

# **Guide pastoral des funérailles chrétiennes**

**Directives et orientations**



# **Pastoral Guide for Christian Funerals**

**Directives and Orientations**



**le 22 janvier 2009—January 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2009**

## Promulgation

La mort d'un membre de la famille ou de la communauté est un moment d'épreuve et un moment de grâce. Elle donne l'occasion aux survivants de se situer sur leur chemin de vie et dans leur foi. Pour permettre aux personnes et à la communauté de vivre cette étape de la vie, l'Église propose un rite des funérailles. Il est important que les rites et les gestes soient reliés au mystère pascal du Christ, mort et ressuscité pour la vie du monde. Ce Guide des funérailles chrétiennes vise à fournir des repères pour assurer la dignité et le respect des défunts et des vivants, à l'occasion d'un décès. Par la présente, je promulgue ce document pour usage dans l'archidiocèse de Moncton.

† ***Mgr André Richard, c.s.c., archevêque de Moncton.***

Janvier 2009

## Promulgation

The death of a family member or of a member of the community is a time of trial and a time of grace. It provides family and friends an opportunity to review their life's journey and their faith. To help family, friends and the community through this experience, the Church offers a funeral rite. It is important that the rites and gestures refer to the paschal mystery of Christ, whose death and resurrection brings new life. The purpose of this Guide for Christian Funerals is to provide points of reference to ensure the dignity and the respect of the deceased and the living, at time of death. I hereby promulgate this document for use in the Archdiocese of Moncton.

† ***Mgr André Richard, c.s.c., Archbishop of Moncton.***

January 2009

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## *A few words of explanation*

This new edition of the *Pastoral Guide for Christian Funerals* brings together in one document the guides previously used by our two linguistic communities. A number of priests and lay persons responsible for the preparation of funeral liturgies had requested this move since they were, until now, asked to consult two separate guides to be apprised of the peculiarities of the ritual and of the practices proper to each community.

Revision was also in order: the English guide was last revised in the nineties while the French one was last updated in November 2003.

Harmonization of both pastoral guides allowed us to update their content, to reorganize it and to tighten the original text.

This document does not replace the rituals that contain a number of suggestions and options which will enrichen our celebrations. It aims to deal with a pressing number of issues on the part of priests and lay persons who are responsible for the preparation of the celebrations in two linguistic communities.

The few differences between the English and French rituals deal mainly with the moment for the aspersion and the word of remembrance (formerly called the eulogy).

The reorganization and the regrouping of the different points has allowed us to improve the continuity in the document and to drop a number of details to lighten the text.

And finally, we should mention that such a project have been impossible had it not been for the precious collaboration of a number of persons among whom are the priests, the members of the liturgical commissions, the deaneries and the diocesan staff.

January 5<sup>th</sup>, 2009

# **Pastoral Guidelines for Christian Funerals**

## ***1. Introduction***

“ In the face of death, the Church confidently proclaims that God has created each person for eternal life and that Jesus, the Son of God, by his death and resurrection, has broken the chains of sin and death that bound humanity. Christ ‘achieved his task of redeeming humanity and giving perfect glory to God, principally by the paschal mystery of his blessed passion, resurrection from the dead, and glorious ascension’.

“ [...] The mystery of the Lord’s death and resurrection gives power to all of the Church’s activity. ‘For it was from the side of Christ as he slept the sleep of death upon the cross that there came forth the sublime sacrament of the Whole Church.’ The Church’s liturgical and sacramental life and proclamation of the Gospel make this mystery present in the life of the faithful. ”<sup>8</sup>

The revision of the funeral rite brought forth after Vatican II states that:

*" The Church, therefore, offers the eucharistic sacrifice of Christ’s Passover for the dead and pours forth prayers and petitions for them. Because of the communion of all Christ’s members with each other, all of this brings spiritual aid to the dead and the consolation of hope to the living".*<sup>9</sup>

