

DIOCESAN FUNERAL GUIDELINES

Preamble

The reality of death is an event that warrants sincere reflection and profound compassion for the deceased and the mourners. In the Catholic Church the funeral rites allow one to meet those needs and to pray for the soul of the departed while providing strength and comfort to those present. In addition, these rites offer hope that life is changed not ended at death for Christ promised us: “I am the resurrection and the life he who believes in me shall never die” (John 11:26).

If you are responsible for planning a funeral for someone you love and you would like the funeral rite to take place in a Catholic Church in the Diocese of Armidale please contact your local Parish office. When you phone the Parish office, you will be able to talk about the steps involved in planning a funeral. The following are some guidelines that will be helpful: Cremation or Burial

Christians traditionally have buried their dead. Today some people favour cremation instead for economic and pragmatic reasons. The Church prefers burials but permits both provided that cremations are not opposed to the Christian teaching of the resurrection of the dead, and that the ashes are interred in an appropriate manner, i.e. Cemetery, Memorial Wall, Columbarium.

Vigil for the Deceased

199The night before the funeral, family and friends may come together to pray in the presence of the deceased’s body. Remembrance words may be delivered in memory of their beloved or the Rosary might be prayed. This may occur in the Funeral Chapel or your parish church.

Church Service or Graveside Ceremony

The Church Service can be a funeral Mass (e.g. Requiem Mass) or funeral Service (e.g. Funeral Liturgy Outside Mass). In both cases the departed is assisted by prayers and the bereaved comforted by God’s love and mercy. The Graveside Service is a brief version of the Liturgy of the word with the committal prayers. All Church ceremonies involve Bible readings and normally hymns.

a). Scripture Readings: Only readings derived from the Word of God are permissible and no secular readings/poetry are to be read. See this link to peruse appropriate texts.



b). Hymns / Music: While the deceased may have had a favourite song, it is not appropriate that secular music is played in a funeral Liturgy or Mass in the Church. This site provides one with an extensive list of hymns approved by the Church. If a particular secular song is strongly desired and the celebrant agrees it may be permitted at the end of the burial.



c). Words of Remembrance: If the family desires to say some words they may be spoken before the Final Commendation or conversely at the very beginning of the service. The text should be

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approved by the minister before the funeral. Only one eulogy is permitted of a duration no greater than seven minutes and parts of it may be delivered by different people. The words must be appropriate to the sacred context so inappropriate language and content should be avoided. Also, the funeral is not the only place where words of remembrance may be spoken. It may be more suitable that words are spoken at the Vigil, Committal Service and/or the Wake, where anecdotes, personal stories, poems, songs or Power Point presentations may be responded to more readily.

Once again, please contact your parish office so that they may assist you to begin the proceedings. May they rest in peace - Amen.