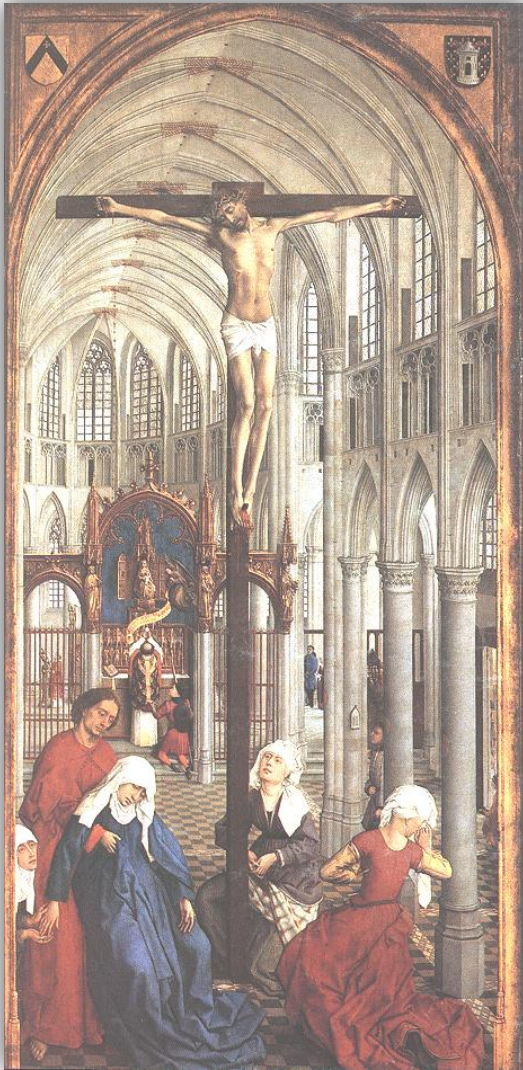


# A GUIDE TO FUNERAL PLANNING



*Saint John the Beloved Catholic Church  
McLean, Virginia*

## INTRODUCTION

On behalf of all your fellow parishioners, the priests and staff of Saint John the Beloved Church extend to your family our prayerful sympathy in this time of loss and grief. There are many people praying for you and with you. At Sunday Mass we all pray especially for those of the parish family who have passed away recently. The Mass of Christian Burial that is celebrated in this parish community honors the ancient tradition of the classic Requiem Mass, employing Scriptural prayers and monastic chants that have been used at the burial rites of Christians for far more than one thousand years. In the Sacred Liturgy we experience the consolation of praying with each other, with the whole Church, with all the saints and with Jesus Christ Himself and of having them pray for us. This tangible connection with the Communion of Saints, those who pray for us in heaven and even those who still need us to pray for them, can be a comfort and consolation for us as we mourn the loss of a loved one.

The death of the just, we are told in Scripture, is blessed in the eyes of the Lord (Psalm 116,15). When a Christian dies, suitable reverence should accompany all of the rites and ceremonies that will accompany you through the beginning of your mourning process. In the face of death, the Church proclaims that God has created us for Himself and that Christ has broken the bonds of sin and death that keep us from Him. In the face of death, Christians have hope. Christ has conquered death by showing it to be not our end of our existence but the exhaustion of our body, which will one day rise again (John 6,39-40).

The Church's funeral ceremonies begin with the wake the night before. This is an appropriate time to reconcile with the past and even to celebrate the life of the deceased with favorite stories. The wake also begins the prayers for the deceased and sets the tone for the funeral the next day.

The Holy Mass enables us to offer up our prayers and sorrows in union with Christ's perfect Sacrifice, made present on the altar under the forms of bread and wine. In keeping with the ancient Christian teaching on purgatory – whereby souls experience a final purgation from the effects of sin – the Requiem Mass begs God to free the deceased from all bonds of sin and to receive the person into paradise. We have

confidence that our prayers hasten the deceased's journey through purgatory to the eternal joys of heaven (2Maccabees 12,43-46). The funeral Mass is an opportunity to reconcile with God with focus on the present and the future in the light of Our Lord's Death and Resurrection.

The funeral Mass differs from a memorial service since its focus is Jesus Christ, His victory over death, and the deceased's participation in the Paschal Mystery. Nevertheless, the funeral Mass also seeks to console the family and friends of the departed with the Christian hope of life after death and our continuing union with the deceased in Christ. For the faithful, "life is changed not ended."