## ***2. A Church That Welcomes And Celebrates***

### ***2.1 Death, an Event Experienced in the Church***

“The celebration of the Christian funeral brings hope and consolation to the living. While proclaiming the gospel of Jesus Christ and witnessing to Christian hope in the resurrection, the funeral rites also recall to all who take part in them God’s mercy and judgment and meet the human need to turn always to God in times of crisis.”<sup>10</sup>

The funeral liturgy provides for three principle ritual moments:

1. The Vigil and Related Rites and Prayers,
2. The Funeral Liturgy, and
3. The Rite of Committal.<sup>12</sup>

These ritual moments should be respected to help the families of the deceased accept the reality of death in the Christian faith and hope. Prayers and gestures will be included to help the families proclaim the mystery of death and of resurrection.

## ***2.2 Different Ways of Praying for the Deceased***

There are many ways of going through the loss of a loved one and to comfort the mourning. The Church seeks to be attentive to the needs of the families who are going through a loss. She must be the bearer of the Good News through liturgies adapted to where the celebration will be held, be it in the church, at the funeral home or at the cemetery. Most funerals are celebrated in the presence of the remains. While the Eucharist is only celebrated in the church, a Liturgy of the Word without the Eucharist can be celebrated either at the church or at the funeral home. The decision on this matter will be taken in consultation with the parish priest. If for whatever reason the remains or the ashes have been buried before the celebration of the funeral, a funeral mass can be celebrated in the church at some other time.

## ***2.3 Visitations at the Funeral Home***

The time spent at the funeral home helps the families, friends and relatives in their grieving. The exchanges and the gestures of sympathy, the brief conversations and prayers unite the families and allay their emotions. These moments sometimes offer an occasion for pastoral action, quiet moments for prayer and Christian discourse.

## ***2.4 Visitations at the Church***

In most of our parishes, viewing usually takes place at the funeral home. Those parishes without a funeral home could make a parish hall or another room available to the family to allow for the viewing of the remains of the deceased. Viewing will not be allowed in the nave of the church unless the priest, with the members of the Pastoral Ministry Team, in agreement with the local ordinary, decides differently. If the viewing takes place shortly before the celebration, it will be held in a parish hall rather than in the church (nave).

## ***2.5 Where the Funeral will be celebrated***

Sacraments and other important moments of our faith are celebrated in the parish church. When the Lord calls his children back to Him, the Church seeks to congregate within its walls those who are left behind and those who share the same Christian faith and hope. The Church is present to proclaim the Good News to the bereaved families and to the community, who are both experiencing a loss.

At the funeral home, it is permitted to celebrate the Christian funeral with a Liturgy of the Word.

## ***2.6 A Religious Funeral for Everyone?***

The Church will welcome all requests for funeral celebrations.

## ***2.7 Celebrating with the Remains or with the Ashes of the Deceased***

“The Church still prefers the traditional burial in a grave or tomb in memory of Jesus’ body being placed in a tomb. However, if cremation is chosen, the church will celebrate the funeral rites.”<sup>15</sup> If the remains or the ashes are not present, a funeral mass can be celebrated in the church while omitting the welcoming and the farewell rites. The organization of the celebration should be explained to the families. If the remains or the ashes of the deceased are present, the welcoming and the farewell rites should be done.

# ***3. Liturgical Ministers***

## ***3.1 A Meeting with Liturgical Ministers***

“In planning and carrying out the funeral rite the [...] priest [...] and all other ministers should keep in mind the life of the deceased and the circumstances of death. They should also take into consideration the spiritual and psychological needs of the family and friends of the deceased to express grief and their sense of loss, and to accept the reality of death, and to comfort one another.

