

Policies of the Diocese of Kansas City ~ St. Joseph

Policy # 130.1

Christian Funerals

Approved By: Most Reverend James V. Johnston, DD

Effective: November 25, 2024

Funerals

The diocesan policy on funerals is based on the 2019 English edition of the Catholic Church's *Order of Christian Funerals Including Appendix 2: Cremation* (OCF) and the Spanish edition for the United States, *Ritual de exequias cristianas: Vigilia, Liturgia Funeral, y Rito de Sepelio*. The 1998 English edition may still be used. All of the numbers below refer back to the official order of service, presume its usage, and clarify some points for local celebrations.

I. Vigil and Related Rites and Prayers

Related prayers that lay ministers or clergy may lead

- The section entitled Prayers after Death “provides a model of prayer that may be used when the minister first meets with the family following death” (OCF, 101). These presume that the minister is with the family at the side of the deceased, shortly after death.
- Gathering in the Presence of the Body “provides a model of prayer that may be used when the family first gathers in the presence of the body, when the body is to be prepared for burial, or after it has been prepared” (OCF, 109).
- The Transfer of the Body to the Church or to the Place of Committal “may be used for prayer with the family and close friends as they prepare to accompany the body of the deceased in the procession to the church or to the place of committal” (OCF, 119).
- All of these related rites and prayers are optional. They may be led by a suitable representative from the parish. They are appropriate for the time between the moment of death and the Vigil for the Deceased.

The Vigil for the Deceased

- “The vigil for the deceased is the principal rite celebrated by the Christian community in the time following death and before the funeral liturgy, or if there is no funeral liturgy, before the rite of committal” (OCF, 54).
- The ideal service for the Vigil for the Deceased is a Liturgy of the Word or part of the Office for the Dead from the Liturgy of the Hours. The presider may be a priest, a deacon or a lay minister.
- Mourners may fittingly pray the rosary at the wake and visitation, but ideally the rosary does not replace the Vigil for the Deceased. Reciting the rosary at the wake is a long-standing custom in the Catholic Church in the United States. Mourners unfamiliar with the rosary may appreciate the more biblically based options from the Order of Christian Funerals.

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- Ideally, the visitation of mourners with the family does not replace the Vigil for the Deceased. Mourners who come to view the remains of the deceased and to console the family are urged to participate in a Vigil service distinct from and followed by the funeral the following day.
- In preparation for the Vigil for the Deceased, whenever possible, “the family of the deceased should take part in the selection of texts and music and in the designation of liturgical ministers” (OCF, 65).
- The minister is reminded that the OCF provides a wide selection of opening prayers (72, 398-399), readings (73, 343), and concluding prayers (80, 398-399).
- Near the end of the Vigil, “A member or a friend of the family may speak in remembrance of the deceased” (OCF, 80). It is highly recommended that such remembrances take place at this time or before the funeral liturgy, rather than during a funeral. It is also highly recommended that those who speak prepare their words in advance and limit the presentation to a few minutes.

The Location for the Vigil for the Deceased

- “The vigil may be celebrated in the home of the deceased, in the funeral home, parlor or chapel of rest, or in some other suitable place. It may also be celebrated in the church, but at a time well before the funeral liturgy, so that the funeral liturgy will not be lengthy and the Liturgy of the Word repetitious” (OCF, 55).
- On occasion a family may request that the remains of the deceased be left in the church overnight. They may even offer to have one or more mourners keep vigil. No diocesan policy forbids this practice as long as local civil legislation and prudent care are observed.
- If the Vigil takes place at the same church where the funeral will be, the rite of reception that usually begins a funeral opens the Vigil instead, complete with the sprinkling of blessed water and the placing of symbols (OCF, 58). The service begins at OCF 82.

II. Funeral Liturgy

The two forms of the funeral liturgy

- A Catholic funeral may take place with or without Mass. However, “When one of its members dies, the Church especially encourages the celebration of the Mass.” The option without Mass is permitted “when Mass cannot be celebrated,” and in that case, “a Mass for the deceased should be celebrated, if possible, at a later time” (OCF, 46). The priest may designate such a Mass at the parish even if the family and friends do not attend.
- “Whenever possible, ministers should involve the family in planning the funeral rites: in the choice of texts and rites provided in the ritual, in the selection of music for the rites, and in the designation of liturgical ministers” (OCF, 17). It is commendable for someone from the parish to visit with the family to make such plans.
- The music for all stages of the funeral is to reflect the faith of the Church. Secular music that may be meaningful for the mourners is best shared at a different venue, such as a gathering for a meal after the funeral.