It can be comforting to remember that our deceased loved ones have seen the face of God. We are then better able to reconcile with all the faithful departed. We also can consider the possibility that they now might feel differently about their last wishes. Our offering of personal prayers and the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass benefits those who have died; *how* we do so benefits the living.

*Let us pray.*

*Eternal rest grant unto them, O Lord.*

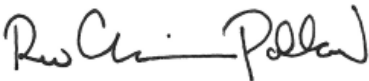
*And let perpetual light shine upon them.*

*May they rest in peace. Amen.*

*May their souls and the souls of all the faithful departed,  
through the mercy of God, rest in peace. Amen.*

May the Lord be your strength  
and may His Mother be your comfort.

God bless you.



Rev. Christopher J. Pollard  
Pastor

## OVERVIEW OF THE FUNERAL MASS

Out of reverence for the sacred space of our Holy House and in consideration for those who would be praying in the Church, family and friends who arrive well before the Funeral Mass commences are welcome to visit with each other outside and in the Church lobby. Once inside the Church proper, all are invited to join in the spiritual communion of silent prayer. When the sacred rituals begin, everyone will be prompted to join in the spoken and sung prayers as they are able.

### The Greeting

The priest greets the casket and the deceased's family at the doors of the vestibule (narthex). He sprinkles the casket with holy water and the funeral pall is placed over it. The *Introit* "[\*Requiem Aeternam\*](#)" is then chanted as the procession moves into the church. When all are gathered, the priest prays the *Collect* (opening prayer) for the dead.

### The Liturgy of the Word

This portion of the Mass consists of one or two readings from the Old and New Testament, a sung Responsorial Psalm, and the Gospel. The family may choose the scripture readings from approved texts found in the Order of Christian Funerals. After the Gospel, the celebrant or another priest or deacon delivers the homily; then the General Intercessions are prayed.

### The Liturgy of the Eucharist

The altar is prepared and the gifts are brought forward. Then, the Preface and Eucharistic Prayer follow. The [\*Sanctus\*](#), Memorial Acclamation and [\*Agnus Dei\*](#) are typically chanted.

To help guests avoid suffering the awkwardness of not knowing what to do when some people go up to the altar rail to receive Holy Communion, the priest beforehand may remind all present of the ancient Christian tradition that only those in full communion with the Church who are in the state of grace and keeping the Eucharistic fast may receive Holy Communion.

### Final Commendation

At the end of Mass, we make a final farewell to the departed Christian. The ancient antiphon, "[\*In Paradisum\*](#)" (*May the angels lead you*

to paradise), is chanted while the casket is blessed with holy water and then with incense – a reminder of Baptism and a sign of our prayers rising up to God (*Revelation* 8,4).

## FREQUENT QUESTIONS

**(Q) Are there any prayers you recommend for us between now and the Funeral Mass?**

(A) Yes. The *Chaplet of Divine Mercy* beautifully draws us into a simple meditation on Our Lord's Passion and into prayer for all those who need His mercy. The *Holy Rosary* makes for a lovely family prayer. It allows you to take turns leading and following. It assists you in joining your sorrows and joys with the life of Christ. If you meditate on the Sorrowful Mysteries, it might be helpful to add the First Glorious Mystery so as to conclude on a hopeful note with the Resurrection. The *Liturgy of the Hours* is the official public prayer for the Church throughout the day. *Holy Mass* is the official worship of the Church. Joining in the weekday parish Mass helps us to experience the Holy Sacrifice in a quiet and meditative setting. We can get no closer to heaven than by being in the presence of and in being in communion with the Blessed Sacrament. To that end, this is a moment when our loved ones would be especially pleased if we made a good confession.

**(Q) May we do the readings at Mass?**

(A) Yes. A family member or friend may do one or two of the readings (except for the Responsorial Psalm and the Gospel). This person should be someone who already serves as a lector at Mass and lives a life consistent with Sacred Scripture. *The lector needs to be a practicing Catholic.* Given the understandable difficulty that family members likely will have maintaining their composure at the funeral, the parish is very happy to provide a lector.

**(Q) Which readings can we use?**

(A) We invite you to choose some of the readings that will be incorporated into the Mass. Please make your selection from the attached list of options which are approved for the Rites of Christian Burial. The priest or deacon who will be preaching sometimes has a particular Gospel passage in mind. Kindly consult with him before selecting the Gospel.