“Whenever possible, ministers should involve the family in the planning of the funeral liturgy: in the choice of readings, prayers, and music for the liturgy and in the designation of ushers, pallbearers, readers, acolytes, special ministers of the eucharist, when needed, and musicians.”<sup>16</sup>

“Family members should be encouraged to take an active part in these ministries,

but they should not be asked to assume any role that their grief or sense of loss may make too burdensome.”<sup>21</sup>

### ***3.2 Who presides the funeral rites ?***

In our diocese, “priests, as teachers of faith and ministers of comfort,”<sup>22</sup> still preside most of our funeral celebrations. Because of their dwindling number, lay teams will eventually be called on to preside over funerals without mass. These teams of lay person will receive a formation, be recognized and mandated by the bishop in collaboration with the priest moderator of the pastoral unit.

It is also important that we find and form lay persons who will eventually accept to preside at the vigil and at the funeral celebration held without Eucharist.

### ***3.3. Other Liturgical Ministers***

The main concern of the lay ministry teams will be to accompany the bereaved before, during and after the funeral so as to bring them the support and the comfort of the prayers of the Church. Their ministry may include visits to the families, praying with them, helping them prepare the funeral liturgy and presiding over the funeral liturgy. This support will be very precious for the Christian community.

“Parish priests should instill in these ministers an appreciation of how much the reverent exercise of their ministries contributes to the celebration of the funeral rites.”<sup>23</sup>

The Vatican II Council foresees the possibility of conferring to lay persons certain functions and enumerates the conditions:

“The laity can also be called in different ways to more immediate cooperation in the apostolate of the hierarchy, like those men and women who helped the apostle Paul in the Gospel, laboring much in the Lord. (*cf. Phil. 4-3; Rom. 16: 3 ff.*) They have, moreover, the capacity of being appointed by the hierarchy to some ecclesiastical offices with a view to a spiritual end.”<sup>24</sup> And more recently, in his exhortation to the lay faithful, John Paul II reminded that “The Pastors, therefore, ought to acknowledge and foster the ministries, the offices and roles of the lay faithful that find their *foundation in the Sacraments of Baptism and Confirmation*, indeed, for a good many of them, *in the Sacrament of Matrimony.*”<sup>25</sup> And he specified “When necessity and expediency in the Church require it, the Pastors, according to established norms from universal law, can entrust to the lay faithful certain offices and roles that are connected to their pastoral

ministry but do not require the character of Orders.”<sup>28</sup>

The Code of Canon Law states: " When the necessity of the Church warrants it and when ministers are lacking, lay persons, even if they are not lectors or acolytes, can also supply for certain of their offices, namely, to exercise the ministry of the word, to preside over liturgical prayers, to confer Baptism, and to distribute Holy Communion in accord with the prescriptions of the law."<sup>29</sup>

## ***4. The Funeral Liturgy***

### ***4.1 Periods without Funeral Masses***

- ***On Saturday After Noon and All Day Sunday***

According to the guidelines for the Archdiocese of Moncton, funeral services cannot be held after noon on Saturday and on Sunday.

- ***During the Triduum***

From Thursday morning and throughout the Easter Triduum, funeral masses are forbidden.<sup>30</sup> However, a Liturgy of the Word can be held, except during the exclusion periods indicated in the preceding point.

### ***4.2 The Welcoming at the Church***

The Presider greets the family and the remains of the deceased at the entrance to the church. After a brief meditative pause, he reads a short prayer taken from the Ritual. In the English Ritual, the Holy Water rite is used in the Introductory Rites. (In the French Ritual, the Holy Water rite is used in the Rite of Committal.) A hymn or music accompanies the procession with the remains to the front of the church. When at presidential seat, the priest greets the assembly. If there are people of another linguistic group, it would, as much as possible, be appropriate to welcome them in their language.

### ***4.3 The Word of God***

The liturgy of the Word is an integral part of the sacramental celebrations. The English ritual allows for one or two readings whether there be a Funeral Mass or a Funeral Liturgy Outside Mass. To nourish the faith of the faithful, the Word of God must be proclaimed properly. Having a member of the family perform this ministry has advantages and inconveniences. The person responsible for the celebration will assign the readings to persons

capable of properly performing this ministry. At funerals, the liturgy of the Word requires a good preparation since the assembly is searching for words of hope that will help them through this loss.

