

CATHOLIC BURIAL RITES

Vigil, Liturgy and Committal

The Vigil (Wake Service), the funeral Liturgy (Mass) and the Committal (Burial/Entombment) each have distinct purposes in the journey to healing wholeness. The Vigil, the Funeral Liturgy and the Committal set us on a path to healing, wholeness and peace. We do not have to face it alone, nor should we, our church will be there for us and for that we are truly thankful.

Vigil for the deceased – The Vigil for the deceased is the first way that the Church captures the sentiments of those who are grieving. A prayer service with readings selected from Scripture, a homily that comforts and gives hope, intercessions that speak to the faith of those gathered and the comfort of those gathered to share memories of the deceased.

Funeral Liturgy (the Mass) – Celebrating the funeral liturgy at Mass in the parish church is the normal way in which most Catholics experience the Order of Christian Funerals. Its effectiveness is greatly enhanced when the family participates in appropriate ways: clothing the casket with the pall, selecting the Scripture readings, serving as lectors, singing the responses and the hymns.

The funeral homily is of utmost importance in the funeral liturgy. A homily may only be delivered by a priest or a deacon. The homily speaks of the mystery of Christ's death and resurrection and gives the deeper meaning that is found in the experience of death and dying. The homily occurs within the context of a funeral Mass that is offered for the forgiveness of sins and the salvation of the soul of the faithful departed.

Rite of Committal (Cemetery) – The last concrete act we can do for our loved ones in this world is the Committal, the burial or entombment of the remains of the deceased. The relationships, bonds and “communion” we build with one another in faith are not broken by death. Resting in a holy place with our brothers and sisters is a profound statement of that belief.