

## Planning a Burial

### When Someone Dies...

The death of a loved one can be one of the most emotional happenings that a person can experience. When a loved one passes there are many important decisions that must be made, documents that must be quickly located, and numerous family and friends who must be notified. Often, these decisions are made without guidance and under extreme stress from grief and confusion.

The Diocese of Joliet Catholic Cemeteries has created this book to provide focus and guidance, giving you a consolidated resource for recording personal information and final wishes that are not always easily conveyed to surviving family members.

### Pre-Planning / In Advance of Need

Talking about death and dying is often difficult, but discussion and pre-planning can eliminate stress and confusion when the time comes to make funeral arrangements for a loved one.

Funeral and burial arrangements should be discussed openly and frankly. Many people choose to prearrange their own funeral. When a death occurs, there are needs to be met, concerns to be faced, and decisions to be made. It is important that personal wishes be made clear now so that unnecessary confusion and stress can be avoided later.

### Catholic Cemeteries / Mission and Ministry

The Catholic Cemetery is a sacred place and a testimony to the Christian belief of Jesus Christ's death and resurrection. While being ever mindful of the sacredness of our cemeteries in which the bodies of the deceased rest, it is our duty to perform this corporal work of mercy in a compassionate and caring fashion. The Catholic Cemetery is an expression of our relationship with God through a graced environment of beautifully manicured grounds and buildings.

We accept the responsibility of implementing this apostolate to the people of God in the Diocese of Joliet under the direction and supervision of a dedicated staff. We will proclaim through our words, work and example the sacredness of the Human Body and the rich tradition of the Catholic Church and its teachings, which relate to death, burial and devotion to the departed souls.

### The Role of the Funeral Director

Many families choose a funeral director who has served them previously, and some will make their preference for these reasons, such as reputation, church affiliation, personal acquaintance, referral, or location.

The funeral director counsels the surviving family, providing information and offering advice with which they can make meaningful decisions. The funeral director then implements these decisions using their professional knowledge and experience.

Some people will wish to preplan and prepay for funeral and cemetery costs. You will find your Catholic Cemetery and funeral home most willing to counsel you on the appropriate arrangements to suite your desires and financial needs.

### The Visitation (Wake Service)

The Vigil for the Deceased is the first way that the Catholic Church captures the sentiments of those who are grieving and sets them in the context of our faith. A prayer service with readings selected from the scripture to fit the circumstances of the deceased, a homily that comforts and gives hope, intercessions that speak to the faith of those gathered around the deceased, and prayers selected from the resources found in the *Order of Christian Funerals* can do a great deal to prepare people to enter into the Christian Spirit of the Funeral Liturgy.

Eulogies are best given at the Vigil Service or at some appropriate time during the wake. While there is a natural desire to say good things about a person who has died, we must always remember that in the context of prayer, it is the working of God's grace in the life of the deceased for which we want to give thanks and praise. Priests and in some parishes, bereavement ministers, are available to assist families in selecting scripture readings and music for funeral liturgies.

### The Catholic Funeral Liturgy (Mass)

Catholics bring the body of the deceased to the church. This is where their Christian journey began. In the waters of Baptism, they were joined to Christ who stands victorious over death. This is where they are formed by the Word of God and fed at the Lord's Table. The Eucharist looks forward to our participation in the heavenly banquet, where we are united with Jesus, the saints, and all those who share eternal life.

The Funeral Liturgy is not merely a celebration for the bereaved family. Each time the church celebrates the mass, the church proclaims to the entire world its belief in Christ's death and resurrection. These sacred rites, in turn, shape and form the Christian community, and deepen its convictions. In some extraordinary instances, a simple prayer service is conducted by a priest or deacon in the funeral home environment although the celebration of the mass in church is preferred by the Catholic Church.

### **The Rite of Committal at the Catholic Cemetery**

The Rite of Committal in the *Order of Christian Funerals* is the final act of caring for the body of the deceased member of the church through the use of scripture, a few words of hope by the minister, intercessions and prayers. To have a representative of the church present at this final moment is a great source of consolation to those who will now have to continue their journey in life without their beloved. While a priest may be unable to preside at the Committal Service, a deacon or a trained bereavement minister may represent the church at this final moment. Because they are the only cemeteries in which the complete ritual and full graces of the church are available, Catholics are ordinarily buried in Catholic Cemeteries. Burial in a Catholic Cemetery is a long-standing sign of the church's reverence for the human body. Appropriately, the grounds and buildings in Catholic Cemeteries are consecrated to receive sacred remains. Burial in a Catholic Cemetery recognizes baptismal commitment and gives witness, even in death, to the faithfulness of the church.

### **Cremation as a choice and the Catholic Church**

The Catholic Church prefers to bury the body of the deceased in consecrated ground. However, for a variety of reasons, some people may prefer to have the body of the deceased cremated before it is buried. This is permissible, as long as there is no intentional denial of the belief in the final resurrection of the body. The burial or inurnment in a Catholic Cemetery, mausoleum or columbarium should occur as soon as possible after the funeral mass. The cremated remains of the body should not be kept in the funeral home or the family home. Cremated remains are to be given the same respect as the body they were and therefore the Catholic Church does not permit the cremated remains of the body to be scattered.

### **Infant Fetal Deaths**

All life is sacred and the remains of infants, fetuses, and stillborns are to be given a reverent Christian burial, preferably in Catholic Cemeteries. Catholic Cemeteries can assist parents and families of fetal deaths with appropriate options. Initially however, the family would need to select a funeral director to assist with arranging the funeral details.

### **Donation to Medical Science and the Catholic Church**

Catholics may donate their bodies or parts of their bodies to advance medical science. The only limitation is that after the medical study has been completed, some reasonable assurance is made that the remains will be given a proper and reverent disposition by burial or cremation. The family of the donor should arrange to celebrate a memorial mass after the person's death.