#### ***4.4 The Homily***

The homily is a reflection on the Word of God proclaimed to rekindle the faith and hope of the members of the assembly. It is important that the funeral homily show the action of the Spirit in the life and environment of the deceased; however this must be done seriously, without becoming a funeral eulogy.

“A brief homily based on the readings is always given after the gospel reading at the funeral liturgy and may also be given after the readings at the vigil service; but there is never to be a eulogy.”<sup>34</sup>

#### ***4.5 The Word of Remembrance***

The Word of Remembrance (formerly called the "eulogy") is not part of the Funeral Mass. It is therefore preferable that it be done at the vigil. If it is not done at that time, it could be done at the reception following the funeral liturgy.

We must remember that the church is a place to live and celebrate the liturgy of the Word of God and the Eucharist and not a place for a ceremony of compassion where we would pay homage to the deceased through popular songs, poems, etc. that do not correspond to the structure of a liturgy of the Word nor of the Eucharist.

It should also be noted that the Ritual allows for a word of remembrance during a funeral liturgy outside mass: “A member or a friend of the family may speak in remembrance of the deceased before the final commendation.”<sup>35</sup>

## ***4.6 The Final Commendation and Farewell***

The last farewell closes the celebration at the church. Through that rite, the Christian community salutes one of its members a last time before the mortal remains are buried or cremated. The Presider will stand near the coffin. He will invite the assembly in a silent prayer . “The coffin may now be sprinkled with holy water as a reminder of baptism [...] Then, as a sign of respect for the body of the deceased, [...] the coffin may be incensed.”<sup>37</sup> This is done by the Presider in the presence of either the remains or the ashes. This last farewell is lived in the hope that we will all find ourselves together one day in Christ resurrected.

Contrary to the French Ritual, the English Ritual provides for the recitation of the Our Father and for s shorter rite in case of inclement weather in articles 395 and 401.

## ***5. Liturgical Matters***

### ***5.1 The Assembly Celebrates the Funeral***

« [...] the subject of the celebration is the assembly gathered with a priest presiding. To fully experience this reality of the celebration, it is recommended that we favor all available means to encourage the participation of the faithful. [...] ‘This purpose will best be accomplished if [...] the celebration is planned in such a way that it brings about in the faithful a participation in the body and spirit that is conscious, active, full, and motivated by faith, hope, and charity. The Church desires this kind of participation, the nature of the celebration demands it, and for the Christian people it is a right and duty they have by reason of their baptism.’ »<sup>38</sup>

In urban as well as in rural communities, funeral celebrations vary according to families or the popularity of the deceased. We should remember that the assembly is particularly attentive to what is done and what is said during the funeral liturgy. As a Church, we must proclaim a word of faith in the name of Jesus risen, and we must manifest God’s love.

### ***5.2 The Presider***

A celebration is an act that gathers people around an event. All are asked to celebrate. In each prayer meeting, there is a presider. The Presider is the one who acts in the name of the Church. He is responsible to give the rhythm to the celebration so that everything is done in an atmosphere of respect, attention and meditation.

### ***5.3 Altar Servers***

Parishes will generally give preference to their local adult ministry teams for altar services. These persons offer a reliable and competent ministry. If members of the family of the deceased offer their services at the altar, it will always be possible inasmuch as they receive the necessary formation beforehand.

### ***5.4 The Ministers of the Word and of Communion***

While it is preferable to have ministers of the Word proclaim the readings, there are advantages to having someone close to the family accomplish this ministry. These persons will have received the necessary formation. As for the minister of Communion, they will already have been mandated in their parish.

