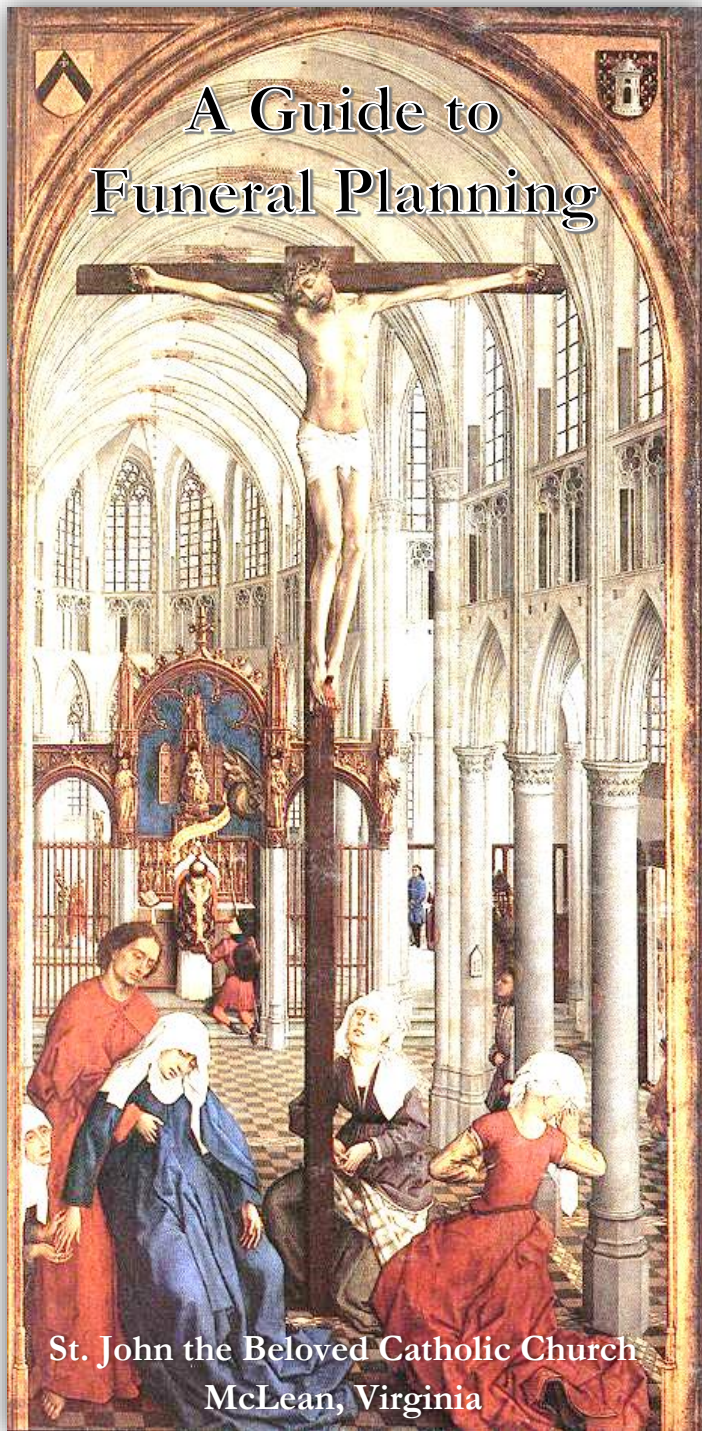


# A Guide to Funeral Planning



St. 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. The hundreds of members of the St. John Prayer Chain are lifting you up in prayer. At Sunday Mass we all will be praying for your loved one and your family. On the first Saturday after All Souls Day we will be together and pray for all those who passed away in the previous year. You are not alone.

When we gather for the Mass of Christian Burial at St. John the Beloved we also transcend time and join the faithful sinners and saints who have offered up the same prayers for their loved ones over the past twenty centuries. In the ancient tradition of the classic Requiem Mass, we can feel our prayers carried aloft by the angels with the Sacred Scriptures 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 (*Psalms* 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 in spite of grief. 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 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 in the state of grace but not yet perfectly sanctified 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 by focusing 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 faithful departed's participation in the Paschal Mystery. Nevertheless, the funeral Mass also seeks to console us with the Christian hope of life after death and our continuing union with those who have fallen asleep 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. *That* we offer 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.*

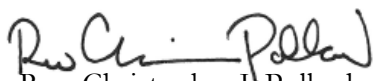
*And let perpetual light shine upon them.*

*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.

