

Funeral Directives

Introduction

1.1 The moment of losing a loved one is very sensitive, both humanly and spiritually. Therefore, the parish priest and the priests who are close to the family should give importance to the preparation of the funeral celebration, the sacrament of confession for the family and relatives of the deceased and contact with the family. It is also recommended that groups are fostered in parishes that can provide support to the family during the days and months following the funeral.

1.2 We should keep in mind that the funeral liturgy celebrates the bond of the deceased with the Risen Christ. It is very important that the funeral celebration encourages in us faith in the Lord who died and rose, the hope that all the dead will rise in Christ, and the love and bond between us who are still in this vale of tears with those who have died in Christ.

1.3 Therefore, where possible, the Parish Priest (or another priest) should visit the family some time before the funeral, pray with them, offer them the service of confession and prepare the funeral celebration.

1.4 The changes being introduced by the Church in Malta are foreseen by the same Funeral Order (OE) issued in 1969.

Directives

2.1 These directives apply to the liturgical part of the funeral.

2.1.1 The liturgical part of the funeral is divided into two stations: in the church and in the cemetery. The liturgical part begins with the blessing of the deceased upon arrival at the church and ends with the prayer by the priest over the grave or until the deceased is taken out of the church in the event that the second station (i.e. in the cemetery) is not held because the burial is not to take place immediately.

2.1.2 In the event that the burial is not to take place immediately, the priest performs the rite that is held in the cemetery when the remains are to be buried.

2.2 The time of the liturgical part of the funeral must be agreed upon between the parish priest/rector of the church where the funeral will take place and the family (directly or through the commissioner). In the event that the funeral is not held in the parish of the deceased's residence, the commissioner must inform the parish priest of the residence's parish about the funeral before it takes place.

2.3 It is suggested that the deceased should be brought to the church approximately fifteen minutes before the established time of mass. At that time the celebrant will be available for confession. It is advisable that at this time there be a prayer of preparation for the mass organized by the parish/church or suitable music.

2.4 Upon the arrival of the deceased in front of the church where the funeral will take place, the priest welcomes the deceased and their relatives at the church door. At the entrance of the coffin into the church, a procession begins to the place where the coffin is placed - in the middle aisle. As soon as the coffin is placed in its place, a prayer is said for the deceased and the relatives, and the deceased is blessed by the priest or deacon. The procession should proceed as follows: the priest and the liturgical ministers walk in front and behind them walk the pallbearers with the coffin. Behind them are the relatives, the commissioner, the people involved in the funeral and other people. The same order should be maintained when the coffin leaves the church, and when entering the cemetery. After the mass, the procession from the church to the cemetery should go directly to the cemetery.

2.4.1 In the event that instead of a coffin there is an urn, this will be placed where the coffin is usually placed or on a table near the presbytery, without a photograph of the deceased.

2.5 The funeral mass is an act of faith in the redemption brought by Jesus, that faith in which we believe that he is “the resurrection and the life”. Therefore, the singing in the church must be liturgical and respect liturgical norms. The singing, the readings, the prayers of the faithful, the choice of readers, the arrangement of flowers in the church, etc. must be discussed with the celebrant.

2.5.1 The prayers of the faithful, and in the event that there is any prayer after communion, must not be a eulogy for the deceased, but must be prayers that go with that part of the mass.

2.6 If the family wishes, thanksgivings may be offered only by the celebrant himself on behalf of the family after the end of the mass. If family members wish to deliver a message, this may be done by them after the priest’s prayer at the graveside.

2.7 The dignity of the celebration and the place must be respected at all times during the liturgical part of the funeral.

2.8 Photographs of the deceased may only be placed at the back of the church where the book of condolences is located.

2.9 No flags or flowers may be left on the coffin during the mass. In the case of flags of disciplinary bodies and state flags, the flag must be neatly folded and removed from the coffin upon entering the church. If it is to be used again at the end, it is placed on the coffin before it is lifted out of the church. In the case of other flags, these must be

removed before entering the church and may be replaced once the coffin has been taken out of the church. During mass, only the Crucifix and the Bible or lectionary (and a stole in the case of a priest) are placed on the coffin, and it may only be covered with a special cloth for this purpose. In the case of any medals and honours held by the deceased, these may be placed on a stool near the coffin.

2.10 Flags, banners of civil societies and associations, etc., which are brought into the church on the occasion of a funeral, must be placed near the front door.

2.11 From the beginning of mass until the time the coffin leaves the church, nothing more than what is contained in the funeral ritual should be done.

2.12 The commissioner shall inform and facilitate the observance of these directives by the relatives and those present at the funeral.

2.13 The fee for the liturgical service is €85. The fee includes the use of the church and the celebrant's alms. The fee does not include singing, permits from civil authorities, cemetery fees and other expenses related to burials and cemeteries. Those who wish to make further donations may do so. This does not mean that the collection will not be held during the mass. In cases where the relatives cannot afford to pay the fee, the relatives themselves should speak to the parish priest or rector of the church where the funeral will take place.

2.13.1 In the case of a so-called pauper's funeral and in the case of a child's funeral, the church offers its services free of charge.

2.14 Any permission from civil authorities is the responsibility of the commissioner.

2.15 The commissioner must ensure that an original burial permit is provided to the parish in whose cemetery the burial takes place, a copy to the parish/church where the funeral is held and a copy to the parish where the deceased was resident.

2.16 Anyone wishing to take photographs, videos or live-stream the liturgical part of the funeral must request permission from the parish priest or rector of the church and the celebrant.