### ***5.5 Music and Hymns During the Celebration***

The funeral liturgy is made up of prayers, gestures, hymns and music. The hymns and the music play an important part in our liturgical celebrations. They create a climate of peace, beyond sorrow and encourage encounter. They help us express our faith in the resurrection of Christ. In choosing the hymns and the music, we will respect the pastoral context and the place where the funeral is being celebrated. The refrains of the hymns belong to the assembly whose participation must be encouraged. The role of the organist and of the cantor are important to sustain certain liturgical gestures during the celebration.

### ***5.6 Flowers, Insignia and Other Objects***

At the church, the flowers will be placed so as not to cause any obstruction. While some floral arrangements will be brought to the church, it is not necessary to bring all the floral arrangements from the funeral home. Flowers are not to be placed on the funeral pall which should have prominence since it represents the white garment of baptism.

On some occasions, members of the family may want to place a flag or some other association insignias on the coffin. These objects will be placed on a table near the casket. As for members of the Armed Forces or of the government, the Church will respect the protocol established by the government.

### ***5.7 The Easter candle***

“ The Easter candle may be placed beforehand near the position the coffin will occupy at the conclusion of the procession. [...] other candles may also be placed near the coffin during the funeral liturgy as a sign of reverence and solemnity. ”<sup>40</sup>

### ***5.8. Missal and Lectionary***

For all liturgical celebrations, the Church proposes celebration rites and prayers that are complete. All proclamations of the Word of God will be made from the Lectionary. It is advisable to check the funeral missal since it offers many suggestions for monitions, orations and meditations which should be chosen before the celebration. The praying assembly will thus not be distracted by a presider leafing through his book to find a prayer.

If the funeral service is held in both languages, the presider should avoid holding two ritual books in his hands at the same time.

## ***6. Accompanying the Deceased to the Cemetery***

## ***6.2 The Committal at the Cemetery***

“The act of committal, the conclusion of the funeral rites, is the final act of the community of faith in caring for the body of its deceased member. It may be celebrated at the grave, tomb, or crematorium and may be used for burial at sea. Whenever possible, the rite of committal is to be celebrated at the site of committal, that is, beside the open grave or place of internment, rather than at a cemetery chapel.”<sup>43</sup>

“In committing the body to its resting place, the community expresses the hope that, with all those who have gone before marked with the sign of faith, the deceased awaits the glory of the resurrection. The rite of committal is an expression of the communion that exists between the Church on earth and the Church in heaven: the deceased passes with the farewell prayers of the community of believers into the welcoming company of those who need faith no longer but see God face to face.”<sup>44</sup>

It is unfortunate that in many parishes the priest does not accompany the remains to the cemetery where possible. It would be fitting if the priest or a member of the funeral team accompanied the members of the family to the cemetery when requested.

## ***6.3 Disposal of the Ashes***

“The great respect the Church has for the bodies of the deceased should also be evident in the way the cremated remains are treated after cremation. This means that they should be put into a worthy container, and all who handle them should treat these remains with care and reverence in the way they are transported and where they are placed.

“The Church asks that, in keeping with a spirit of reverence, the cremated remains be buried in a grave or entombed in a mausoleum or a columbarium (a place for the entombment of cremated remains), that is, in a place especially designated for this purpose and reserved as such.

“In addition, a specific place for a person’s remains helps focus the remembering and prayer for the deceased person by the family and friends, and by the Church in general. Also, such a place will make it easier to memorialize the deceased, for example, with plaques which record names and dates.

“Scattering remains on the sea, in the air, on the ground, or keeping them in homes of relatives does not display appropriate reverence, and the Church does not offer a prayer service when that kind of disposal has been chosen.”<sup>46</sup>

## ***7. Entering the Act of Funeral in the Parish Register***

### ***7.1 The Act of Funeral***

The funeral celebrated in a parish by a priest or a lay person mandated by the Church will be registered in the parish where the celebration took place. If the celebration is held outside the parish church, that is at the funeral home or elsewhere, the priest who allowed the ceremony to be held elsewhere will be responsible to see to it that the act of funeral is included in the parish register. It is very important to mention clearly where the funeral was celebrated. The funeral act will be entered in one parish only.

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