

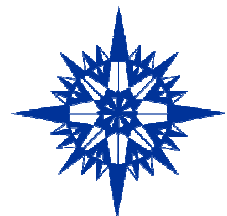
# NOW AND *at the* HOUR *of* OUR DEATH

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*Dying, Death & Funerals*



ST. CHARLES BORROMEO &  
OUR LADY OF THE SNOWS



# Now and at the Hour of our Death

My prayer is that this booklet be of assistance to you in the preparation for death and the beginning of planning a funeral. Many parts of this booklet have been taken from materials that I have accumulated over the years. This booklet speaks about the dying process and describes some of the physical and spiritual experiences surrounding dying. The booklet also offers some prayers and scriptures that can be read when someone is dying and/or at the moment death visits us. Finally, the booklet serves as a vehicle for you to begin thinking about planning a funeral.

Should you have any questions or comments, please feel free to contact me at the parish.

With prayers for you and your family,

*Fr. Ronald Melnick*

Each person approaches dying and death in their own way, bringing to this last experience their own uniqueness. What is listed here is simply a guideline, a road map. Like any map, there are many roads arriving at the same destination, many ways to enter the same city.

Use this guideline while remembering there is nothing concrete; all is very, very flexible. Any one of the signs in this booklet may be present; all may be present; none may be present. For some, it will take months to separate from their physical body, for others only a few minutes.

Death comes in its own time, in its own way.

Death is as unique as the individual who is experiencing it.



If the following signs were to be put on a timetable, a very flexible timetable, we could say changes begin one to three months before death occurs. The actual dying process often begins within the two weeks prior to death. There is a shift that occurs within a person that takes them from a mental processing of death to a true comprehension and belief in their own mortality. Unfortunately, this understanding is not always shared with others.

## **1 - 3 MONTHS PRIOR TO DEATH**

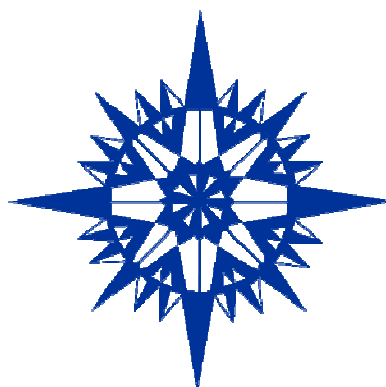
### **♦ Withdrawal**

**A**s the knowledge that “yes, I am dying” becomes real, a person begins to withdraw from the world around them. This is the beginning of separation, first from the world—no more interest in newspapers or television or people—no more neighbors visiting: “Tell Aunt Jessie I don’t feel like company today,” and finally from the children, grandchildren and perhaps even those persons most loved.

This is becoming a time of withdrawing from everything outside of one's self and going inside. Inside where there is sorting out, evaluating one's self and one's life. But inside there is only room for one.

This processing of one's life is usually done with the eyes closed, so sleep increases. A morning nap is added to the usual afternoon nap. Staying in bed all day and spending more time asleep than awake becomes the norm. This appears to be just sleep but know that important work is going on inside on a level of which “outsiders” aren't aware.

With this withdrawal comes less of a need to communicate with others. Words are



## ♦ Food

Food is the way we energize our body. It is the means by which we keep our body going, moving, alive. We eat to live. When a body is preparing to die, it is perfectly natural that eating should stop. This is one of the hardest concepts for a family to accept.

There is a gradual decrease in eating habits. Nothing tastes good. Cravings come and go. Liquids are preferred to solids. “I just don’t feel like eating.” Meats are the first to go, followed by vegetables and other hard-to-digest foods, until even soft foods are no longer eaten.

It is okay not to eat. A different kind of energy is needed now. A spiritual energy, not a physical one, will sustain from here on.

## 1 - 2 WEEKS PRIOR TO DEATH

### ♦ Disorientation

Sleeping is most of the time now. A person can’t seem to keep their eyes open. They can, however, be awakened from that sleep. There is literally one foot in each world. A person often becomes confused, talking to people about places and events that are unknown to others. They may see and converse with loved ones who have died before them. There may be picking at the bedclothes and agitated arm movements. There is a seeing aimlessness to all physical activity. Focus is changing from this world to the next; they are losing their grounding to the earth.

