

SERVER'S HANDBOOK



SERVING AT FUNERALS

Immaculate Heart of Mary Church

Revised: November 2009

The Funeral Liturgy

In the Catholic Funeral Liturgy, the primary focus is on worship, praise, and thanksgiving. It is extremely important for servers to “be the best”, for we never want to become a distraction to the assembly. As a Funeral Team member, you must know how to serve better than anyone else! This means, you must study the Server Handbook frequently. Appearance, how you fold your hands, and performing actions at the correct time is critical!

Three Servers are needed for the funeral

Introductory Rites (Reception of the Body)

The **Cross Bearer** will stand in the aisle of the Church, facing the casket. Stand about 3 pews up the aisle from the last pew in church to give room for the priest and other ministers.

The server with the **Holy Water** (aspergillum) stands next to Father, to his right side.

The server with the **Pall** stands to the left of Father.

Greeting (there is no sign of the cross)

Sprinkling with Holy Water

Father begins the Rite with a simple greeting. He then prays “In the waters of baptism....share with him eternal glory.” At the end of this short prayer, the server will hold the holy water out so Father can take the sprinkling wand. He will sprinkle the casket, and return it to the bucket. The server will carry the aspergillum in the entrance procession

Then, the server with the Pall gives it to the person(s) who will unfold it on top of the casket.

Entrance Procession

After the pall has been placed, the cross bearer turns and begins the entrance procession—just like a normal Mass. The other servers will process in as at a normal Mass. Upon reaching the steps of the sanctuary, they all wait for Father, and all genuflect with Father except the cross bearer and the server with the holy water, who bow. The cross bearer places the cross into it’s stand in the sanctuary. The server with the holy water upon reaching his/her chair, will place it on the floor next to the chair. All go to their chairs and stand.

Opening Prayer:

The Book Bearer may bring the Sacramentary to Father for the opening prayer. Sometimes, Father or the Deacon will hold the Funeral Liturgy Book instead of using the Sacramentary. Remember, when I look, bring the book.

Mass continues as normal

After Communion.

Father will stand and say “Let Us Pray”, at which time the server will bring the Sacramentary to Father. Everyone else also stands.

After the Communion Prayer, the server with the book returns to his/her place. The server who carried the Holy Water at the beginning will immediately go to working sacristy to get the censor and the boat. He/she brings that out to where Father is standing, on the top step of the sanctuary in front of the altar.

At the same time, the cross bearer will get the cross, and go directly past the casket to stand in the center aisle, about 3 pews past the casket, facing the altar.

Final Commendation

After a brief prayer, the choir will begin to sing the “Song of Farewell”. At that time, Father will take the boat from the server, who will open the censor and lift it so Father can place incense on the coals. Close the censor, and give it to Father; Father will hand you the boat. Stand in place until he returns to you. Father will incense the paschal candle, the casket, and the cross.

When he returns the censor to you, continue to swing it gently from side to side; this serves to keep the smoke from coming up into your face.

The other server will come from his/her chair and stand next to Deacon/Father at this time.

Prayer of Commendation

Father will pray the prayer of Commendation (Into your hands, Father of mercies, we commend...). After that prayer, Father or the Deacon will say “In peace, let us take our brother/sister to his/her final resting place.”

Procession to the Place of Committal

The censor bearer moves down the steps and passes the cross bearer, and leads the procession out of church. The cross bearer turns and processes out into the Gathering Space, standing about center of the space slightly toward Mr. Wagner’s office. The other server descends the sanctuary steps, and continues to process out behind the cross bearer. On reaching the gathering space, all servers stand next to the cross and wait. The funeral directors will remove the pall from the casket, and the server (pall bearer) will take it from them. When all of the assembly has moved out of church, all servers return to the sacristy and begin their normal post-Mass duties.