

ORDER OF  
CHRISTIAN  
FUNERALS

*A Guide  
for  
the Liturgical Rites  
of the  
Catholic Church*

*at the time of death of a loved one*

SAINT JOHN VIANNEY

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CATHOLIC CHURCH

*Archdiocese of Galveston-Houston*

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## ***Funerals in the Catholic Church***

*The Catholic Church sees the death of a Christian as the end of the earthly pilgrimage and the beginning of a new and eternal life with God. The rites of the Church reflect this belief. The rites of the Church aim to assist the dead with prayers of the Church for their eternal salvation in Jesus Christ and to aid the family and friends of the deceased in their time of loss and sorrow with a message of hope and consolation in Jesus Christ.*

*The focus of the Catholic Funeral Liturgy is God. The Church praises God for His goodness and for the gifts of life and love which He bestows and are experienced by the deceased. In the Funeral Liturgy, the Church turns to God in faith for the reward of eternal life for those who believe in God and lived for God in this life. The Church prays to God for the healing and consolation of those who mourn.*

*The Funeral Liturgy is an aid for both the living and dead. As we gather to pray for our beloved dead we are strengthened and renewed in our faith so that we can recommit ourselves to loving God and living our lives in Jesus Christ. The dead are assisted by our prayers for the forgiveness of their sins and for their entrance into eternal life with the saints in glory.*

*The Funeral Liturgy is closely tied with the Rites of Baptism when the promise of eternal life in Christ is first given to those who believe. The ritual symbols of water, the paschal candle, the pall, the Word of God and the journey to the altar, all recall the journey that begins for the Catholic in baptism.*

*The Order of Christian Funerals has three stations reflecting the earthly pilgrimage and the journey to Heaven for the followers of Jesus: The Vigil at the funeral home, the Funeral Liturgy at the Church and The Final Commendation and Burial at the cemetery.*

## *Funerals at St. John Vianney*

### *Time & Place*

Funerals at St. John Vianney are normally scheduled Monday – Friday at 10:30 and 1:00 p.m. Saturday funerals are scheduled in consultation with the Parish Office and clergy. There are no funerals on Sundays and Church holy days.

Funerals are generally held in the chapel. Larger funerals are held in the church. Funeral liturgies outside of Mass may also be held at the funeral home. Funeral Masses may not be celebrated in a funeral home.

### *Vigils, Wakes, Rosaries and Visitation*

Vigils, wakes, the recitation of the rosary and family visitation normally take place at the funeral home or even in the family home. The time of the vigil services are set with the consultation of the parish clergy, funeral home and the family.

### *Funeral Masses and Cremation*

The Catholic Church maintains a strong preference for the burial of the bodies of deceased members. Cremation is allowed but not preferred. In certain instances, the Church forbids cremation - as when it is chosen for reasons against the Faith.

When cremation is chosen, the cremation should take place after the Funeral Mass. The Catholic Church prefers that the body of the deceased be present for the funeral Mass.

### *Burial of Cremated Remains*

The Catholic Church does not allow for the scattering of the cremated remains of the faithful. Ashes are to be treated with the same respect as the body. The cremated remains are to be interred in the ground or placed in a vault (columbarium). The Rite of Committal should be celebrated at this time, even if time has passed since the funeral liturgy.

## *The Vigil*

The Vigil (Liturgical Vigil, Rosary or Wake) takes place on the eve of the funeral. The normal place is the funeral home or family home. Here family and friends gather in the presence of the body and begin their prayers for the soul of the deceased. The Vigil (rosary or wake) may be led by a lay person, deacon or priest. This is also the time of the Visitation, when friends visit with the family showing support and offering condolences at the time of grief and loss.

The prayers may be led by a priest, deacon or layperson. The time should be coordinated by the funeral directors with the parish and the family.

The appropriate time for friends and family to offer remarks and remembrances of the deceased is following the vigil prayers. *This should only be done with the consent of the family.*

## *The Funeral Liturgy*

For Catholics, the normative celebration of a funeral is the Funeral Mass. The Funeral Mass is always celebrated in the church. A Funeral Liturgy outside of Mass may be celebrated either in the church or in a funeral home chapel.

### *The Rite of Reception*

The body of the deceased is accompanied to the church by the family and welcomed at the doors of the church by the ministers. Here the body is blessed with the Holy Water at the baptismal font and clothed with the funeral pall by the family.

In procession and accompanied by song, the clergy and family escort the casket and proceed to the altar.

### *The Liturgy of The Word*

The Sacred Scriptures are proclaimed by the readers. Between the First (Old Testament) and Second (New Testament) Readings, the cantor leads the singing of the Responsorial Psalm. Following the proclamation of the Gospel, a homily is given followed by the Prayers of the Faithful.

### *The Liturgy of the Eucharist*

The Liturgy of the Eucharist begins with the Presentation of the Gifts of bread, wine and water. These gifts may be presented by family members. Following the Prayers of the Faithful the gift bearers proceed to the offertory table and then, after collecting the gifts, process to the altar to present the gifts for the sacrifice of the Mass.

