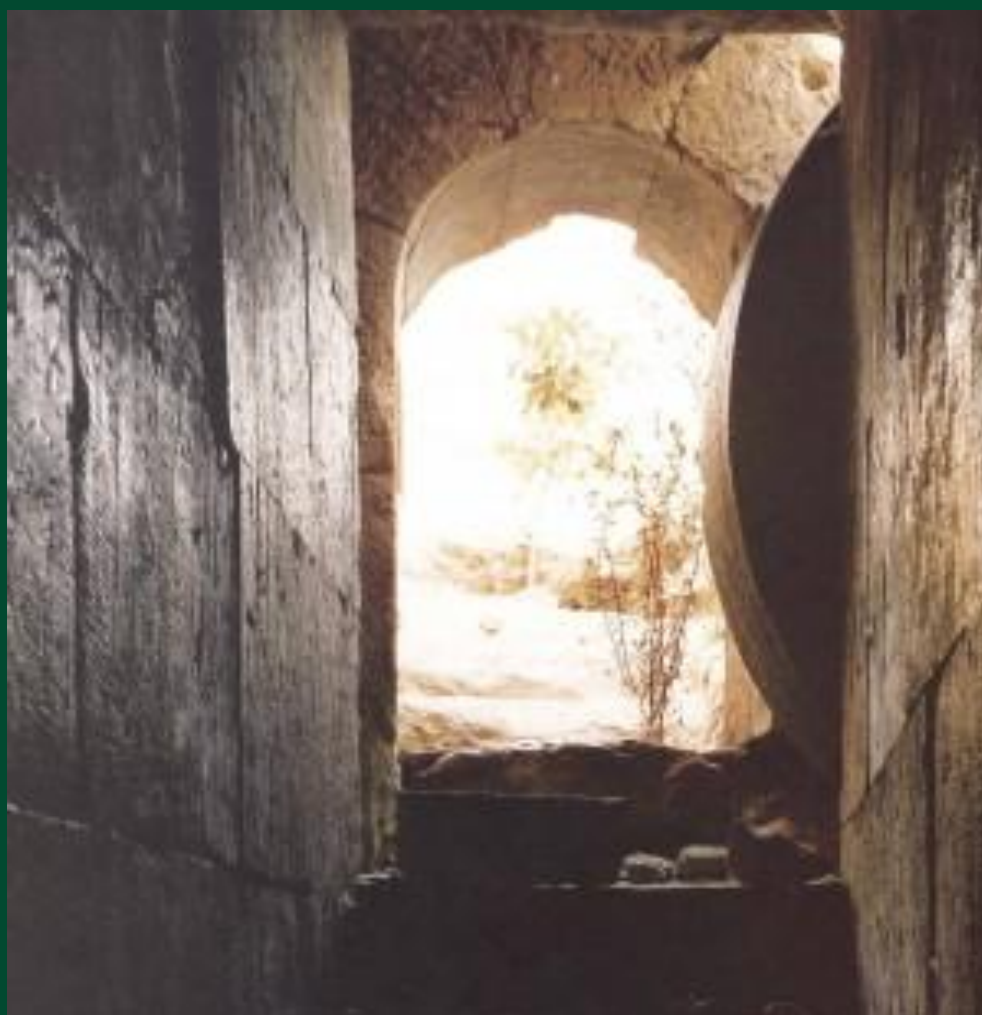


READING CATHOLIC COMMUNITY

Order of Christian Funerals

*...Life
Is
Changed
Not
Ended...*



Saint Athanasius Parish
300 Haverhill Street
Reading, MA

Saint Agnes Parish
186 Woburn Street
Reading, MA

A death in the family is never easy. Our human experience leaves us in shock and with heavy hearts. We may feel alone to confront our loss and our own mortality. You are not alone. Our Faith in God supports us and directs our attention to the Crucified and Risen Lord - victor over death with whom we are one through Baptism and the community of the Church. The Reading Catholic Community of Saint Agnes and Saint Athanasius Parishes walks with you in this time of need, and we are already in prayer for your beloved and for your consolation. The following information will assist you in planning the Funeral Liturgy of your loved one. Our Bereavement Team is here to offer any assistance you may require for planning your loved one's Funeral Mass.

