do so. The family is asked to coordinate with the parish secretary as to whether they will leave the flowers in the church after the service, because this determines if the parish needs to make arrangements for flowers for the Sunday Masses.
- **Offertory Procession:** If there is to be a Requiem Mass, two family members or friends can be asked to bring the gifts of bread and wine, to be used for the Eucharist, to the sanctuary at the time of the Offertory. No monetary collection is taken up at either a requiem Mass or a Funeral Service.
- **Thanks and Announcements:** A short, less than a minute – ‘word of thanks’ may be given by a family member or friend before the Final Commendation of the Requiem Mass/Funeral Service. This should include information about where to go for the burial, and the arrangements for the reception (if any) after the service.

- **Cremation or burial:** In the case of cremation, there is the possibility that the ashes be interred in the parish garden of remembrance, if there is one, sometime after the Requiem Mass/Funeral Service. There is a short prayer service for the interment of ashes, and a date for the interment should be arranged with the parish priest, either directly or through the secretary.

Catholic teaching is that the ashes are to be treated with respect; that they should not be kept at home or elsewhere for any unreasonable length of time before interment; they should be interred in a blessed place for this purpose; and that the ashes are not to be divided up.

- **Readings and readers:** There are suggested and approved readings for funerals and Requiem Masses and either the family could select these readings, or the priest could be asked by the family to select the readings. The options for these readings can be referenced at the following website: <https://www.usccb.org/prayer-and-worship/sacraments-and-sacramentals/bereavement-and-funerals>

No poems or non-biblical readings are to be permitted. For a list of recommended Scripture readings, please refer to the Appendix below.

- **Proclaimers of the Word:** It is important that the readings are proclaimed by those who are trained Proclaimers of the Word. If there are none known to the family, the parish priest will arrange for Proclaimers. Typically, there is a first reading from the Old Testament (from the New Testament during Eastertide), a Responsorial Psalm, a second reading from the New Testament, a Gospel Acclamation, and a Gospel reading. The Gospel reading is always proclaimed by a priest, or a deacon, if there is one present.
- **Prayer of the Faithful:** The petitions may be read by a Proclaimer of the Word, with the introduction and conclusion read by the priest, or the Deacon if he is leading the Funeral Service.
- **Ecumenical and Inter-Religious Considerations:** It is not uncommon for Christians of other denominations or people of other religions to be present at Catholic Requiem Masses/Funeral Services. This calls for great sensitivity and pastoral care. Short directives such as “Please be seated for the Scripture Readings” could be used, to help a mixed congregation to follow the order of service. When it comes to the distribution of Holy Communion, taking into

consideration that only practicing Catholics who are in a position to receive Holy Communion should do so, and considering that there may be many non-practicing Catholics as well as other Christians present, an announcement before the distribution of Holy Communion should be made. This needs to be done with great sensitivity. An example of this could be: *“Dear brothers and sisters, we now come to that moment in the Mass, which for us as Catholics is central to living our Faith: the distribution and reception of Holy Communion. Through this action we express our union not only with Jesus truly present, but also with His Church in all she believes, teaches and practices. We are very aware that we have special friends and family here who sadly do not share our Faith and therefore are not able to receive the Sacrament. We long for a union in belief and truth, which unfortunately does not exist at this time. Should those who may not receive the Sacrament wish to receive a special blessing, please come forward with those who are receiving Holy Communion, cross your arms over your chest, and it will be a great honour to give you a blessing at this time.*

- Use of the parish hall: Arrangements may be made to use the parish hall for a reception after the requiem Mass or funeral service, if it is available. The use of the hall should not be considered as the main event or more important than the service in the church. Arrangements should be made with the parish secretary about costs and other details.
- Donation for the use of the church and parish: There is no fee for funerals, but it is customary that the family make a donation to the church if they are able to do so. Offerings should be placed in clearly marked envelopes or offered by EFT into the parish bank account. Similarly, if the family wishes to give a gift to the priest or deacon, this should be placed in a clearly marked envelope. In the case of EFTs an appropriate reference is necessary.
- Record in Parish Register of Deaths: The details of the deceased and the Requiem Mass/Funeral Service should be recorded in the parish Register of Deaths. Details of burial/cremation should also be recorded.
- Order of a Requiem Mass:
 - Greeting and welcome, and blessing of the body with holy water (at the entrance to the church)
 - Entrance procession with hymn
 - Brief Eulogy