The mass continues in the usual fashion. The congregation will be invited to sit, kneel and stand at the appropriate times and to join in the sung acclamations.

Holy Communion will be offered to all Catholics who desire and are able to receive the sacrament. Non-Catholic family members and friends are invited to join in silent prayer during communion or to join in the singing of the communion hymn. *Communion is not distributed outside of Mass.*

Following the Prayer after Communion, a family member or other designated person may offer a few words of appreciation on behalf of the family. *Only one person may speak and for no longer than 3 minutes.* Other remarks should be offered at the conclusion of the vigil service.

### *The Final Commendation*

The Funeral Liturgy concludes with the Song of Farewell and the Prayer of Final Commendation. The body of the deceased is then taken in procession to the place of burial.

## *The Rite of Committal*

The Rite of Committal takes place following the Funeral Liturgy. There is normally an immediate procession to the cemetery and there the final prayers of the church are offered. If burial is delayed or in the case of cremation, the Rite of Committal is offered at the time of internment.

## *The Funeral Liturgy Outside of Mass*

When the funeral takes place at the funeral home, the rite of the Funeral Liturgy Outside of Mass is offered. The rites remain the same with the exception that the Liturgy of the Eucharist is omitted.

## *Music*

Music plays an important part in the funeral liturgy and adds great beauty and solemnity to the prayers of the church. The parish music staff provides instrumentalists and vocalists and arranges the appropriate liturgical musical selections for the funerals. If the family desires a particular musical piece for the funeral they may make their request to the music department.

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## *Scripture Readings*

At Funeral Liturgies, there is a reading from the Old Testament followed by a reading from the New Testament as well as the Gospel. The family is invited, if they desire, to choose from among the designated selections of readings for the First and Second Readings.

The family may also choose to ask one or two people to assist with the readings. At a Funeral Mass, the persons should be practicing Catholics.

The Responsorial Psalm is sung by the cantor.

The Gospel Reading is normally chosen by the Celebrant and is proclaimed by either a priest or a deacon. *See page 9 for readings.*

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## *Eulogies*

The homily at the Funeral Liturgy is one that focuses on the Scripture readings and the themes of Christian hope and the significance of our salvation in Jesus Christ. Therefore, *eulogies are not part of the Catholic Funeral Liturgy. Remembrances of the deceased may be given as part of the vigil service the evening before.* At the end of the Funeral Liturgy a member of the family or a designated person may speak to express remarks of appreciation. *Only one person may speak and for no longer than 3 minutes.*

## *Receptions*

The St. John Vianney Women's Club offers and hosts funeral receptions for parish members who so desire. There is no charge for this reception though donations to the Women's Club to offset expenses are welcome. The receptions are held in either the parish Activity Center or St. Jude Hall (Multi-Purpose Room).

Families who wish may also have a catered reception. These are to be coordinated with the Parish Life Office.

## *Charges and Fees*

There are no charges for the church or chapel for a funeral at St. John Vianney. A customary honorarium may be offered to the clergy by either funeral home or the family. The fees for the musicians are to be paid directly to the musicians either by the funeral director or the family. The fees are \$150 for the organist and \$125 for each vocalist. Other musicians and their fees are to be coordinated with the music department.

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## *Flowers & Photographs*

Floral arrangements given specifically for use in the Church are welcome outside the Lenten season. For information on details, please contact the parish offices. Floral sprays, floral arrangements, plants and photographs are appropriate for visitation at the funeral home and at the graveside. These arrangements are handled by the funeral directors. Photographs may also be present at the reception.

## *Memorials*

Memorial gifts in honor of a deceased loved one may be made to St. John Vianney. Gifts can be designated for the general ministries of the parish or for specific use. All memorial gifts are tax-deductible and the donations will be acknowledged by the parish.

## *Scripture Selections*

### OLD TESTAMENT READINGS

Job 19:1,23-27/Wisdom 3:1-9 or 3:1-6,9/Wisdom 4:7-15/Isaiah 25:6a,7-9/Lamentations 3:17-26/Daniel 12:1-3/2 Maccabees 12:43-46

### NEW TESTAMENT READINGS

Acts 10:34-43 or 10:34-36,42-43/Romans 5:5-11/Romans 5:17-21/  
Romans 6:3-9 or 6:3-4,8-9/Romans 8:14-23/Romans 8:31b-35,37-39/  
Romans 14:7-9,10b-12/1 Corinthians 15:20-23,24b-28 or 15:20-23/  
1 Corinthians 15:51-57/2 Corinthians 4:14-5:1/2 Corinthians 5:1,6-10/  
Philippians 3:20-21/1 Thessalonians 4:13-18/2 Timothy 2:8-13/  
1 John 3:1-2/1 John 3:14-16/Revelation 14:13/Revelation 20:11-21:1/  
Revelation 21:1-5a,6b-7

The full text of the readings in a printable format may be found on the parish website:

[www.stjohnvianney.org/funerals](http://www.stjohnvianney.org/funerals)

*Practical Procedures*

*Check List*

*Lord,*

*For Your  
Faithful People*

*LIFE*

*Is Changed*

*Not Ended!*

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CATHOLIC CHURCH**

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