*Choose from the following approved readings.*

*Readings in italics are the choices for the first reading during Easter season.*

*Please make sure we provide you under separate cover with a copy of all the readings as well as the Prayers of the Faithful, to which you may add a few intentions.*

**First Reading**

2 Maccabees 12:43-46  
Job 19:1, 23-27  
Wisdom 3:1-9  
Wisdom 4:7-15  
Isaiah 25:6a, 7-9  
Lamentations 3:17-26  
Daniel 12:1-3

**Second Reading**

*Acts 10:34-43*  
Romans 5:5-11  
Romans 5:17-21  
Romans 6:3-9  
Romans 8:14-23  
Romans 8:31b-35, 37-39  
Romans 14:7-9, 10b-12  
I Corinthians 15:20-23, 24b-28  
I Corinthians 15:51-57  
2 Corinthians 4:14 -5:1  
2 Corinthians 5:1, 6-10  
Philippians 3:20-21  
1 Thessalonians 4:13-18  
2 Timothy 2:8-13  
1 John 3:1-2  
1 John 3:14-16  
*Revelation 14:13*  
*Revelation 20:11 - 21:1*  
*Revelation 21:1-5a, 6b-7*

**Gospel**

Matthew 5:1-12a  
Matthew 11:25-30  
Matthew 25:1-13  
Mathew 25:31-46  
Mark 15:33-39, 16:1-6  
Luke 7:11-17  
Luke 12:35-40  
Luke 23:33, 39-43  
Luke 23: 44-46, 50, 52-53; 24:1-6a  
Luke 24:13-35  
John 5:24-29  
John 6:37-40  
John 6:51-58  
John 11: 17-27

**(Q) Do the readers need to bring a copy of their readings with them to the Funeral Mass?**

(A) No, they do not need to provide a copy for the Funeral Mass. They will proclaim their readings from the Lectionary at the pulpit.

**(Q) How do I arrange for music?**

(A) Music is arranged through the parish's Director of Music, Mr. James Senson. He can be reached at 703-356-3639.

**(Q) Why are our music choices limited?**

(A) The sacred music that we use at St. John is chosen from those pieces that were written specifically for the Holy Mass and are of superior quality. Since the Sacred Liturgy actually makes present to us the Death and Resurrection of Jesus Christ, imagine what music you might sing while you were witnessing those very events. That thought can help explain what music we use here at Mass and what songs we would use only outside of Mass.

Some hymns that are still popular in various church settings would already have passed into disuse in this parish, especially songs that have arisen out of other Christian traditions, songs that are self-referential rather than prayers directed to the Lord, songs that presume salvation and songs that obscure the full meaning of the Holy Eucharist. For these reasons please do not request *Amazing Grace*, *One Bread One Body*, *On Eagle's Wings* and *I am the Bread of Life*, all of which have a proper setting but not necessarily at a Funeral Mass.

Some musical parts of the Funeral Mass are not hymns per se but are sung liturgical prayers that have been used in the Sacred Liturgy for so long that they even have their own unique melodies. Those would include *Requiem Aeternam* (sung during the Entrance), *Lux Aeterna* and *In Paradisum* (sung during the final rituals). These lovely prayers are similar to the regular parts of the Mass that are chanted in the ancient languages at St. John every Sunday: *Kyrie*, *Alleluia*, *Sanctus* and *Angus Dei*. They will be sung in Greek, Hebrew and Latin, respectively.

Although the selections in the "Funeral" index of the *St. Michael Hymnal* would be suitable, you are encouraged to choose from the following hymns for the Offertory and Communion. Otherwise kindly ask the Master of Music to help you select appropriate pieces.

His decisions will be considered final and he will inform the parish office of what selections are to be included in the Funeral program.

**RECOMMENDED  
HYMNS**

*Abide with Me*  
*All You Who Seek a Comfort Sure*  
*Eternal Father, Strong to Save*  
*For All the Saints*  
*I Heard the Voice of Jesus Say*  
*Jerusalem, My Happy Home*  
*Jesu Dulcis Memoria*  
*Jesus, Lord, Have Mercy*  
*Jesus, Remember Me*  
*Joyful, Joyful, We Adore Thee*  
*Lead, Kindly Light*  
*Let All Mortal Flesh Keep Silence*  
*Lord Jesus, Think on Me*  
*Lord of All Hopefulness*  
*Merciful Savior, Hear Our Humble Prayer*  
*Nearer, My God, to Thee*  
*O God, Our Help in Ages Past*  
*O Living Bread from Heaven*  
*O Lord, I Am Not Worthy*  
*Soul of My Savior*  
*The Strife Is O'er*  
*What Wondrous Love Is This*

**RECOMMENDED  
MOTETS/SOLOS**

*Ave Maria*  
*Panis Angelicus*  
*Pie Jesu*

**(Q) What about flowers?**

(A) Flowers are welcome in Church except for during Advent and Lent. Flowers placed in the sanctuary are used in the worship of God and, therefore, would remain in the sanctuary after the Mass is concluded. At any time of year an arrangement or two might be placed in the Church lobby as a decoration; these may return home or be brought to the cemetery.