THE FUNERAL RITE

The Catholic Funeral Rite is divided into three components or "Stations":

- The Vigil Service (Wake Prayer Service)
- The Funeral Mass
- The Committal (Prayers at the Grave)

A. THE VIGIL SERVICE

This is a service of the Word, held during the wake the evening before the funeral. It includes Scriptures, reflection, and prayers. Often the priest or deacon will start the prayers after the family has gathered, but before the public viewing has begun.

B. THE FUNERAL MASS

The Mass is held at the parish. Upon entering the church, the family is greeted by the priest and Bereavement Team members. The casket is sprinkled with Holy Water and covered with the pall. Both of these symbols are reminders of the deceased's Baptism through which he or she entered the Church. Family members are invited to place the pall on the casket after the blessing with holy water. This comforting action exhibits the care of the family for their beloved even in death. The family then follows the casket and priest to the front of the church. The funeral director will accompany them to the seats while the entrance song is sung. The opening prayer of the Mass concludes this Entrance Rite. The Mass continues in the usual manner with the Liturgy of the Word.

The Funeral Mass calls for a total of three readings from Sacred Scripture: one from the Old Testament, one from the New Testament Letters, and a Gospel Reading. Included below are the selection of readings. The family is invited to choose the first two readings, as well as the person(s) who will proclaim them for the assembly. The Gospel is chosen and proclaimed by the priest or deacon. The person(s) who will proclaim the first and second readings should be comfortable doing this. A copy of the readings will be at the lectern, so they need not bring their copy up with them. Sometimes it is better that a non-immediate family member be chosen for this role. Often a family friend who performs this ministry in his or her parish regularly is available and willing to assist the family in this way.

One family member or a person close to the departed is often asked to speak words of thanks or remembrance at the funeral. This is done before the First Reading by one person and should be no longer than three to five minutes. However, additional words could be arranged during the wake, at the graveside, or during the post-funeral reception if there is one. The family should expect to provide a copy of the eulogy to the celebrant at the wake. This allows the celebrant to review the words of remembrance while ensuring that the Gospel message in the homily does not encroach on the sentiments of the speaker.

Another role for the family and friends is the presentation of the gifts for the celebration of the Eucharist. The Funeral director will assist the gift bearers who carry the items down the aisle to present them to the priest in front of the altar. (Presently suspended due to Archdiocesan COVID guidelines).

C. THE COMMITTAL

The prayers offered at the graveside are brief. There is a short scripture passage, a blessing of the grave, a committal prayer, and prayers for the mourners and all the deceased. Some families choose to conclude this Rite with a familiar hymn in thanksgiving for the life in Christ of the deceased. Also, this is a good moment to play a song that was most meaningful to your beloved.

First Reading - Old Testament

1. A reading from the Book of Job

(Job 19:1, 23-27a)

Job answered and said:
Oh, would that my words were written down!
Would that they were inscribed in a record:
That with an iron chisel and with lead they were cut in the rock forever!
But as for me, I know that my Vindicator lives,
and that he will at last stand forth upon the dust;
Whom I myself shall see: my own eyes, not another's, shall behold him,
And from my flesh I shall see God; my inmost being is consumed with longing.

The Word of the Lord.

2. A reading from the Book of Wisdom

(Wisdom 3:1-9)

The souls of the just are in the hand of God, and no torment shall touch them.
They seemed, in the view of the foolish, to be dead; and their passing away
was thought an affliction and their going forth from us, utter destruction.
But they are in peace. For if before men, indeed, they be punished,
yet is their hope full of immortality; Chastised a little, they shall be greatly blessed,
because God tried them and found them worthy of himself.
As gold in the furnace, he proved them, and as sacrificial offerings he took them
to himself. In the time of their visitation they shall shine, and shall dart about
as sparks through stubble; They shall judge nations and rule over peoples,
and the Lord shall be their King forever. Those who trust in him shall understand truth, and the faithful shall abide with him in love:
Because grace and mercy are with his holy ones, and his care is with his elect.

