

Norms for Words of Remembrance at Funerals in the Diocese of Rochester

Promulgated on May 20, 2012

As Catholics we believe the celebration of the Eucharist is the source and summit of Christian life therefore, we are blessed with a funeral liturgy that is the Lord's gift to us and a great source of consolation at the time of death. It is through the funeral liturgy the Church commends the dead to God's merciful love.

While the opportunity to share one's grief and memories is certainly part of the mourning process, these interactions more suitably take place among family and friends at the funeral home or reception where reminiscing and supportive, informal conversation occur.

The Words of Remembrance are not intended to be a eulogy and are optional and therefore not a requirement of the Order of Christian Funerals. To be faithful to and respectful of God's gift of this most perfect prayer, the following guidelines for Words of Remembrance will be followed:

- The most appropriate time for Words of Remembrance is at the Vigil for the Deceased, commonly known as the wake.
- Eulogies (reminiscing and toasting speeches) are not permitted.
- **One person only speaks in the name of all when the Words of Remembrance occur at the Funeral Mass or Funeral Liturgy outside Mass.**
- **Words of Remembrance are brief: no more than 3-4 minutes, one typed page.**
- The Words of Remembrance are to be in good taste and respectful of the dignity of the liturgy.
- The Words of Remembrance are to be prepared beforehand and reviewed by the pastor of St. Louis Church one day prior to the funeral.
- The Words of Remembrance are a reflection of God's action in the life of the Deceased and how God's blessings upon that person have enriched the world around them.

WORDS OF REMEMBRANCE EXAMPLE

Good Morning. Thank you for coming today to help us through this difficult time and to help celebrate our mother's life.

Mom was a deeply religious woman and was an extraordinarily faithful Christian.

She was a kind and loving wife and mother.

Mom was strong, resilient, and pragmatic.

She had more common sense than anyone I know.

Mom taught us many lessons through example. I'd like to share a story that captures her kindness, common sense, and Christian love.

Mom and Dad had been in America for about 8 years and very much wanted to become United States Citizens. It was 1961. Allen was about 6 years old and I was a newborn baby.

They filled out all the paper work and found that the last step to citizenship was an oral exam in front of a Judge! Well, Dad was a pretty studious man and didn't see a problem with this. He bought the books and all the study material. He read the books, took notes, and made outlines for mom. At the end of the process, I'm sure he could recite the US Constitution backward and forward in two languages!

There was a hitch though. Mom wasn't as studious as Dad. When the time for the exam came, Dad was confident that he would do fine but was really worried about Mom.

Dad went into the Judges chambers and did just fine. He came out of the room knowing that things went well but now it was Mom's turn and time for the moment of truth.

Mom sat down with the Judge and he asked a few simple questions about where she was born, how she got here and what she had been doing in America. Everything was going well until he asked what she had done to prepare for the exam.

Mom got a little nervous and said that Dad had bought her three books to study from. The judge asked how much she had studied. She replied "well only about three pages!"

There was some silence and the judge asked why she hadn't studied for the test. Mom said "well I have a six-year-old son and a newborn baby. I work the night

shift at the Birds Eye plant as a first aid nurse. My husband works the day shift at Birds Eye as the personnel manager. We share a car and drive each other back and forth to work so that if the kids need something, we have the car available. This schedule is tough but it allows us to be with the kids without leaving them alone." She went on, "Honestly, I really never been very good at history and we're both working very hard. We're trying to save for a new house where we can raise our family."

The judge thought about this for a little bit and then escorted mom out of the room. She was certain that she "blew it" and that Dad wasn't going to be very happy.

When the judge entered the waiting room, he made an announcement. He said "I've been giving these exams for a number of years now and I have to say that I've never met anyone better prepared to become an American Citizen." She got a round of applause!

I wish I were there to see the look on Dad's face. I'm sure it was a look of relief, disbelief, pride, and joy!

This story captures mom's essence. It also offered us important lessons:

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- She was honest even when it was hard.
 - She loved her family and was willing to sacrifice to give us a better life.
 - Her common sense is hard to argue with.

All this came from the most important part of her core being – her faith. Her love, hard work, and frankly here survival were all founded in her faith.

Without faith, she wouldn't have had the strength to emigrate from Lithuania, raise a family, and love deeply.

With faith, all things were possible.

Thank you for letting me share this story with you and for all of your kind thoughts prayers.

May God Bless you and may God Bless our mom.