

St. Mary's Basilica

Policy for

DEATH AND FUNERALS

version 8-3-16

We at St. Mary's Basilica want to make ourselves available to families and friends who suffer at the time of the death of a loved one. We hope to bring to bear the support, resources and the prayer of our parish family to this difficult time. Any assistance we can give extends the heart of Jesus that was offered so particularly to those grieving the loss of a loved one.

We realize that there are many decisions that need to be made and details, which need to be considered, often in a short period of time. We offer these thoughts as help and direction.

AS DEATH APPROACHES

Our parish can support those who are ill and their family members through the prayer of friar priests and the "ministers of care" of our community. Through home and hospital visits, Communion to the sick and the Sacrament of Anointing we hope to bring the healing and comforting attention of Christ to those who suffer. We ask that families not wait until the moment of death to accept the ministry of the church. The last rites prior to death are usually communion for the journey home (Viaticum and a final Anointing of the Sick.) The Sacrament of Anointing is available to all during their illness as a source of strength. The Church does, however, propose that Viaticum or a final Holy Communion be given to those in imminent danger of death so that Christ may be "with them on their way." Those who have already died are in God's keeping. While they are no longer able to receive the sacraments with us, their fellow Christians still pray and formally commend them to the love and mercy of God.

IF DEATH COMES UN-EXPECTANTLY

Grief sometimes settles on us like a cloud and only time and slow accustoming can teach us to live with out the beloved partner who has passed. Choosing another family member or close friend to act on your behalf in planning and the rites of burial sometime makes the most sense. We are a Communion of Saints says St. Paul and death cannot threaten the bond of love between us. The proper rites for this kind of loss are different. Grief sets its own schedule. Anniversaries, vigils, remembrances and often just informal regular gatherings at home take on even more significance.

SCHEDULING FUNERAL SERVICES

We do not direct families to any specific funeral director in the Phoenix area. We have, however, shared with many of these community businesses our policies and the services we are able to provide.

We would like to be informed at the parish when a member dies and we would like to meet the family to offer support and to extend assistance in planning for funerals. Requests can normally be directed to any of the friar priests and parish manager. It will be important to determine a time for services so that notices can be published in the newspaper. It will be necessary to discuss with the pastor or pastoral minister times available for such things as wake services, funeral Masses and burial arrangements. We recommend our own Diocesan Catholic Cemeteries particularly St Francis Cemetery which our parish purchased in the early years of its history for burial.

WAKES AND VIGIL SERVICES

In planning the events leading to a funeral, it is important to allow time for family and friends of the deceased to gather for prayer and support. Sundays and Mondays are difficult days to schedule a Vigil and Funeral due to a set schedule of events, but every attempt will be made to accommodate a family. A vigil and reception of guests can take place in a mortuary, or at the church itself the night before a funeral mass. Our security is adequate to keep the body of a deceased loved one in our Church overnight. Scheduled use of the church for other services or events would need to be considered.

An hour viewing and prayer service is often requested in the basilica prior to the funeral Mass. The family can lead a rosary or prayer service themselves or request leadership by one of our pastoral staff. The body is normally greeted by the priest or deacon celebrant at the door of the church with a sprinkling with water from the Baptismal font and the dressing of the coffin with the white pall. Normally the large paschal candle, blessed each year in our Easter vigil, is burning near by.

As part of a wake, people often gather for a rosary and/or vigil service the night before the funeral. The family can best determine the manner in which visitation will take place as well as its duration. It is a time for prayer, storytelling, scripture reading, songs, and remembering. A priest deacon or other pastoral minister can lead all or part of the vigil service. Families sometimes have their own funeral traditions and rosary prayer leaders that we want to honor. The *Rite of Christian Funerals (the official translation of Roman Catholic Prayer texts for the United States)* provides prayers, Scripture suggestions and blessings for a Vigil.

THE FUNERAL MASS

The Mass of Christian Burial is an opportunity to express deep feelings of love and sorrow, but also an opportunity for Christian believers to affirm their trust and faith in the Paschal mystery, "Christ has died, Christ has risen, Christ will come again!"

Our celebration of the Eucharist is our strongest statement that Christ contradicts the death we experience. It is the greatest challenge for the Christian to trust the Lord's promise that even "in the valley of darkness," The Risen Christ is still with us.

Without denying our emotions at this difficult time, our church invites us to express our faith in an act of worship. We must ask ourselves if the service we plan for our loved ones express the hope and faith to which (we and they) are called. As members of the Church, we believe that we have membership in a larger family - the household of faith and the Communion of Saints. For this reason, we stress the importance of bringing the remains of the deceased to the church for the funeral liturgy, even if cremation is to follow. It is the church building that is the place of the catholic community's celebration. There we gather for Baptism and the other sacraments of the church's life.

An evening Funeral Mass can most often accommodate the largest number of friends and family members. A reception can be arranged afterward with burial the following morning. Morning Funerals followed by burial is the preference of most. Our Chapel can accommodate up to 30 people, for a more intimate worship service. The main Basilica seats around 800 comfortably and is wheelchair accessible for the elderly or handicapped. It is our hope that as many neighbors and parish members as possible can join the family of the deceased in prayer.

Time can be made after Communion for a family member to give a brief remembrance and invitation to funeral reception or banquet. The better time for a quality Eulogy is during the wake or vigil. The role of the funeral homily is to remember the deceased in the mystery of the Lord's death and resurrection which is the reason for our hope.