The Word of the Lord.

3. A reading from the Book of Wisdom

(Wisdom 4:7-15)

The just man, though he die early, shall be at rest. For the age that is honorable comes not with the passing of time, nor can it be measured in terms of years.

Rather, understanding is the hoary crown for men, and an unsullied life,

the attainment of old age. He who pleased God was loved;

he who lived among sinners was transported—

Snatched away, lest wickedness pervert his mind or deceit beguile his soul;

For the witchery of paltry things obscures what is right and the whirl of desire

transforms the innocent mind. Having become perfect in a short while,

he reached the fullness of a long career; for his soul was pleasing to the Lord,

therefore he sped him out of the midst of wickedness. But the people saw and

did not understand, nor did they take this into account.

The Word of the Lord.

4. A reading from the Book of the Prophet Isaiah

(Isaiah 25: 6a, 7-9)

On this mountain the Lord of hosts will provide for all peoples.

On this mountain he will destroy the veil that veils all peoples,

The web that is woven over all nations; he will destroy death forever.

The Lord God will wipe away the tears from all faces;

The reproach of his people he will remove from the whole earth;

for the Lord has spoken.

On that day it will be said:

"Behold our God, to whom we looked to save us!

This is the Lord for whom we looked;

let us rejoice and be glad that he has saved us!"

The Word of the Lord.

5. A reading from the Book of Lamentations

(Lm 3:17-26)

My soul is deprived of peace, I have forgotten what happiness is;
I tell myself my future is lost, all that I hoped for from the Lord.
The thought of my homeless poverty is wormwood and gall;
Remembering it over and over leaves my soul downcast within me.
But I will call this to mind, as my reason to have hope:
The favors of the Lord are not exhausted, his mercies are not spent;
They are renewed each morning, so great is his faithfulness.
My portion is the Lord, says my soul; therefore will I hope in him.
Good is the Lord to one who waits for him, to the soul that seeks him;
It is good to hope in silence for the saving help of the Lord.

The Word of the Lord.

6. A reading from the Book of the Prophet Daniel

(Daniel 12:1-3)

[I, Daniel, mourned and I heard this word of the Lord:]
"At that time there shall arise Michael, the great prince,
guardian of your people;
It shall be a time unsurpassed in distress since nations began until that time.
At that time your people shall escape, everyone who is found written in the book.
Many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake;
Some shall live forever, others shall be an everlasting horror and disgrace.
But the wise shall shine brightly like the splendor of the firmament,
And those who lead the many to justice shall be
like the stars forever."

The Word of the Lord

7. A reading from the Second Book of Maccabees

(2Mac 12:43-6)

Judas [the ruler of Israel] then took up a collection among all his soldiers,
amounting to two thousand silver drachmas, which he sent to Jerusalem to provide for an expiatory
sacrifice. In doing this he acted in a very excellent and noble way, inasmuch as he had the
resurrection of the dead in view; for if he were not expecting the fallen to rise again,
it would have been useless and foolish to pray for them in death.
But if he did this with a view to the splendid reward that awaits those who had gone to rest in
godliness, it was a holy and pious thought. Thus he made atonement for the dead that
they might be freed from this sin.

The Word of the Lord

Second Reading - New Testament

1. A reading from the Acts of the Apostles (Acts 10:34-43)

Peter proceeded to address the people in these words:

"In truth, I see that God shows no partiality. Rather, in every nation whoever fears him and acts uprightly is acceptable to him. You know the word that he sent to the Israelites as he proclaimed peace through Jesus Christ, who is Lord of all, what has happened all over Judea, beginning in Galilee after the baptism that John preached, how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and power. He went about doing good and healing all those oppressed by the devil, for God was with him. We are witnesses of all that he did both in the country of the Jews and in Jerusalem. They put him to death by hanging him on a tree. This man God raised on the third day and granted that he be visible, not to all the people, but to us, the witnesses chosen by God in advance, who ate and drank with him after he rose from the dead. He commissioned us to preach to the people and testify that he is the one appointed by God as judge of the living and the dead. To him all the prophets bear witness, that everyone who believes in him will receive forgiveness of sins through his name."

