



*St. Jane Frances de Chantal*  
CHURCH

*PLANNING FUNERAL MASSES*  
*AT ST. JANE FRANCES DE CHANTAL CHURCH*

THE THEOLOGY OF THE FUNERAL RITES

"Christians celebrate the funeral rites to offer worship,  
praise and thanksgiving to God for the gift of a life  
which has now been returned to God. . .

The Mass, the memorial of Christ's death and resurrection,  
is the principal celebration of the Christian funeral"  
(*Order of Christian Funerals*, no. 5).

"If one member suffers in the body of Christ which is the Church,  
all the members suffer with that member" (1 Corinthians 12:26).

As members of Christ's body, we are called to comfort those who have lost a loved one.

"Christian consolation is rooted in that hope that comes from  
faith in the saving death and the anguish of grief  
but trusts confidently that the power of sin and death  
has been vanquished by the risen Lord" (*OCF*, no. 8).

The community's principal involvement in the ministry of consolation  
is expressed in its active participation in the celebration of the funeral rites,  
particularly for the vigil of the deceased, the funeral liturgy and the rite of committal.

PROCEDURE FOR SETTING UP A FUNERAL MASS FOLLOWING DEATH

When a death in the family occurs, the procedure for setting up a funeral Mass begins with contacting the funeral home of your choice. The funeral home will then contact the parish to see what days are available. Funerals normally take place during the 11:00 am daily Mass. This ensures that a parish priest is available to celebrate the Mass and to allow the Christian community, specifically the parishioners of St. Jane's, to be present to pray for their deceased brother or sister in Christ and for the family. On rare occasions, a funeral Mass may be scheduled for another time, for example, if a priest outside of St. Jane de Chantal is requested or on a Saturday when there is no 11:00 am Mass. Once the funeral is scheduled, the family should then contact Henry Bauer, the parish Director of Liturgy and Music, to plan the details of the funeral Mass. He will guide the family through the selection of readings, music and other details. The parish also produces programs to assist the family and friends in the celebration of the funeral Mass. These services are provided by the parish on behalf of the family. The family is asked to make a donation to the church in whatever amount they feel comfortable. Henry Bauer is also available if you would like to pre-plan a funeral.

## MUSIC IN THE FUNERAL RITES

"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"  
(*OCF*, no. 30).

In order to assist the assembly in their full participation through the singing of songs, responses and acclamations, and for the music to be sung with understanding, conviction and reverence, a cantor and organist are employed. The cantor is a singer who is properly trained in the music of the Roman Catholic Church and the parish of St. Jane de Chantal, and in the structure of the funeral liturgy. The cantor needs to be approved by the parish so as to most effectively lead and encourage the singing of the faithful. The fees for the cantor, organist and other instrumentalists are handled through the Director of Liturgy and Music. In special situations, a family member or friend of the deceased may serve as a cantor, as long as they are properly trained. In order to involve more participation by the family and friends, a family member or friend may sing a solo or play an instrumental piece, as long as it is of a sacred nature.

## SELECTING SCRIPTURE AND TEXTS FOR THE FUNERAL MASS

In preparing the funeral liturgy, the family is invited to select the readings and texts. The Church provides suggestions for readings in the Order of Christian Funerals, the rite book for the celebration of the liturgies at the time of death. Readings may be selected from those given in the Order of Christian Funerals, or other selections from Sacred Scripture may be chosen which reflect the hope that Christians feel at the passing of a brother or sister. When meeting with our Director of Liturgy and Music, you will be provided with a booklet that contains the suggested readings for a funeral. Normally there are three readings: a reading from the Old Testament, except during the Easter Season when a reading from the Acts of Apostles or Revelation may be chosen; a second reading from the New Testament and finally a gospel. In addition to the readings, the family may select the General Intercessions or, if so inclined, write their own. Up to three persons may be selected to read; one each for the first reading, second reading and intercessions. If the family is not able to provide any readers, the parish can arrange for someone to read.

## CREMATION AND THE RESPECT FOR THE REMAINS OF THE DECEASED'S BODY

"The body of the deceased brings forcefully to mind the Church's conviction that the human body is in Christ a temple of the Holy Spirit and is destined for future glory at the resurrection of the dead."  
(*OCF*, no. 412)

Although the Church recommends the custom of burying the body be observed, cremation is permissible, assuming proper motives. As stated in the Order of Christian Funerals, the Church prefers that cremation take place after the funeral liturgy and before the committal service. "The cremated remains of a body should be treated with the same respect given to the human body from which they come. This includes the use of a worthy vessel to contain the ashes, the manner in which they are carried, the care and attention to appropriate placement and transport and the final disposition. The cremated remains should be buried in a grave or entombed in a mausoleum or columbarium. The practice of scattering cremated remains on the sea, from the air, or on the ground, or keeping cremated remains in the home of a relative or friend of the deceased are not the reverent disposition that the Church requires." (*OCF*, no. 417) (For more information about cremation, see the pamphlet, *Questions Concerning Cremation, the Funeral Liturgy, and the Liturgy of the Catholic Church*, found in the pamphlet rack in the gathering space of church.)

## REMARKS OF REFLECTION

A eulogy is a speech that honors someone who has recently died. Because Christian funeral rites focus not only on the life of the deceased but on God's presence and goodness in that person, a eulogy, per se, is not permitted. However, Remarks of Reflection recall the deceased in the light of his or her faith are appropriate, and may be spoken by a family member or friend during the vigil or final commendation. According to the *Sacramental Norms and Policies of the Archdiocese of Washington* (January 1995), "[o]nly one such address . . . may be given at the funeral Mass. The address should not exceed five minutes and should be a reflection upon the deceased's life in the context of his or her faith. . . It is recommended that the eulogy be written out. . . Other occasions outside the funeral Mass may be recommended to the family as more suitable for a eulogy: e.g., the wake, the internment, a meal after the funeral (Appendix to Chapter 9, August 15, 2000).

## PARISH SUPPORT IN THE MINISTRY OF THE BEREAVEMENT COMMITTEE

Following the death of a loved one, the parish's Bereavement Committee is available to assist the family with immediate needs and tasks. Some of the services they provide are house sitting when the family is at the funeral home and burial, and assisting with a reception following the burial. Their role is to act on behalf of the parish by offering condolences to the family and assuring them of our continuing sympathy and support. Terry Kelley (301-530-7642) and Jennie Peternell Morris (301-530-0210) are the contact persons for this committee.