- Opening Prayer
 - Scripture Readings and Homily
 - Prayer of the Faithful
 - Offertory
 - Liturgy of the Eucharist
 - Holy Communion
 - Brief Word of Thanks
 - Final Commendation and Song of Farewell
 - Blessing and Dismissal
 - Recessional procession with hymn
 - Rites at the graveside if there is a burial
- Order of a Funeral Service:
 - Greeting and welcome, and blessing of the body with holy water (at the entrance to the church)
 - Entrance procession with hymn
 - Brief Eulogy
 - Opening Prayer
 - Scripture Readings and Homily
 - Prayer of the Faithful
 - Word of Thanks
 - Final Commendation and Song of Farewell
 - Blessing and Dismissal
 - Recessional procession with hymn
 - Rites at the graveside if there is a burial

Appendix

Scripture Readings From the Old Testament

- *Ecclesiastes 3:1-11*: "There is a time for everything, and a season for every activity under heaven; a time to be born and a time to die."
- *Isaiah 40:1-11*: "Comfort, comfort my people, says your God."
- *Isaiah 25:6a, 7-9*: "He will destroy death forever."
- *Daniel 12:1-3*: "Many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake."
- *Micah 7:7-9*: "Though I dwell in the darkness, the Lord is a light for me."
- *Wisdom 3:1-9*: "The souls of the just are in the hands of God."
- *Wisdom 4:7-14*: "The Righteous One, though he dies early, shall be at rest."

- **Maccabees 2:43-46:** “He acted in an excellent and noble way as he had the resurrection of the dead in view.”
- **Lamentations 3:17-26:** “It is good to hope in the silence for the saving help of the Lord.”
- **Job 19:1, 23-27:** “I know that my Vindicator lives.”
- **Sirach 2:1-11:** “For in fire gold is tested.”
- **Ezekiel 37:12-14:** “O my people, I will open your graves and have you rise.”

Scripture Readings From the New Testament

- **Romans 5:17-21:** “Where sin increased, grace overflowed all the more.”
- **Romans 6:3-9:** “If we have died with Christ, we believe that we shall live with him.”
- **Romans 14:7-9, 10c-12:** “Whether we live or die, we are the Lord's.”
- **Acts of the Apostles 10:34-43:** “Everyone who believes in him will receive forgiveness of sins.”
- **1 Corinthians 15:20-28:** “So too in Christ shall all be brought to life.”
- **2 Corinthians 4:14-5:1:** “What is seen is transitory, but what is unseen is eternal.”
- **2 Corinthians 5:1, 6-10:** “We have a building from God, eternal in heaven.”
- **Philippians 3:20-21:** “He will change our lowly bodies to conform to his glory.”
- **2 Timothy 4:1-2, 6-8:** “I have competed well, I have finished the race...”
- **1 John 3:1-2:** “Beloved, we are God's children now.”
- **1 John 3:14-16:** “We know that we have passed from death to life because we love our brothers.”
- **Revelation 14:13:** “Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord.”

Scripture Readings From the Gospels

- **Matthew 5:1-12a:** “Rejoice and be glad, for your reward will be great in heaven.”
- **Matthew 11:25-30:** “Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest.”
- **Luke 22:33, 39-43:** “Today you will be with me in Paradise.”
- **Luke 23:44-46, 50, 52-53; 24:1-6a:** “Father, into your hands I commend my spirit.”
- **Luke 24: 13-35:** “Was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer these things and enter into his glory?”
- **John 5:24-29:** “Whoever hears my word and believes has passed from death to life.”

- **John 6:37-40:** “Everyone who sees the Son and believes in him may have eternal life and I shall raise him on the last day.”
- **John 6:51-58:** “Whoever eats this bread will live forever, and I will raise them up on the last day.”
- **John 11:17-27:** “I am the resurrection and the life.”
- **John 14:1-7:** “In my Father’s house are many rooms”
- **John 17:24-26:** “I wish that where I am they also may be with me.”
- **John 19:17-30:** “Jesus bowed his head and gave up his spirit.”