## ♦ Physical Changes

**T**here are beginning changes that show the physical body is losing its ability to maintain itself.

- ♦ The **blood pressures** often lowers.
- ♦ There are changes in the **pulse beat** either increasing from a normal of eighty to upward of one hundred fifty, or decreasing anywhere down to zero.
- ♦ The **body temperature** fluctuates between fever and cold.
- ♦ There is **increased perspiration**, often with clamminess.
- ♦ The **skin color** changes: flushed with the fever, bluish with the cold. A pale yellowish pallor (not to be confused with jaundice) often accompanies approaching death. The nail beds, hands, and feet are often pale and bluish because the heart can't circulate the blood through the body at a normal flow.
- ♦ **Breathing changes** also occur. Respiration may increase from a normal sixteen to twenty, to upward of forty or fifty breaths every minute, or decrease to nine or even six breaths a minute. There can be a puffing, a blowing of the lips on exhaling, or actual stopping of the rhythmic breathing, only to resume. This generally occurs during sleep.



Congestion can also occur, a rattily sound in the lungs and upper throat. There might be coughing with this, but generally nothing can be brought up. All of these breathing changes and congestion have a tendency to come and go. One minute, any or all of these symptoms may be present, the next minute, breathing may clear and be even.

### 1 - 2 DAYS TO HOURS PRIOR TO DEATH

Sometimes there is a **surge of energy**. A person may talk clearly and alertly when before, there had been disorientation. A favorite meal might be asked for and eaten when nothing had been eaten for days. A person might sit up in the living room with relatives and visit when they hadn't wanted to be with anyone for quite a while. This spiritual energy for transition from this world to the next has arrive and it is used for a time of physical expression before moving on. The surge of energy is not always as noticeable as the other examples, but in hindsight, it can usually be recognized.

The **one to two weeks'** signs that were present earlier become more intense as death approaches.

- ◇ **Restlessness** can further increase due to lack of oxygen in the blood.
- ◇ The **breathing patterns** become slower and more irregular. Breathing often stops for ten to fifteen and even thirty to forty-five seconds before resuming.
- ◇ **Congestion** can be very loud. It can be affected by positioning on one side or the other. It still comes and goes.
- ◇ The **eyes** may be open or semi-open but not seeing. There is a glassy look to them, often tearing.
- ◇ The **hands and feet** now become purplish. The knees, ankles, and elbows are blotchy. The underside of the arms, legs, back and buttocks also can be blotchy.
- ◇ Generally, a person becomes **non-responsive** (unable to respond to their environment) sometime prior to death.



How we approach death is going to depend upon how we have lived our life and our faith. Oftentimes, fear or anxiety accompanies all change. So it is with death. Sometimes fear and anxiety can be present. Fear of letting go plays a major role in the dying process. Up until someone accepts in their heart that they are dying, a feeling of fear and/or anxiety can be present. Fear and unfinished business are two big factors in determining how much resistance we put into meeting death.

The separation of body and spirit becomes complete when breathing stops. Many times what appears to be the last breath is often followed by one or two long spaced breaths and then the physical body is empty of life's spirit.

They have entered a new city, a new life.





# SUMMARY OF DYING PROCESS

## 1 - 3 MONTHS

- Withdrawal from the world and people
- Decreased food intake
- Increase in sleep
- Going inside self
- Less communication

## 1 - 2 WEEKS

- Disorientation
  - ◊ Agitation
  - ◊ Talking with the unseen
  - ◊ Confusion
  - ◊ Picking at clothes
- Physical
  - ◊ Decreased blood pressure
  - ◊ Pulse increases or decreases
  - ◊ Skin color changes: pale, bluish
  - ◊ Increased perspiration
  - ◊ Respiration irregularities
  - ◊ Congestion
  - ◊ Sleeping but responding
  - ◊ Complaints of body tired and heavy

## DAYS OR HOURS

- Intensification of one to two weeks' signs
- Surge of energy
- Decrease in blood pressure
- Eyes glassy, tearing, half open
- Irregular breathing: stop, start
- Restlessness or no activity
- Purplish, blotchy knees, feet, hands
- Pulse weak and hard to find
- Decrease urine output
- May wet or stool the bed