The Word of the Lord.

2. A reading from the Letter of Paul to the Romans (Rom 5:5-11)

Hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit that has been given to us. For Christ, while we were still helpless, yet died at the appointed time for the ungodly. Indeed, only with difficulty does one die for a just person, though perhaps for a good person one might even find courage to die. But God proves his love for us in that while we were still sinners Christ died for us. How much more then, since we are now justified by his blood, will we be saved through him from the wrath. Indeed, if, while we were enemies, we were reconciled to God through the death of his Son, how much more, once reconciled, will we be saved by his life. Not only that, but we also boast of God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation.

The Word of the Lord.

3. A reading from the Letter of Paul to the Romans

(Rom 8:14-23)

Those who are led by the Spirit of God are children of God. For you did not receive a spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you received a spirit of adoption, through which we cry, Abba, "Father!" The Spirit itself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs, heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if only we suffer with him so that we may also be glorified with him.

I consider that the sufferings of this present time are as nothing compared with the glory to be revealed for us. For creation awaits with eager expectation the revelation of the children of God; for creation was made subject to futility, not of its own accord but because of the one who subjected it, in hope that creation itself would be set free from slavery to corruption and share in the glorious freedom of the children of God. We know that all creation is groaning in labor pains even until now, and not only that, but we ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, we also groan within ourselves as we wait for adoption, the redemption of our bodies.

The Word of the Lord.

4. A reading from the Letter of Paul to the Romans

(Rom 8:31b-35, 37-39)

If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare his own Son but handed him over for us all, how will he not also give us everything else along with him?

Who will bring a charge against God's chosen ones? It is God who acquits us.

Who will condemn? It is Christ Jesus who died, rather, was raised, who also is at the right hand of God, who indeed intercedes for us. What will separate us from the love of Christ?

Will anguish, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or the sword?

No, in all these things we conquer overwhelmingly through him who loved us.

For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor present things, nor future things, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

The Word of the Lord.

5. A reading from the Letter of Paul to the Romans

(Rom 14:7-9, 10b-2)

None of us lives for oneself, and no one dies for oneself. For if we live, we live for the Lord, and if we die, we die for the Lord; so then, whether we live or die, we are the Lord's. For this is why Christ died and came to life, that he might be Lord of both the dead and the living. For we shall all stand before the judgment seat of God; for it is written: "As I live, says the Lord, every knee shall bend before me, and every tongue shall give praise to God." So then each of us shall give an account of himself to God.

The Word of the Lord.

6. A reading from the First Letter of Paul to the Corinthians

(Cor 15:20-23,24b-28)

Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who have fallen asleep. For since death came through a human being, the resurrection of the dead came also through a human being. For just as in Adam all die, so too in Christ shall all be brought to life, but each one in proper order: Christ the first fruits; then, at his coming, those who belong to Christ; then comes the end, when he hands over the kingdom to his God and Father. For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet. The last enemy to be destroyed is death, for "he subjected everything under his feet." But when it says that everything has been subjected, it is clear that it excludes the One who subjected everything to him. When everything is subjected to him, then the Son himself will also be subjected to the One who subjected everything to him, so that God may be all in all.

The Word of the Lord.

7. A reading from the First Letter of Paul to the Corinthians

(Cor 15:51-57)

Behold, I tell you a mystery. We shall not all fall asleep, but we will all be changed, in an instant, in the blink of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For that which is corruptible must clothe itself with incorruptibility, and that which is mortal must clothe itself with immortality. And when that which is corruptible clothes itself with incorruptibility and that which is mortal clothes itself with immortality, then the word that is written shall come about "Death is swallowed up in victory. Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting?" The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. But thanks be to God who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

The Word of the Lord.

