



PLANNING A CATHOLIC FUNERAL

“WHOEVER SEES THE SON AND BELIEVES IN HIM SHALL HAVE ETERNAL LIFE.” John 6:40

THE LOSS OF A LOVED ONE - PRACTICAL FIRST STEPS

Who needs to be informed when someone dies?

A number of people need to be informed when a person dies, these include the deceased person's relatives or legal guardians - their 'next of kin', the person's doctor (if they died at home), a funeral director and the local parish priest.

If someone dies unexpectedly or in unusual circumstances, the police will need to be informed. Should this happen, it is important not to touch or move anything until the police give you permission to do so.

What happens next?

If the cause of death is clear, a doctor will issue a medical certificate and a formal notice. This document includes information about how to register the death and enables funeral arrangements to be made. If the doctor needs to report the death to the coroner, there may be a delay while a post-mortem or inquest is carried out. The coroner's office will be able to advise you what arrangements can be made.

Registering the death

The death will need to be registered within five days, unless it has been reported to the coroner.

Choosing between burial or cremation

Most people use the services of a Funeral Director after someone has died. The deceased person may have left instructions about their funeral wishes or taken out a pre-paid funeral plan. If the deceased person has not left a record of their funeral wishes you may wish to ask friends or family members for a trusted recommendation, while researching how much each company might cost. There is a significant difference in costs between a cremation and a burial. If you decide to undertake a burial, you will also need to consider the longer-term upkeep of the grave.

Other Funeral costs

It is important to contact the parish priest before finalising any arrangements with a Funeral Director. An offering to the minister or parish is discretionary, though customary. If the person or people organising the funeral uses the services of a funeral director this type of offering might be included in their fee - it is helpful to check. There may also be a fee for an organist or other musician during the service, if music is played.

CATHOLIC FUNERALS

The purpose of a Catholic Funeral is to ask our heavenly Father to welcome the person who has died into His eternal presence and look on them with forgiveness and love.

Funeral arrangements can vary quite considerably. Your parish priest will be able to advise and support you through the decision-making process, guiding you through arrangements and helping you to choose appropriate prayers, readings and music.

Catholic funerals are modelled on the Easter journey of Jesus, from His death to His resurrection. It is because of this journey that Catholic funerals are celebrated in **three stages**:

The Prayer Vigil

This usually takes place the evening before the funeral and is the first stage in the farewell journey. The Vigil may be held in a church, the home of the person who has died, or a funeral home. Vigils offer an opportunity for quiet reflection and are less formal than the Funeral Mass, with prayers and readings from Scripture. You may wish to use this time to pray the Rosary or share appropriate poems and songs.