## MINUTES

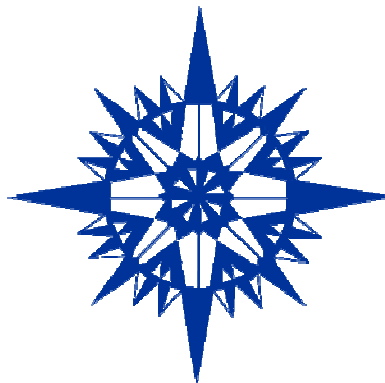
- "fish out of water" breathing
- Cannot be awakened

**PRAYERS FOR THE DYING  
AND AT THE TIME OF DEATH**

**Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name;  
Thy kingdom come; Thy will be done on  
earth as it is in Heaven. Give us this day our daily bread;  
and forgive us our trespasses  
as we forgive those who trespass against us;  
and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.  
Amen.**

**Hail Mary, full of grace! the Lord is with thee;  
blessed are thou among women,  
and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus.  
Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners  
now and at the hour of our death.  
Amen.**

**Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit.  
As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be,  
world without end.  
Amen.**



# THE ROSARY

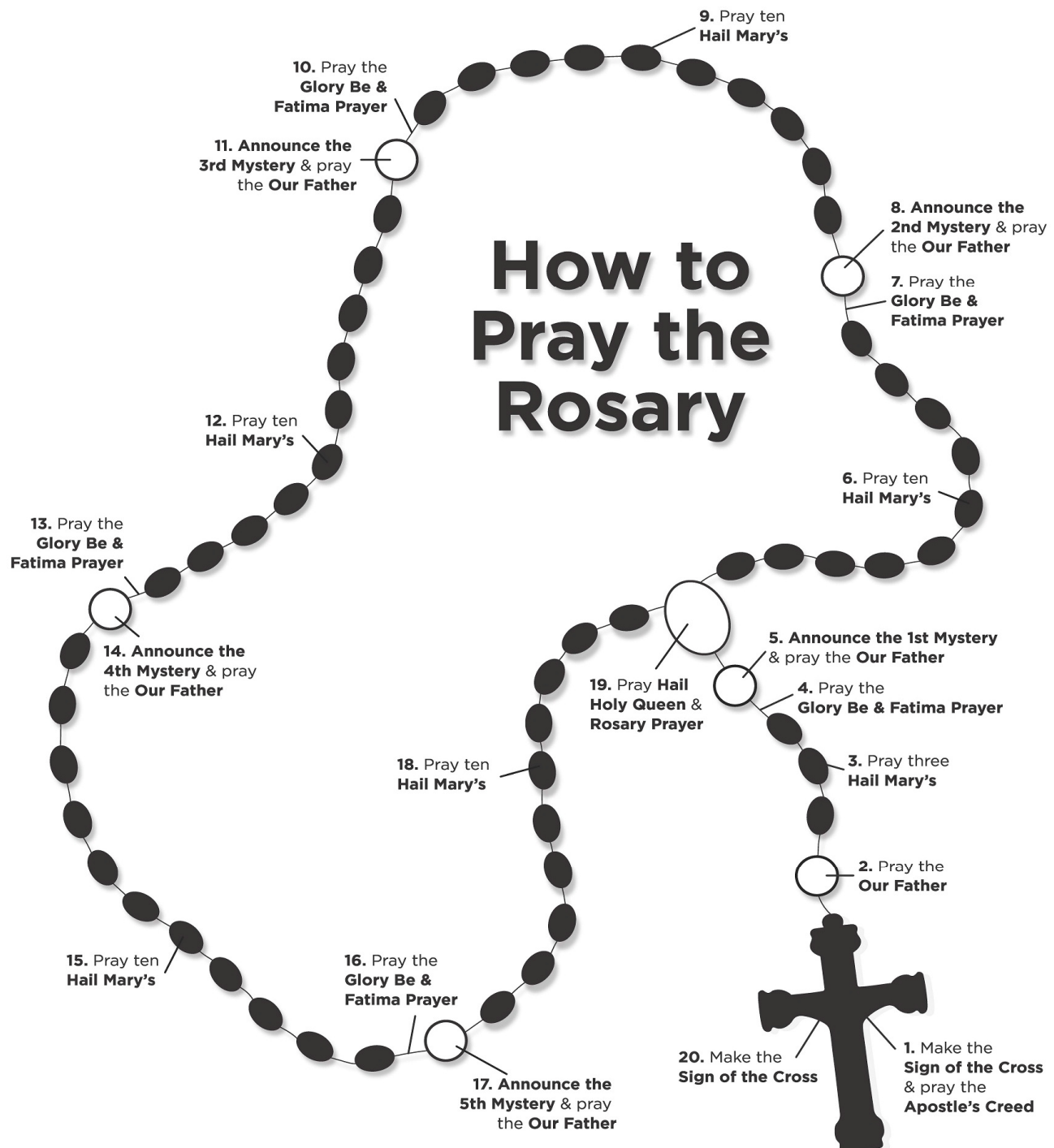
The Rosary is a powerful prayer to pray when someone is dying. The repetition of the prayers is very soothing to those who are dying, and also a comfort to those who minister to the dying. The mysteries of the rosary are:

**Glorious:** Resurrection; Ascension; Descent of the HS; Assumption; Crowning of BVM

**Joyful:** Annunciation; Visitation; Nativity; Presentation; Finding Child

**Sorrowful:** Agony; Scourging; Crowning; Carrying Cross; Crucifixion

**Luminous:** Baptism; Wedding; Kingdom; Transfiguration; Institution of Eucharist



Hail, holy Queen, Mother of Mercy,  
our life, our sweetness and our hope.  
To thee do we cry, poor banished children of Eve;  
to thee do we send up our sighs,  
mourning and weeping in this valley of tears.

Turn then, most gracious advocate,  
thine eyes of mercy toward us;  
and after this our exile,  
show unto us the blessed fruit of thy womb, Jesus.  
O clement, O loving, O sweet Virgin Mary.

V./ Pray for us O holy Mother of God,  
R./ that we may be made worthy of the promises of Christ.



Matthew 5:1-12

When he saw the crowds, Jesus went up the mountain and after he had sat down, his disciples came to him.

He began to teach them, saying:

"Blessed are the poor in spirit,  
for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Blessed are they who mourn,  
for they will be comforted.

Blessed are the meek,  
for they will inherit the land.

Blessed are they who hunger and thirst for righteousness,  
for they will be satisfied.

Blessed are the merciful,  
for they will be shown mercy.

Blessed are the clean of heart,  
for they will see God.

Blessed are the peacemakers,  
for they will be called children of God.

Blessed are they who are persecuted for the sake  
of righteousness,  
for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Blessed are you when they insult you and persecute you and utter every kind of evil against you falsely because of me. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward will be great in heaven."

The Gospel of the Lord.

John 14:1-6

"In my Father's house there are many dwelling places."

Jesus said to his disciples: "Do not let your hearts be troubled. Have faith in God and faith in me. In my Father's house there are many dwelling places; otherwise, how could I have told you that I was going to prepare a place for you? I am indeed going to prepare a place for you, and then I shall come back to take you with me, that where I am you also may be. You know the way that leads where I go."

"Lord," said Thomas, "we do not know where you are going. How can we know the way?" Jesus said to him, "I am the way, the truth and the life; no one comes to the Father but through me."

The Gospel of the Lord.

Matthew 6:19-23

Jesus said to his disciples:

"Do not lay up for yourselves an earthly treasure. Moths and rust corrode; thieves break in and steal. Make it your practice instead to store up heavenly treasure, which neither moths nor rust corrode nor thieves break in and steal. Remember, where your treasure is, there your heart is also.

"The eye is the body's lamp. If your eyes are good, your body will be filled with light; if your eyes are bad, your body will be in darkness. And if your light is darkness, how deep will the darkness be!"

The Gospel of the Lord.

Matthew 11:25-30

On one occasion Jesus spoke thus:

"I give praise to you, God, Lord of heaven and earth, for although you have hidden these things from the wise and the learned you have revealed them to the childlike. Yes, Father, such has been your gracious will. All things have been handed over to me by my Father. No one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and anyone to whom the Son wishes to reveal him.

"Come to me, all you who labor and are burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am meek and humble of heart; and you will find rest for yourselves. For my yoke is easy, and my burden light."

The Gospel of the Lord.

### Luke 8:22-25

One day Jesus said to his disciples, "Let's go over to the other side of the lake." So they got into a boat and set out. As they sailed, he fell asleep. A squall came down on the lake, so that the boat was being swamped, and they were in great danger.