8. A reading from the Second Letter of Paul to the Corinthians

(Cor 4:14-5:1)

We know that the one who raised the Lord Jesus will raise us also with Jesus and place us with you in his presence. Everything indeed is for you, so that the grace bestowed in abundance on more and more people may cause the thanksgiving to overflow for the glory of God. Therefore, we are not discouraged; rather, although our outer self is wasting away, our inner self is being renewed day by day. For this momentary light affliction is producing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison, as we look not to what is seen but to what is unseen; for what is seen is transitory, but what is unseen is eternal. For we know that if our earthly dwelling, a tent, should be destroyed, we have a building from God, a dwelling not made with hands, eternal in heaven.

The Word of the Lord

9. A reading from the First Letter of Paul to the Thessalonians

(Thes 4:13-18)

We do not want you to be unaware, brothers [and sisters], about those who have fallen asleep, so that you may not grieve like the rest, who have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose, so too will God, through Jesus, bring with him those who have fallen asleep. Indeed, we tell you this, on the word of the Lord, that we who are alive, who are left until the coming of the Lord, will surely not precede those who have fallen asleep. For the Lord himself with a word of command, with the voice of an archangel and with the trumpet of God, will come down from heaven, and the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. Thus we shall always be with the Lord. Therefore, console one another with these words.

The Word of the Lord.

10. A reading from the First Letter of John

(John 3:1-2)

See what love the Father has bestowed on us that we may be called the children of God. Yet so we are. The reason the world does not know us is that it did not know him. Beloved, we are God's children now, what we shall be has not yet been revealed. We do know that when it is revealed we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is.

The Word of the Lord.

11. A reading from the First Letter of John

(John 3:14-16)

We know that we have passed from death to life because we love our brothers [and sisters]. Whoever does not love remains in death. Everyone who hates his brother is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life remaining in him. The way we came to know love was that he laid down his life for us; so we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers [and sisters].

The Word of the Lord.

12. A reading from the Book of Revelation

(Rev 20:11–21:1)

I saw a large white throne and the one who was sitting on it. The earth and the sky fled from his presence and there was no place for them. I saw the dead, the great and the lowly, standing before the throne, and scrolls were opened. Then another scroll was opened, the book of life. The dead were judged according to their deeds, by what was written in the scrolls. The sea gave up its dead; then Death and Hades gave up their dead. All the dead were judged according to their deeds. Then Death and Hades were thrown into the pool of fire. (This pool of fire is the second death.) Anyone whose name was not found written in the book of life was thrown into the pool of fire. Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth. The former heaven and the former earth had passed away, and the sea was no more.

The Word of the Lord.

13. A reading from the Book of Revelation

(Rev 21:1-5a, 6b-7)

I saw a new heaven and a new earth. The former heaven and the former earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. I also saw the holy city, a new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Behold, God's dwelling is with the human race. He will dwell with them and they will be his people and God himself will always be with them as their God. He will wipe every tear from their eyes, and there shall be no more death or mourning, wailing or pain, for the old order has passed away."

The one who sat on the throne said, "Behold, I make all things new. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. To the thirsty I will give a gift from the spring of life-giving water. The victor will inherit these gifts, and I shall be his God, and he will be my son."

The Word of the Lord.

Prayers of the Faithful - Option A

Priest: Brothers and sisters, Jesus Christ is risen from the dead and sits at the right hand of the Father, where he intercedes for his Church. Confident that God hears the voices of those who trust in the Lord Jesus, we join our prayers to his:

READER: Please respond, “Hear our prayer” to the following petitions.

In baptism, N., received the light of Christ. Scatter the darkness now, and lead him/her over the waters of death. Lord, in your mercy:

All: Hear our prayer.

READER: Our brother/sister N., was nourished at the table of the Savior. Welcome him/her into the halls of the heavenly banquet. Lord, in your mercy:

All: Hear our prayer.

READER: For friends and members of our families who have gone before us and await the kingdom, grant them an everlasting home with your Son. Lord, in your mercy:

All: Hear our prayer.