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Rev. Christopher J. Pollard". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Rev" and last name "Pollard" being more distinct than the middle name "Christopher".

Rev. Christopher J. Pollard  
Pastor

## THE WAKE

The Church's funeral ceremonies begin with the Wake or Visitation, which ideally takes place in the Funeral Home the night before the Funeral Mass. This is a blessed and informal 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. A priest can be available to lead the prayers.

The time for visitation may also take place at St. John the Beloved in the hour or hours leading up to the Funeral Mass. During this time the casket may be in the church. We would likely remove the Blessed Sacrament from the tabernacle during the Wake and play Gregorian Chant to provide an atmosphere of reverent conviviality. Perhaps you might want family and guests to pray a rosary together at the conclusion of the Wake. Again, one of the priests of the parish can be available to lead the family prayers.

## THE FUNERAL MASS

Out of reverence for the sacred space of our Holy House in which there almost always seems to be someone praying, family and friends who arrive ahead of time are welcome to visit with each other outside and in the lobby. The Church is for talking to God. The lobby for talking to each other. Some of our guests will be unfamiliar with what a tabernacle means and who the Blessed Sacrament is. Please help those who are unfamiliar with these surroundings. A few words of guidance will be better received from you than from someone they have never met before.

### 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

While the chalice and paten are prepared, the Offertory Hymn or Meditation is sung. 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. A reminder about this will be printed in the program. These and other explanations for the benefit of visitors might also be done as a part of welcoming everyone at the beginning of the homily.

## 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*).



## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

### **Q. When should we have the Funeral Mass?**

*A.* Our recommendation is that the Funeral Mass best be done as soon as possible. Waiting too long can take an unexpected toll on your nerves. It may take close relatives a few days to be able to travel. If you are the one entrusted with funeral planning, you can feel like you need to make everyone happy. Please try not to burden yourself with unreasonable pressure to make the Funeral convenient for everyone. An additional Memorial Mass can always be done later when everyone is able to be together.

Planning the Funeral Mass also means planning the burial, which needs to be done before the parish can confirm the Funeral Mass. If you are working with a funeral home, the funeral directors usually coordinate both with the cemetery and the church when you first sit down with them.

Some families have a special cemetery back home where everyone will gather in a few weeks or months. Burials at Arlington National Cemetery can take half a year. Especially in these circumstances we find that there is great consolation to be found in having the Funeral Mass sooner rather than later.

In the interest of everyone's health and peace of mind, it might be decided only to have the Burial for the time being. We can offer a Memorial Mass some time down the road when your family feels ready to come to Church.

### **Q. May we require everyone in attendance to wear a face covering?**

*A.* Yes, you may. The parish has been following strictly the Governor's Executive Orders, which permit some people to be exempt from the requirement to wear a face covering without needing to prove that they qualify for an exemption. For family liturgies such

as Funerals, Weddings, Confirmations, First Holy Communions, and Baptisms, the family may request that we go above and beyond the State mandate and not permit entrance to anyone not wearing a face covering.

At Holy Communion our priests will whisper “The Body of Christ”. You may request, additionally, that the priest distributing Holy Communion also wears a face covering. Please be sure to communicate this directly to the priest who will be offering the Funeral Mass.

**Q. Can we livestream the Funeral Mass?**

A. Yes. The parish has a video camera and a video broadcasting channel which simulcasts on Facebook. This is at your disposal at no cost. You can see at [www.livestream.com/StJohnMcLean](http://www.livestream.com/StJohnMcLean) that we broadcast just about every day. We can set up an event link which you can send ahead of time to those who will watch from home.

**Q. May a flag drape the coffin?**

A. Yes, special honors are deserved by those who have served in the United States military, uniformed services and in other roles of public service such as police, fire & rescue, and elected office. You will need to provide your Funeral Home with the requisite documentation such as a Form DD 214 or a copy of your loved one’s Honorable Discharge. Your Funeral Home should be able to verify your loved one’s military service with just a Social Security Number.