The disciples went and woke him, saying, "Master, Master, we're going to drown!"

He got up and rebuked the wind and the raging waters; the storm subsided, and all was calm. "Where is your faith?" he asked his disciples.

In fear and amazement they asked on another, "Who is this? He commands even the winds and the water, and they obey him."

The Gospel of the Lord.

### Luke 12:22

Jesus said to his disciples:

"I tell you, do not be anxious about your life, what you shall eat; nor about your life, what you shall eat; what you shall put on. For life is more than food, and the body more than clothing.

"Consider the ravens: they neither sow nor reap; they have neither storehouse nor barn, and yet God feeds them. Of how much more value are you than the birds!

"And which of you by being anxious can add a cubit to your life-span? If then you are not able to do as small a thing as that, why are you anxious about the rest?

"Consider the lilies, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin; yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. But God so clothes the grass which is alive in the field today and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, how much more will he clothe you, O people of little faith!

"And do not seek what you are to eat and what you are to drink, nor be of anxious mind. For all the nations of the world seek these things; and your Father knows that you need them. Instead, seek God's kingdom, and these things shall be yours as well.

The Gospel of the Lord.



Matthew 7:24-27

Jesus said:

“Everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock. The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house; yet it did not fall because it had its foundation on the rock.

“But everyone who hears these words of mine and does not put them into practice is like a foolish man who built his house on sand. The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell with a great crash.”

The Gospel of the Lord.



## **Psalm 23**

**The Lord is my shepherd; there is nothing I shall want.**

The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want.

In verdant pastures he gives me repose;

Beside restful waters he leads me;

he refreshes my soul.

He guides me in right paths

for his name's sake.

**The Lord is my shepherd; there is nothing I shall want.**

Even though I walk in the dark valley

I fear no evil; for you are at my side

With your rod and your staff

that give me courage.

**The Lord is my shepherd; there is nothing I shall want.**

You spread the table before me

in the sight of my foes;

You anoint my head with oil;

my cup overflows.

**The Lord is my shepherd; there is nothing I shall want.**

Only goodness and kindness follow me

all the days of my life;

And I shall dwell in the house of the LORD

for years to come.

**The Lord is my shepherd; there is nothing I shall want.**

## AT THE TIME OF DEATH

In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit: Amen.

Let us call upon the Angels and Saints to be with us:

Leader says:

Lord, have mercy  
Christ, have mercy  
Lord, have mercy

People respond:

Lord, have mercy  
Christ, have mercy  
Lord, have mercy

Holy Mary, Mother of God,  
Holy angles of God,  
St. John the Baptist,  
St. Joseph,  
Saints Peter & Paul,  
St. Jerome,  
All holy men and women,

pray for us  
pray for us  
pray for us  
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pray for us

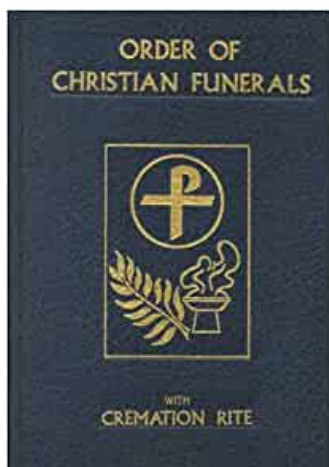
**G**o forth, Christian soul, from this world  
in the name of God the almighty Father  
who created you,  
in the name of Jesus Christ, Son of the living God,  
who suffered for you  
in the name for the Holy Spirit,  
who was poured out upon you,  
go forth, faithful Christian.

May you live in peace this day,  
may your home be with God in Heaven,  
with Mary, the virgin Mother of God  
with Joseph, and all the angels and saints.



**I** commend you, my dear brother/sister, to almighty God,  
and entrust you to your Creator.  
May you return to God who formed you from the dust of the earth.  
May holy Mary, the angels, and all the saints  
come to meet you as you go forth from this life.  
May Christ who was crucified for you  
bring you freedom and peace.  
May Christ who died for you admit you into his garden of paradise.  
May Christ, the true shepherd,  
acknowledge you as one of his flock.  
May he forgive all your sins,  
and see you among those he has chosen.  
May you see your redeemer and Lord, face to face,  
and enjoy the vision of God for ever.