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Beginning the funeral immediately after a Visitation

- If the Vigil took place in the church, and the rite of reception was conducted when the remains of the deceased arrived (OCF, 82), the rite of reception is not repeated (OCF, 158 and 183).
- If the remains of the deceased have already been in place near the sanctuary, they are appropriately carried to the door of the church for the entrance procession of the funeral (OCF, 162 and 187). If the lid of the coffin was open, it is closed before any movement toward the door.

Beginning the funeral liturgy at the arrival of the deceased

- Before the rite of reception begins (OCF, 159 and 184), “Any national flags or insignia of associations to which the deceased belongs are to be removed from the coffin at the entrance of the church” (OCF, 132). They may be replaced upon leaving the building.
- In the case of cremated remains, the covering with a pall is omitted (OCF, 434). However, holy water is used (OCF, 433) and incense may be used (OCF, 428).
- Note that the Order of Christian Funerals uses the expression “cremated remains” and not the neologism “cremains”. The full expression of “cremated remains” helps everyone respect the remains of a human being.

The Liturgy of the Word

- Regarding the number of readings, “there may be either one or two readings before the Gospel reading” (OCF, 138). There need not always be three readings as on a Sunday.
- The singing of the responsorial psalm is encouraged, though the OCF provides other options (OCF, 139).
- When a funeral takes place at Mass, the readers are expected to be Catholics. The *Directory for the Application of Principles and Norms on Ecumenism* 133 states, “The reading of Scripture during a Eucharistic celebration in the Catholic Church is to be done by members of that Church. On exceptional occasions and for a just cause, the Bishop of the diocese may permit a member of another Church or ecclesial Community to take on the task of reader.”
- Those who wish to have a non-Catholic reader during a funeral Mass are therefore to request permission from the bishop.
- Only a priest or deacon may preach the homily. It is not a eulogy, but it is appropriate to share elements of the life of the deceased while proclaiming Christian hope in the resurrection (OCF, 27).

The Liturgy of the Eucharist

- Priests are reminded that Eucharistic Prayers II and III include special intercessions at a Mass for the Dead. These are appropriate for a funeral Mass. In the case of Prayer III, the priest includes the optional word “today”, which would be omitted at other Masses for the Dead.

The Final Commendation

- At the final commendation, “A member or a friend of the family may speak in remembrance of the deceased before the final commendation begins” (OCF, 170). However, it is highly recommended that such remembrances take place at the Vigil

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service or in the minutes before the funeral Mass begins. It is also recommended that those who speak prepare their words in advance and limit the presentation to a few minutes. This especially applies to remembrances occasionally being shared at Mass. For the integrity of the Eucharist, these should not last longer than a few minutes.

- In the case of cremated remains, the minister may sprinkle them with blessed water and incense them.

III. Rite of Committal

The location for the rite of committal

- “Whenever possible, the rite of committal is to be celebrated at the site of committal” (OCF, 204).
- Under extreme weather conditions, if the cemetery provides an indoor chapel, it may be used for the rite of committal.
- For a stillborn or one who dies shortly after birth the final commendation may take place in the hospital or place of birth (OCF, 318, 337-341).
- The rite may be repeated especially if there has been a long delay from the time of the funeral, or if the committal takes place some distance away with a different group of mourners (OCF, 212).

The receptacle for cremated remains.

- Mourners are reminded that “it is not permitted to scatter the ashes of the faithful departed in the air, on land, at sea or in some other way, nor may they be preserved in mementos, pieces of jewelry or other objects”
https://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc_con_cfaith_doc_20160815_ad-resurgendum-cum-christo_en.html, no. 7.
- “When, for legitimate motives, cremation of the body has been chosen, the ashes of the faithful must be laid to rest in a sacred place, that is, in a cemetery or, in certain cases, ... in an area, which has been set aside for this purpose, and so dedicated by the competent ecclesial authority” (no. 5) and “the conservation of the ashes of the departed in a domestic residence is not permitted.” (no. 6) (Dicastery of the Doctrine of the Faith Instruction hyperlink referenced in above bullet).

The presider for the committal

- “In the absence of a parish minister, a friend or member of the family should lead those present in the rite of committal” (OCF, 215).
- The parish is to provide leadership for the graveside service. If a priest or deacon cannot be present, a parishioner with the appropriate skills should lead the prayer (see OCF, 14).