The American flag would be on the casket before and after the Funeral Mass but not during. After the casket enters the vestibule, the national flag is removed. Once the Funeral Mass has begun and the casket has been blessed with the holy water, the funeral pall is placed on top. 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. Can someone deliver a eulogy?**

*A.* Yes, but eulogies *per se* only happen at the wake, 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 family members and close friends can be offered in the church at the beginning of the rituals *before* the Funeral Mass. So that nobody misses this part of the Funeral, these remarks would usually start at the published time for the Funeral Mass. If you are working with a Funeral Home and/or have a scheduled time to reach the cemetery, please be sure to factor into the schedule that the Funeral Mass might conclude late than expected.

The focus of every Christian homily is the Paschal Mystery: the Death and Resurrection of Our Savior Jesus Christ, especially so at a Funeral. It goes without saying that the homilist would be happy to incorporate details about the life of your loved one into the homily. Please be sure to convey these by email to the priest who will be offering the Funeral Mass.

## **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. Your priest will be familiar with the process.

**Q. What color vestments will the priest be wearing?**

A. Typically the priests would wear violet vestments. When the Funeral is for a baptized infant, white vestments would be the norm. In the Extraordinary Form Requiem Mass the vestments are always black.

**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.

We can provide you with your own copy of all the readings.

## **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

If reading through them all becomes a chore, please do not force yourself to get through them. Sometimes this time spent with the Word of God can be consoling and uplifting. For others, it can be overwhelming. We can help with our own suggestions.

**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. May we compose our own Prayers of the Faithful?**

*A.* We would like you to suggest some Intercessions which the priest or deacon should be able to incorporate into the Prayers of the Faithful. It would be customary to mention the names of family members who are too ill to be present at the Funeral Mass and also those loved ones who have already passed away.

**Q. May we have an offertory procession?**

*A.* One day the offertory procession might be possible again. While we are taking extra precautions against the spread of disease, the offertory procession has been suspended.

**Q. How do we arrange for music?**

*A.* Our parish Director of Music, Mr. David Lang, will help you plan the sacred music. If he has not already reached out to you, you can contact him at [DLang@StJohnCatholicMcLean.org](mailto:DLang@StJohnCatholicMcLean.org) or 703-356-7916, ext. 310.

**Q. May we invite musicians and singers from outside the parish to participate in the Funeral Mass?**

*A.* Possibly. Please contact our Director of Music, David Lang, so that he may ensure their suitability and prepare them for their participation in the Funeral Mass. As the liturgy will involve the singing of Gregorian Chant, we encourage families to employ our own trained musicians who are familiar with the Funeral Mass.

## 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 merely hymns or songs 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 Director 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 Iesu*

### **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. What about cremation?

A. Given the sometimes exorbitant cost of funerals, this is a common question and it is understandable that some families feel that they have no choice but to opt for cremation.

The Church prohibits cremation absolutely when it signifies a lack of belief in the resurrection of the body. Outside of that circumstance, cremation is now permitted. The remains, contained inside a worthy urn or box, may be present at the funeral. We have a small table for them that will be in the sanctuary. On that table may also be flowers but not pictures. We can set up a table in the vestibule to display photographs.

The Church still prefers that the body not be cremated and urges that, if cremation occurs, it be done *after* the funeral. Your funeral home should be able to accommodate this request without incurring the cost of a casket.

When the body is cremated, the Church still requires that the ashes be laid to rest in a sacred place: interred in a grave, buried at sea or entombed in a mausoleum or columbarium. A family room mantel, in contrast, might have the effect of turning your living space into a cemetery and it can feel so temporary. Since we should treat ashes as reverently as we would a loved one's sacred body, we don't keep the ashes at home and we don't, for the love of all that is good and holy, scatter them. As mentioned above, Saint John the Beloved parish will be able to provide the funeral rites when there are plans for a burial or interment. Wanting to hold on is natural. When we are ready to take the supernatural step of entrusting our loved ones to God, then it will be time for the prayers of the Funeral Mass.

If some time will pass between the Funeral and the Interment, we can reverently keep custody of your loved one's cremated remains in the church sacristy.



**Q. Will the priest come to the burial?**

*A.* Interment usually follows immediately after the funeral Mass. In those cases, the priest will accompany the family to the cemetery for the funeral rites at the grave without question. If the burial is set for a later date, our priests would be very happy to accompany you to the cemetery then. Please make arrangements through the parish office to ensure that all the dates are on everyone's calendars.