**(Q) Can someone deliver a eulogy?**

(A) Yes, but only at the wake or burial or reception. The Catholic Church does not permit eulogies at the Funeral Mass. The remarks that the Church permits at the end of the Funeral Mass are expected



to refrain from canonizing the faithful departed, which is difficult to avoid when we love and miss them so much, or otherwise trivializing the sacred rituals, which can happen inadvertently when we allow our gaze to slip away from Our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament. The interior peace that will have been knit together by prayers, chants, Scripture readings and Holy Communion can be lost in the face of reminiscences about the faithful departed, which renders such reflections better suited to more informal settings. Although encountered in some Catholic Funeral Masses, remarks at the conclusion of the Funeral Mass are not permitted at Saint John the Beloved. Please do not ask for an exception. However, some personal remarks by a family member can be offered in the church at the beginning of the rituals *before* the Funeral Mass. It goes without saying that the homilist would be happy to incorporate some details about the life of your loved one into the homily, the focus of which will be the Death and Resurrection of Our Savior Jesus Christ.

**(Q) What about the interment?**

(A) Interment usually follows the funeral Mass. In those cases, the priest will accompany the family to the cemetery for the funeral rites at the grave. If the deceased is to be buried at a later time, please make arrangements through the parish office to ensure that a priest or deacon will be present for burial.

Plans for a burial must be made before the parish can confirm the Funeral Mass. The desire to keep your loved ones remains close by explains why a nearby cemetery can be a wise choice. A family room mantel, however, will not afford mourners a sanctuary for grieving, praying and hoping.

**(Q) May we have the traditional prayers for burial?**

(A) Yes. The traditional prayers at the graveside have lovely melodies and certainly can be provided instead of the regular spoken prayers in English. Please let your priest know ahead of time so that he will bring the proper ritual to the cemetery.

**(Q) What about cremation?**

(A) Although it is now permitted to have the deceased's mortal remains cremated and even to have the cremated remains present at the funeral, the Church prefers that the body not be cremated and urges that, if cremation occurs, it be done *after* the funeral.

When the body is cremated the Church requires that the ashes be laid to rest in a sacred place: buried in a grave, buried at sea or entombed in a mausoleum or columbarium. It is forbidden to keep the ashes at the home of a relative or friend nor may the ashes be scattered. If the family does not intend to inter or entomb the ashes, then Saint John the Beloved parish will not be able to do the funeral ceremony.

The Church prohibits cremation absolutely when it signifies a lack of belief in the resurrection of the body.

**(Q) May we invite another priest from outside the diocese to participate in the Funeral Mass?**

(A) We would hope so. Fr. Pollard or Fr. Melmer ordinarily would be the main celebrant of the Funeral Mass. The assistance of other priests is always welcome. Please ask them to contact the main celebrant directly so that they can coordinate their collaboration. All priests from outside the diocese are required to demonstrate being in good standing. Their Bishop and/or Provincial will need to send the appropriate letters to the Chancery of the Diocese of Arlington.

**(Q) May we have the funeral Mass in the extraordinary form?**

(A) Yes. A funeral according to the ritual of 1962, the extraordinary form of the Roman Rite, may be celebrated. Please indicate to the parish clergy or office staff if this is your preference.

**(Q) May a flag drape the coffin?**

(A) Yes, before and after the Funeral Mass but not during. As the casket enters into the church, the national flag is removed and the funeral pall is placed on top to call to mind the deceased's life in Christ at Baptism. The family may place a family bible or a crucifix on the coffin after it has been draped with the pall. At the conclusion of the sacred rites, the funeral pall is removed and the flag may be placed again on the casket before departing the church.

**(Q) May we have an offertory procession?**

(A) Yes. If the family desires, they may have members or friends bring the bread and wine forward during the Offertory. The altar server carrying the processional cross will lead them forward.



**SAINT JOHN THE BELOVED  
CATHOLIC CHURCH**

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**Rev. Christopher J. Pollard, Pastor**  
**Rev. John H. Melmer, Parochial Vicar**

**Mr. James Senson, Director of Music**