**R. Amen.**



**Saints of God, come to his/her aid! Hasten to meet him/her, angels of the Lord!**

**(R:) Receive his/her soul and present him/her to God the Most high.**

**May Christ, who called you, take you to himself;  
may the angels lead you to Abraham's side. (R)**

**Grant eternal rest unto him/her, O Lord,  
and let perpetual light shine upon him/her. (R)**

**May he/she rest in peace. Amen.**

## Important Phone Numbers

Fr. Ronald Wekerle : \_\_\_\_\_

Funeral Home: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Medical/Nurse: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Important Family and Friends who need to be called:

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[ ] I have a Will?

If so, where is it kept? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

[ ] I have Health Care Directives?

## Funeral Planning

The death of a family member or friend—or in the case that you are planning your own funeral—an immanent experience of death has caused your life to undergo some rapid changes. You are being asked to make many decisions in a relatively short period of time. At the parish we hope that the time and care you take to plan a funeral and select the bible readings and songs for the funeral will be a blessing and consolation for you.

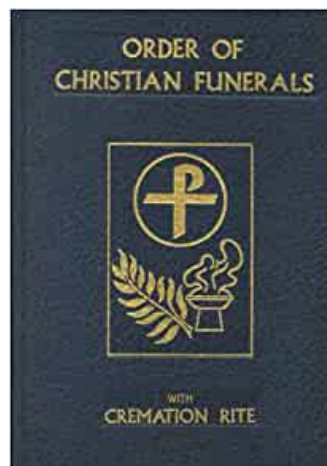
The Funeral Rites of the Catholic Church should reflect as much as possible the life of the deceased, and serve as a message of hope at a time of great loss. That is why the Church strongly recommends and encourages family members and close friends to be actively involved in the preparation of the liturgy.

The Funeral Rites of the Church highlight three key moments: the **Vigil**, the **Funeral Mass / Service**, and the **Burial**. It is recommended that the Funeral Rites of the deceased take place as soon as possible after death or within a reasonable timeframe, after death.

Ordinarily, the **Vigil** is the first public opportunity for people to greet the family, offer sympathy and gather. The Vigil helps prepare us to celebrate the Funeral Mass. The structure of the Vigil is: reception or welcome of the deceased into the Church; readings from scripture; and prayers. It is most appropriate at this time to ask someone to speak in memory of the deceased.

The **Funeral Mass or Service** is a celebration of the deceased's life and Christ's invitation to participate in his victory over death. At the Funeral Mass the community, having been spiritually renewed at the table of God's word, turns for spiritual nourishment to the table of the Eucharist. In partaking the body of Christ, all are given a foretaste of eternal life in Christ and are united with Christ, with each other, and with all the faithfully departed.

Following the Funeral Mass or Service, people are invited to travel to the cemetery for the **Burial**, where the ground will be blessed and the deceased is laid to rest. The prayers at the Burial are brief, yet very powerful. Out of an abundance or respect for the deceased, it is recommended that burial of the body or interment of ashes take place immediately after the Funeral Mass or Service, or as soon as possible after that time.



## **Burial or Cremation:**



The Order of Christian Funerals' Appendix on Cremation states: *"Although cremation is now permitted by the Church, it does not enjoy the same value as burial of the body. The Church clearly prefers and urges that the body of the deceased be present for the funeral rites, since the presence of the human body better expresses the values which the Church affirms in those rites"* (no. 413).

*The cremated remains of a body should be treated with the same respect given to the human body from which they come. This includes the use of a worthy vessel to contain the ashes, the manner in which they are carried, and the care and attention to appropriate placement and transport, and the final disposition. The cremated remains should be buried in a grave or entombed in a mausoleum or columbarium. The practice of scattering cremated remains on the sea, from the air, or on the ground, or keeping cremated remains on the home of a relative or friend of the deceased are not the reverent disposition that the Church requires.* (no. 417).

Having said this, more and more people are choosing to be cremated. Beside the practical advantages, this is a dignified manner to honor your loved one. In the case when someone is cremated, appropriate adaptations to the Funeral rites are made. Did you know that people can be cremated after the funeral Mass or Service? In this case, interment of ashes would take place at another time.

It is important to talk to Father and the Funeral Director about the various ways funeral rites can be celebrated, and/or, when and if a body will be present or not.