Vesture

- “The minister should vest according to local custom” (OCF, 215).
- The priest or deacon who leads the service wears a stole preferably over an alb or over a cassock and surplice.
- Lay leaders of prayer should wear appropriate and dignified clothing (see GIRM 339).

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The Assisting minister

- Ordinarily, the minister who leads the service appoints an assisting minister to read certain parts of the service (OCF, 220, 223; 233; 323, 326). This person may read the short passage from sacred scripture (OCF, 217, 320, 328, 338).

Lengthening the ceremony

- “If there is a need for a longer committal rite, ...the minister may... adapt it, for example, by adding a greeting, song, one or more readings, a Psalm, and a brief homily” (OCF, 211).
- This may especially be appropriate in the case of mourners who have delayed the final disposition of cremated remains, or when what remains of a body donated to science has been returned.
- The rite of committal may even be repeated on such occasions (OCF, 212).
- The same applies to funeral rites for children (OCF, 317).

Music

- “The singing of well-chosen music at the rite of committal can help the mourners” (OCF, 214).
- The diocese encourages the leadership of cantors and instruments at the committal in order to encourage singing. Live instruments may play solo music. Previously recorded music is not allowed. “Recorded music should never become a substitute for the community’s singing” (USCCB, *Sing to the Lord*, 94).

Prayer over the Place of Committal

- If the committal takes place in a Catholic cemetery, the minister uses OCF option 218B because the ground has already been blessed. For funerals of children, see 321B and 329B.
- If the committal takes place elsewhere, the minister uses option 218A (or 321A or 329A for children). Although the rubrics do not call for the sprinkling of holy water upon the grave and the people, the preservation of this custom is acceptable especially in this circumstance, in keeping with the practice of blessing a cemetery (*Book of Blessings*, 1433).

The Committal: Cremated Remains and Child who Dies Before Baptism

- In the case of cremation, the minister is to use the appropriate invitation at OCF, 406 no.3.
- In the case of a child who dies before baptism, the minister uses OCF, 322B.
- The committal of the remains may take place at this time, as the rubrics indicate (OCF, 219, 322, 335). Parish ministers may offer this option to families when preparing for the funeral. If the committal is to be included within the service, coordination with the funeral directors and cemetery staff will be essential.

Intercessions

- An assisting minister is to read the intercessions after the minister introduces them (OCF, 220, 323).

Concluding Prayer for a Child who Dies Before Baptism

- In the case of a child who dies before baptism, the minister uses the appropriate concluding prayer (OCF, 325C, 334B).

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Prayer over the People

- An assisting minister is to invite the people to bow down for the blessing before the minister gives the blessing (OCF, 223, 233, 326).

Gesture of final leave-taking

- “A gesture of final leave-taking may be made, for example, placing flowers or soil on the coffin” (OCF, 210; see also 326, 336).
- The leave-taking may also include other customs, such as the distribution of flowers from the bier to the mourners.
- Military honors may be conducted as this gesture of leave-taking.

Military Honors at Graveside

Our proper protocol to be followed at graveside services where military honors are also celebrated is as follows. Priests and deacons are to permit the military honors to be performed first. This allows the flag to be removed from the casket and given to the family of the deceased veteran, particularly as per military protocol, no item, including holy water, is to be placed upon our nation’s flag. The church ritual then begins after the military honors have concluded. More information may be obtained from Father Dave Holloway, Director of Priestly Life and Ministry and a retired Navy Chaplain.

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Catholic Cemeteries of the Diocese of Kansas City ~ St. Joseph

Diocesan Cemeteries

Kansas City

Mount Olivet
7601 Blue Ridge BLVD
Kansas City MO 64138
816-353-1900

Mount St. Mary's
2201 Cleveland AVE
Kansas City MO 64127
816-241-7663
816-353-1900

Resurrection
5001 NE Cookingham DR
Kansas City MO 64156
816-734-2356

St. Joseph

Mount Olivet
2600 Lovers Lane
St. Joseph, Missouri 64506
816-279-5005

Parish Cemeteries

Cameron

St. Munchin Cemetery
10251-10309 NE Witt RD
Cameron, MO 64429
(816) 632-2768

Kenney Cemetery
Caldwell County
39°45'54.6"N, 94°07'49.5"W
Kidder MO 64649
(816) 632-2768

Carrollton

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St. Mary's Cemetery
Carroll County
39.3836; -93.4856
211 E Shanklin ST
Carrollton MO
660-542-1259
Located at SW corner of HWY 65 and County Road 620