READER: Those who trusted in the Lord now sleep in the Lord. Give refreshment, rest and peace to all whose faith is known to you alone. Lord, in your mercy:

All: Hear our prayer.

READER: The family and friends of N., seek comfort and consolation. Heal their pain and dispel the darkness and doubt that comes from grief. Lord, in your mercy:

All: Hear our prayer.

READER: We are assembled here in faith and confidence to pray for our brother/sister, N. Strengthen our hope so that we may live in expectation of your Son’s coming. Lord, in your mercy:

All: Hear our prayer.

(The READER is reminded to remain at the ambo while the priest prays the closing prayer.)

Prayers of the Faithful - Option B

Priest: God, the almighty Father, raised Christ his Son from the dead; with confidence we ask him to save all his people, living and dead:

READER: Please respond, “Lord, hear our prayer” to the following petitions.

For N., who in baptism was given the pledge of eternal life, that he/she may now be admitted to the company of the saints. We pray to the Lord:

All: Lord, hear our prayer.

READER: For our sister/brother who ate the Body of Christ, the Bread of Life, that she/he may be raised up on the last day. We pray to the Lord:

All: Hear our prayer.

READER: For our deceased relatives and friends and for all who have helped us, that they may have the reward of their goodness. We pray to the Lord:

All: Lord, hear our prayer.

READER: For those who have fallen asleep in the hope of rising again, that they may see God face to face. We pray to the Lord:

All: Lord, hear our prayer.

READER: For the family and friends of our brother/sister N., that they may be consoled in their grief by the Lord, who wept at the death of his friend Lazarus. We pray to the Lord:

All: Lord, hear our prayer.

READER: For all of us assembled here to worship in faith, that we may be gathered together again in God’s kingdom. We pray to the Lord.

All: Lord, hear our prayer.

(The READER is reminded to remain at the ambo while the priest prays the closing prayer.)

MUSIC SELECTIONS

Integral to any celebration in the Church is sacred music. Music by its very nature touches people at a deeper level than mere words. For these reasons music at the celebration of Christian funerals is of the utmost importance: to enhance the celebration of the Eucharist and to lighten the burden of grief and loss.

Words of Remembrance:

A Guide for Speakers at the Funeral Liturgy

For Catholics, the Funeral Liturgy is about our faith in the life, saving death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Therefore, any remembrance offered must be about the deceased's life with God, and the ways the person was faithful to Baptism by loving God and loving neighbors. The Wake would be a special time for sharing stories and for listening to music, meaningful to the deceased and their family. Keep in mind that the purpose of the Funeral Liturgy is to offer thanks to God for the resurrection of Jesus and to pray that the deceased may share in this resurrection! As eulogist, your task is to speak within this tradition, and to speak simply from your heart.

- * One friend or family member should be asked to speak. Remembrances may not last for more than five minutes.
- * Prepare your remembrance in writing so you won't lose your train of thought.
- * Use your own words and speak from your own experience.
- * Avoid telling "inside jokes" or forms of humor which could be easily misunderstood.
- * Discuss your remembrances with the priest before the funeral. He may have some helpful comments. Review exactly when you will speak, how you will come from your seat, enter the sanctuary, and return to your seat.
- * During the preparation and delivery of your remembrances, PRAY. Pray that you will do honor to your loved one's memory, and that your words will be a witness to faith and a blessing to your family and friends.
- * If you have been asked to speak but are unaccustomed to public speaking, or are concerned that your emotions may hinder your ability to speak, do not hesitate to respectfully decline this task.

FUNERAL MASS CELEBRATED FOR

WILL THE FAMILY PLACE THE PALL? _____

GATHERING SONG: _____

WORDS OF REMEMBRANCE/EULOGY (*optional*): _____

FIRST READING: _____

READ BY: _____

PSALM (*always sung*): _____

SECOND READING: _____

READ BY: _____

MUSIC DURING
PREPARATION: _____

GIFT BEARERS: _____

COMMUNION MUSIC: _____

SONG OF FAREWELL: _____

RECESSIONAL: _____

Notes and Questions