



Diocese of Joliet

Arrangements for the Burial of a Priest Preparation and the Funeral Rites

At the Time of a Priest's Death

- Upon the death of a priest, Bishop Conlon's office should be contacted immediately. In the event that he is not available, the Vicar General [Father Richard Smith], or the Vicar for Priests [Father Dewan] should be contacted.
- A Dean shall be responsible for coordinating the burial of any priest of the Diocese of Joliet. The Dean responsible shall be based upon the place of the funeral, as indicated by the preference of the deceased priest. If no preference is identified, the church of the funeral and responsibility for arrangements is based upon the place of the deceased priest's most recent assignment. However, for priests residing outside of said deanery at their death, the Dean of that priest's most recent assignment may request that the place of the funeral – and therefore funeral arrangements – be moved to a more appropriate deanery. Such requests should be made to the Vicar for Priests.
- The responsible Dean will work with the pastor of the parish where the funeral will be celebrated, the funeral director, the family of the priest, and the Diocese to ensure that the funeral rites are properly prepared.
- The Dean or priests delegated by him are responsible for dressing the body in priestly vestments, and ensuring that the body is properly laid out in the casket.
- When contacting the funeral home, the Dean should see to it that...
 - A full-couch casket, with a removable lid is procured. Properly speaking, a priest should "lie in state" in the main aisle of the church in close proximity to the altar, with his head closest to the altar, and the lid of the casket completely removed.
 - A deceased priest is fully vested in Mass vestments. As specified in the General Instruction, the color for funerals is white, purple, or black vestments. The deceased priest may specify in his funeral plans which of the colors are to be used for preparation of his body for burial.
 - The funeral home should prepare the body in black pants, socks, shoes, a black clerical shirt, or a long sleeve white shirt for a clerical shirt-front or a collar and cassock [if that was the priest's custom and/or request].
 - The priests coming to the funeral home to dress the body will put the alb, stole, and chasuble on the body of the deceased. They will also help arrange the body properly in the casket.
 - Please let the funeral home know that another crucifix [ordinarily the type used in the lid of the casket] will be needed the day of the funeral. This is placed in the priest's hands by the Bishop and is buried with him.

- As a deceased priest lies in state in the church, fully vested in mass vestments, it is not appropriate for secular items, e.g., sports and entertainment memorabilia, etc., to be placed in the casket where they would be readily visible.
- The church should be prepared with the Paschal Candle near the entrance of the sanctuary, and remains lit throughout the vigil as the body of the deceased priest lies in state.
- Only sacred/liturgical music is to be used before during and after the wake service, mass of Christian burial, and interment.
- If the parish does not possess a suitable number of con-celebration vestments, the Cathedral should be called and arrangements should be made for the parish to pick-up what is needed. Ordinarily, there should be matching chasubles for the Bishops and Abbots in attendance, as well as dalmatics for the deacons of the Mass. Other concelebrating priests will wear the diocesan vestments.
- The parish should arrange for a meal to be served following the funeral of a priest before the family goes on to the cemetery. It is proper for one of the priests of the parish to invite the people in attendance [this follows the Post-Communion Prayer]. If no other priests are assigned to the parish, then, the Dean should perform this duty.

The Vigil/Wake of a Priest

- When the wake begins in church, the Dean should preside over the Vigil for the Deceased with the Reception at the Church [as found in the Order of Christian Funerals]. This gives a formal beginning to the wake and "lying in state." This is the time when the body is sprinkled with Holy Water and the Funeral Pall is placed on the casket. At the end of the service, the pall is removed and the Funeral Director should open the casket and prepare everything for the visitation to begin.
- The parish should provide "hospitality" to members of the priest's family who come and remain in church throughout the entire day of the wake.
- A liturgical wake service should be held the evening of the wake. One of the bishops, the Dean, pastor of the parish, Vicar for Priests, or another priest [designated by the Dean] should preside. Only proper liturgical music, liturgical ministers, and other elements to make the service more solemn should be used.