Sacred Heart Cemetery
Carroll County
39.2911184 , -93.6251049
Norborne MO 64668
660-593-3536

Chillicothe

St. Columban Cemetery
Livingston County
CR 232
Chillicothe MO 64601
660-646-0190
*Northeast corner of the intersection of Livingston County Road 232 and Litton RD (aka Livingston County RD 243). The entrance to the cemetery is located a little farther down the road (Liv 232.)
Located just at the edge of the city limits and is across Litton Rd from the east entrance into Danner Park.*

St. Patrick-Leopolis Cemetery
Livingston County
HWY KK & Liv 220
Wheeling MO 64688
660-646-0190
Located 10 miles northeast of Chillicothe

Conception Junction

St. Columba Cemetery
Nodaway County
Conception MO 64433
660-944-2301
Located across from Conception Abbey

Easton

Kessler Cemetery
Buchanan County

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Easton MO 64443
816-473-2011
Located off Hampton Road in Easton

St. Joseph Cemetery
Buchanan County
Easton MO 64443
816-473-2011
Located ½ mile from St. Joseph parish on highway 31

Higginsville

St. Mary's Cemetery
Lafayette County
39.0613503, -93.6986794
St Marys DR
Higginsville MO 64037
660-584-3038
Located one mile east of Higginsville, on St. Mary's Drive Road

Hurlingen

St. Mary's Cemetery
Buchanan County
12750 NE Hurlingen RD
Hurlingen MO 64443
816-232-2847

Holden

Mount Calvary Cemetery
Johnson County
Holden MO 64040
816-540-4563
Located east of the Holden city limits on 58 Highway

St. John Cemetery
920 NW 250th RD
Holden MO 64040
816-540-4563
Located south of US Highway 50 between Holden and Warrensburg, when turning off Highway 50, look for Road M to the north, turn onto the gravel road to the south, follow to the church

Kingsville Cemetery
Johnson County

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38.74722, -94.06677
Kingsville MO
816-540-4563
Located on H highway

Independence

Woodlawn Cemetery
701 South Noland Road
Independence MO 64050
816-252-0121 or 816-325-7365
St. Mary's Parish administers a section of the community cemetery: Old St. Mary s and New St. Mary s.

Lexington

Old Catholic Cemetery
Lafayette County
Old Cemetery RD
Lexington MO 64067
660-259-3043
Off Route 13, North of 24 (south of Lexington town), off Roncelli Road which turns into Old Cemetery Road.

Machpelah Cemetery
Lafayette County
900 S 20th ST
Lexington MO 64067
660-251-3270
There is a Catholic section in the community cemetery on South Drive

St. John the Baptist Cemetery
Lafayette County
Dover Cemetery RD
Dover MO 64022
Located south of Highway 24, on county road F

Maryville

St. Mary's Cemetery
Nodaway County
40°20'8"N, 94°52'3"W
Maryville MO 64468
660-582-3833
Located about two blocks east of Main Street, on East South Avenue

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St. Patrick's Cemetery
26831-26863 Ivory RD
Maryville MO 64468
660-582-3833

Located one block past St. Mary's Cemetery, three blocks east of Main Street, on East South Avenue

Montrose

St. Mary's Cemetery
Henry County
1266 SW 700 RD
Montrose MO 64770
660-693-4651

Located on parish property in Montrose, Missouri

Nevada

Mount Calvary Cemetery
Vernon County
927 North Olive Street
Nevada MO 64772
417-667-7517

Parnell

Saint Joseph Cemetery
Nodaway County
40.42731, -94.62077
Parnell MO 64475
(660) 986-3305

Seven Dolours Cemetery
Gentry County
40° 22' 24" -94° 34' 15"
Alanthus MO
660-986-3305

Plattsburg

Calvary Cemetery
Clinton County
39.5583904, -94.4436149
Plattsburg MO 64477
816-539-2634

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Located off Highway C

Stanberry

St. Patrick's Cemetery
Gentry County
40° 8' 52", -94° 27' 43"
Ford City MO 64463
660-783-2159

Located about two miles from St. Patrick's Church in Ford City, Missouri

Mt. Calvary Cemetery
Gentry County
40.2273788, -94.5459137
Stanberry MO 64489
660-783-2159

Trenton

St. Joseph Cemetery
Grundy County
40.0673256, -93.6185684
Trenton MO 64683
660-359-2841

Located in Trenton on the south edge of town, enter either from DeBolt Street or through the Country Club Golf Course