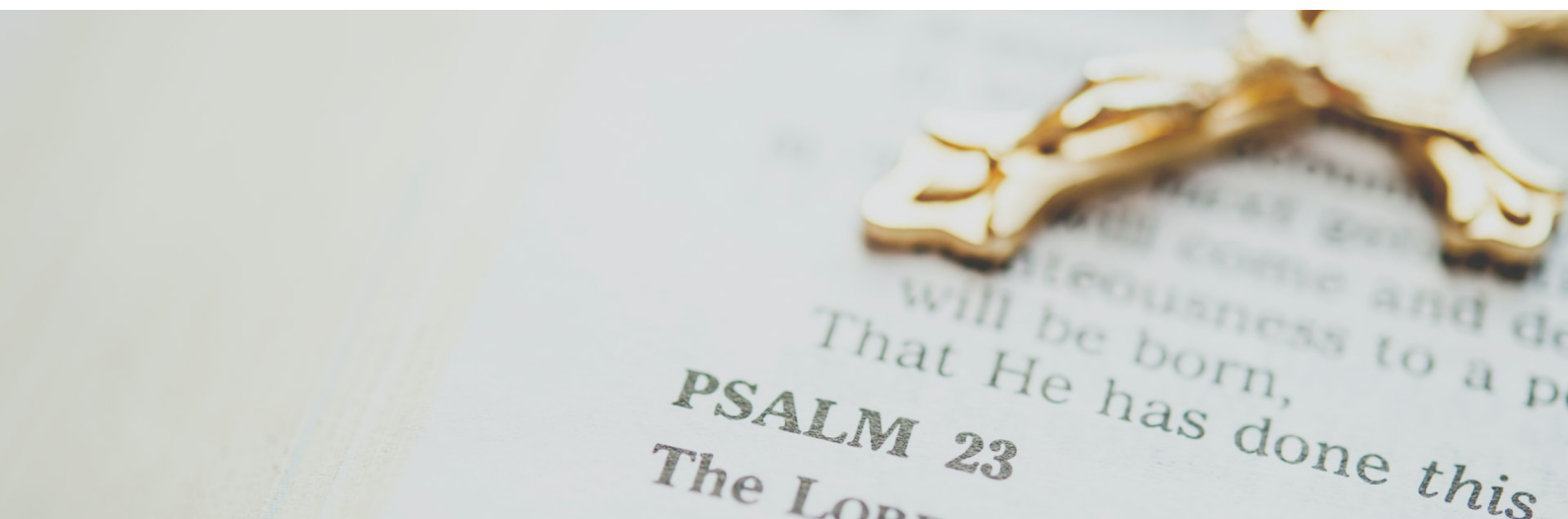
The Funeral Liturgy

The Funeral Liturgy is usually celebrated in the local parish church, though it can be celebrated in a crematorium or cemetery chapel. There are two forms: the Funeral Mass, (also called a Requiem Mass) and a Funeral Liturgy (without a Mass). The family and friends of the deceased person can participate in a number of ways:

- Placing the symbols of the Christian faith, such as a crucifix or an open Bible on the coffin.
- Reading the Bible readings or Bidding Prayers.
- Placing symbols of the person's life on a table near the coffin.
- Bringing up the gifts of bread and wine (if it is a Mass).
- Speaking briefly in memory of the person who has died.

The Committal

This is the final act of saying goodbye and involves a brief service at the graveside or at the crematorium. If the person is being cremated, there can be a further short service for the burial of their ashes.



FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS



I don't know how to plan a funeral

The parish priest or deacon will be able to advise and support you during this time, members of the parish community may also be able to help.

What choices can I make?

Funeral rites can be carefully tailored. There are a number of choices you can make, including selecting the hymns, scripture readings and prayers.

Can I include a poem or favourite song?

There will be opportunities for personal choice during each of the three stages of the funeral. Poems and songs that aren't religious can be included in the prayer vigil, with an opportunity for 'Words in Remembrance' towards the end of the Funeral Liturgy. Care should be taken that all materials are in keeping with the Christian faith.

Can the deceased person be cremated?

Yes, the person's ashes must be buried in a graveyard or sacred place afterwards, not scattered.

Can a stillborn baby have a funeral?

Yes, the church has special prayers available for parents who have suffered the loss of a baby in this way. The service can be adapted for parents who have suffered a miscarriage.

BEREAVEMENT HELP & SUPPORT

The loss of a loved one can feel overwhelming. There are a number of organisations able to help and support people experiencing loss and grief.

Cruse Bereavement Care

Cruse Bereavement Care provides specialist bereavement experts experienced in all types of loss and can provide support however and whenever the death occurred.

W: <https://www.cruse.org.uk>
T: 0808 808 1677

Care for the Family

Care for the Family has compiled a list of organisations and charities able to help those experiencing grief. You can find it [here >>>](#)

Diocesan Bereavement Supporters

Our Bereavement Supporter Network provides trained volunteers across our Deaneries able to accompany people who are bereaved or dying. Whether sitting and listening, praying together, celebrating the life of a loved one through a memorial Mass, or sharing a cup of tea and a moment of quiet, our Bereavement Supporters extend the hand of Christ during a time of loss and need. Contact your parish priest or our Marriage and Family Life Project Officer to find out more.

E: simon.south@abdiocese.org.uk
T: 01293 65115

Sands

Sands provides care and support to anyone affected by the death of a baby.

W: <https://www.sands.org.uk>
T: 0808 164 3332

The Art of Dying Well

The Art of Dying Well offers practical and spiritual support to those faced with the prospect of death and dying. It is a site for everyone.

W: <https://www.artofdyingwell.org>