MUSIC AND THE FUNERAL MASS

The Funeral Mass is an expression of faith of the Christian community and includes community participation in song. The assembly is invited to join in those parts of the Mass sung at Sunday liturgies - the psalms, Holy, Holy, etc. - and a number of other songs. The parish hymnal and other liturgical books can be consulted as a basic resource for worship. We at St. Mary's provide a worship aid for each funeral.

St. Mary's' parish music resources are normally arranged by the director of music and the individual priest celebrant. Our music director and organist, Gordon Stevenson. Is

available to plan music with the families in anticipation of a funeral. His fee is normally \$200.00 (if organist cantor's and plays) otherwise \$185.00. The cantor's suggested offering is \$150.00. Outside organists choirs and musicians are hosted under his supervision. Special music requests are encouraged by our cantors and organists. Music at funerals is the policy of St. Mary's Basilica and other arrangements can be arranged should these fees be a burden.

It is important that the music expresses our common faith in God and resurrection life. Religious music is preferred but there is room often after the Communion of the Mass for music that may have some personal significance. The Wake or Vigil service is the appropriate place for broader (and more secular) music selections.

BURIAL & CREMATION

The Rite of Christian Funerals offers a particular Committal rite with readings, psalms and prayers at the graveside or crypt. It is tradition of Roman Catholics that the remains of our beloved dead be buried in sacred ground. There they can be honored and remembered. Family members are welcome to choose special readings or songs of farewell with a friar priest or deacon presiding. We prefer this to be the priest who celebrated the Funeral Mass when at all possible. Many cultures have different traditions at the burial of a loved one and the priest needs to know in advance so that these additional ceremonies can be accommodated, especially military rites. When the Committal rite concludes, the family is normally presented with a blessed cross in memory of the loved one. The burial itself has several options: Taking leave of the coffin in the chapel at the crypt, leaving the coffin at the graveside for later burial or lowering the coffin into the grave or crypt. It is important to know what the family prefers beforehand. National Flags and military rites are encouraged according to current liturgical custom.

The Catholic Church now permits cremation when it is the expressed desire of deceased. Ashes as well need to be honored with burial in a cemetery or placed in a mausoleum, and should not be scattered. The Diocese of Phoenix permits cremains being brought into the Church for funerals. We prefer to have a Funeral Mass with the body before cremation. Some inexpensive packages have been arranged with local mortuaries that honor this. But should the family chose cremation immediately after death, a local funeral service, has made available to us an "ark-urn" to carry the container of funeral ashes into church, much in the same way as with the coffin. Four pallbearers are suggested and the baptismal symbols of holy water and funeral pall are used in the same way as any funeral. Please consult with the priest or other pastoral minister beforehand. Allow us to accompany your family as you inter the ashes of your loved one of our local Catholic cemeteries.

FUNERAL RECEPTIONS AND BANQUETS

Our Basilica parish hall is available for rental for funeral receptions & banquets. Information and fees are available by contacting our parish manager, Jerome Doris at the Parish Office. These are normally catered and we provide a list of local caterers who are familiar with our facilities.

HONORARIUM FOR THE CHURCH

It is customary to provide an offering of \$300.00 to the Basilica at the time of the vigil. This can usually be given to the Funeral director who will forward it to the parish office. Some families like to give the priest, organist or altar servers an additional offering. \$250 dollars is suggested for the expenses of the individual celebrant written to the "Franciscan friars" who sponsor St. Mary's. The parish priests can assist should the suggested offering is a burden to any family.

MEMORIALS

Memorial funds are often established to assist a family for funeral expenses. Some prefer to make memorial gifts for the parish or other community. Our parish manager can often assist when this is necessary. We encourage having memorials directed for a purpose that can honor the memory of our loved ones and benefit those who are living. Memorials given to St. Mary's Basilica, education or parish building fund are most graciously received. A gift to the Catholic Community Foundation " of the Diocese of Phoenix can benefit the growth of resources for our Catholic Schools. The Franciscan Friars of St. Barbara Province offer their "Fraternal Trust Fund" for such gifts. Our whole Basilica family benefits when St. Mary's Parish is remembered in a will or through a memorial offering.

MASSES IN REMEMBRANCE

Family members who have lost loved ones are held in prayer by the daily liturgy of the Hours by the Franciscan friars of St. Mary's in their friary chapel. Many people request special Masses offered for their deceased. All these requests for Mass intentions are carefully honored. Arrangements can be made at our parish office and a donation is suggested. Mass stipends usually around 10 dollars go to the local Franciscan Community. Our regular Monday through Friday daily Masses are normally available, as are the weekends. Several months advance notice is often needed.

We have a special book of prayer intentions in the back of the Basilica for personal prayer requests that our community honors in each weekend Eucharist. Perpetual Masses can be offered through the Franciscan Missionary Union of the Western (O.F.M.) Franciscans. It might be helpful for the family of the deceased when considering how such money is to be distributed to plan special days such as an anniversary or birthday

when a novena or anniversary Mass can be celebrated. We hold the St. Ann Chapel available for these special family Masses, which seats about thirty people. Each November 2nd, the Church celebrates "All Souls Day." We remember in particular those buried from our Basilica during the past year in that celebration by inscribing their names in the "Book of the Dead." We carry it in procession that day and invite family members to join us. The celebration of "Dia De Los Muertos" draws people from all over the Phoenix Area. We normally keep the book displayed in the Basilica near the Baptism font for most of November.

Saint Mary's is the mother Church of Phoenix, and most especially in time of grief and loss. The Basilica is a normally quiet place open each day between 9-4PM. Please be at home here.

St. Francis of Assisi left us a beautiful greeting, especially with the nearness of Sister death. It is our wish for you.

"THE LORD GIVE YOU PEACE."

The Franciscan Friars and parish staff of St. Mary's Basilica