The Day of the Funeral

- If the body remains in the church throughout the night, a light should be left on, a candle should burn near the casket, and the lid should be securely fixed in place.
- Morning masses celebrated in the presence of the body should be those offered for a "Deceased Priest" [if the day is not a feast]. In any event, prayers should be offered at Mass for the soul of the departed. However, the funeral obsequies are not celebrated at these masses.
- After the morning masses, to prepare for the wake before the funeral Mass, the altar candles and Paschal Candle should be lit, lights in the church turned on, and all made ready for the celebration of Mass. The lid of the casket should be removed before the mourners arrive, and placed in a suitable place in the back of the church [if possible] for the closing of the casket.

The Mass of Christian Burial

- The Bishop celebrating the funeral will appoint a master of ceremonies. At present Fr. DeSalvo ordinarily serves as the master of ceremonies for priest funerals.
- A room will be needed for the priests/deacons to vest. Another room or perhaps the sacristy can be used for the Bishops and Abbots to vest.
- Along with the Bishops, Abbots, and deacon(s), other clergy seated in the sanctuary (space permitting) may include the parish pastor (and parochial vicar), the Dean, the Vicar for Priests and the homilist.
- If deacons are present at the liturgy, as many as two may be on the altar with the Bishop - one to be the Deacon of the Word, the other to be the Deacon of the Eucharist. The other vested deacons will be seated near the concelebrants.
- Liturgical ministers should all be chosen and their names given to the master of ceremonies. He will meet with them the morning of the funeral. He will also consult with the funeral director and let him/her know our procedures for a priest's funeral.
- Ordinarily, six servers are needed for a funeral. They should arrive 1 hour before the funeral so that the master of ceremonies can prepare them and go over things before too many people are gathered in the church.
- The usual "sacristy preparations" should be made before the master of ceremony arrives: hosts, wine, chalices, holy water, incense prepared, funeral pall, etc... should be laid out in the sacristy.

- Once the Bishop has arrived, and has viewed the body, the funeral director should assist the family in a final viewing and farewell. The timing of this is to be coordinated with the master of ceremonies. Once that is finished, and assisted by the master of ceremonies and funeral directors, the Bishop will preside over the closing of the casket. The pall is then once again placed on the casket. It is not necessary for priests, ushers, or other members of the assembly to "shield" the casket as it is closed before the funeral mass. However, ushers in the main aisle will be needed to stop people from coming forward once the Bishop has begun. The Bishop returns to the sacristy/vesting area and, once the Master of Ceremony gives the signal, the Mass begins with the usual Entrance Procession of servers and clergy.
- **Introductory Rites:** Since the Sprinkling with Holy Water and the Placing of the Pall were done when the body was first received into the church, it is not repeated at the Funeral Mass. The Mass begins as usual with the Sign of the Cross, Greeting and Penitential Act. If the third form of the Penitential Act is used, the deacon leads it as usual. The other forms are led by the celebrant.
- **Homily:** If the deceased priest did not designate a homilist for his funeral, the Dean should preach the homily or designate another priest to do so. Whatever the case, the Dean is to diligently remind the homilist of the purpose and directives found in The Order of Christian Funerals: A brief homily is always given after the gospel reading at the funeral liturgy and may be given at the vigil service. But, there is never to be a eulogy. The homilist should dwell on God's compassionate love and on the paschal mystery of the Lord, as proclaimed in the Scripture readings (General Introduction, #27).
- At the funeral of a priest, the only one to speak is the Bishop. There will not be a eulogy given by anyone else. Should the family desire one, it is properly given at the vigil service the night before or at the luncheon.
- Once the Final Commendation is finished, BEFORE the Deacon's dismissal (as given in the Rite of Christian Burial), the Bishop will lead the priests in chanting the Salve Regina - the "final" Marian Antiphon used in the Divine Office, meant to fraternally commend the soul of the deceased priest to the care of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of the clergy.
- Upon exiting the church, the concelebrating priests form two lines out the doors of the church to the hearse, to fraternally honor the deceased priest as he is carried to his final rest.
- The Dean, or a priest designated by him, accompanies the body and the mourners to the cemetery and presides at the Committal Service. Please check with the Dean and see if he is able to perform this duty, or if he is appointing someone else to do so in his place.

FINAL NOTES

- Fr. DeSalvo is available to assist in the preparation and management of any particular funeral proceedings, especially the vesting of the body, as he is familiar with this task.
- All funeral arrangements should be made in coordination with Curia members, Fr. William Dewan, Sr. Judith Davies and Sr. Sharon Marie Stola.