**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. 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 we schedule a "Month's Mind" Mass?**

*A.* Yes. In many Christian cultures it is customary to have a Memorial Mass, in addition to the Funeral Mass, offered after a month has passed. This is usually quiet and intimate. We ordinarily try to schedule this so as not to conflict with Adoration. Saturdays work well as do weekday evenings apart from Wednesday. Please let the parish office know that you are interested.

**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 few Glorious Mysteries so as to conclude on a hopeful note with Our Lord's Resurrection and Ascension into Heaven.

The *Liturgy of the Hours* is the official public prayer for the Church throughout the day. Just like there is a Funeral Mass which offers specific to praying for the deceased, the Liturgy of the Hours has an *Office of the Dead* with prayers for each part of the day, drawing us into the timeless mediation of the Psalms on the mercy of God, lifting us up with reminders of the Lord's resurrection.

Come to *Holy Mass* on a weekday. Joining in the weekday parish Mass helps us to experience the Holy Sacrifice in a calm and meditative setting... in the company of many who belong to the St. John Prayer Chain, which means that they are already praying for you. We can get no closer to heaven than by being in the presence *of* and in being in communion *with* Our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament.

Perhaps there is no quieter and more peaceful setting than coming to *Adoration*, which we have every day but Saturday.

Lastly, this is a great time to make a good *Confession*. The Sacrament of Penance is offered all day on Wednesdays at St. John the Beloved as well as on Saturday mornings and afternoons. Our priests are also available any other time that fits your schedule.

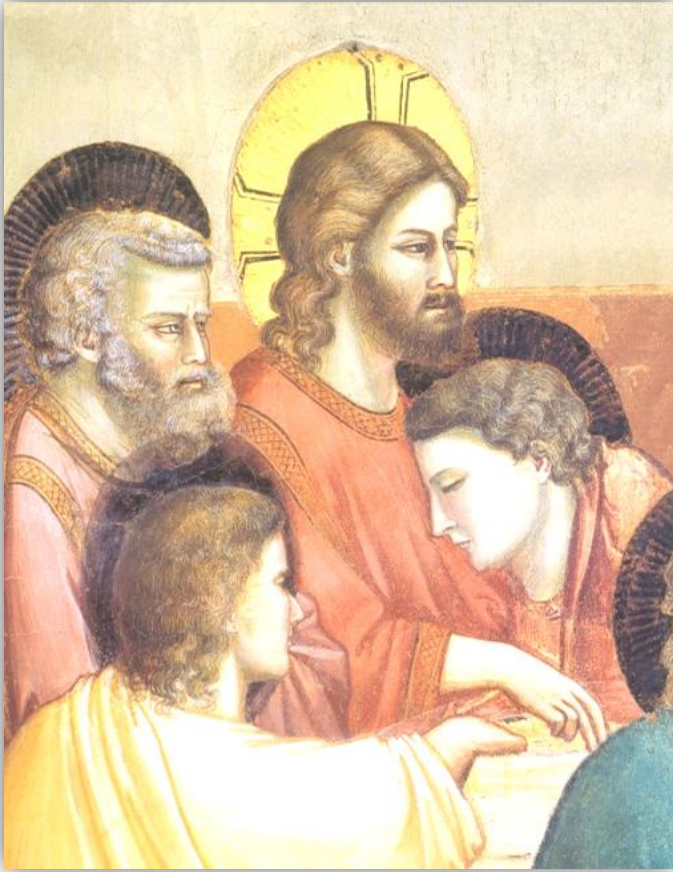
**Q. What if we have other questions?**

*A.* Please ask by telephone, email, or text... whatever works for you.

**Q. Why is the rest of this page blank?**

*A.* We couldn't think of other questions that come up typically.  
Please see the question and answer above.





**SAINT JOHN THE BELOVED  
CATHOLIC CHURCH**

6420 Linway Terrace  
McLean, Virginia 22101

[www.StJohnCatholicMcLean.org](http://www.StJohnCatholicMcLean.org)

Parish Office: 703-356-7916

Parish Fax: 703-356-4517

Music Office: 703-356-7916, ext. 310

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

**Mr. David Lang, Director of Music**