

## **Policies and Guidelines for preparation and Celebration of Funeral liturgy at Sacred Heart Church Bloomfield CT.**

### **INTRODUCTORY NOTES:**

At Sacred Heart church, we are aware of the grief which death brings to a family, and our goal is to do whatever we can to provide spiritual support and comfort to the bereaved. Like we strive to do in every other aspects of the parish life, our goal is to meet both the individual and collective needs of our parishioners. To achieve this goal, our plan is to work with every individual family considering their unique circumstances while at the same time putting in perspective the collective needs and available resources of the parish.

*As a Roman Catholic community of faith we, “celebrate the funeral rites to offer worship, praise, and thanksgiving to God for the gift of a life which has now been returned to God, the author of life and the hope of the just. The mass, the memorial of Christ’s death and resurrection, is the principal celebration of the Christian funeral. The Church through its funeral rites commends the dead to God’s merciful love and pleads for the forgiveness of their sins. At the funeral rites, especially at the celebration of the Eucharistic sacrifice, the Christian community affirms and expresses the union of the Church on earth with the church in heaven in the one great communion of saints. Though separated from the living, the dead are still at one with the community of believers on earth and benefit from their prayers and intercessions. At the rite of final commendation and farewell, the community acknowledges the reality of separation and commends the deceased to God. In this way it recognizes the spiritual bond that still exists between the living and the dead and proclaims its belief that all the faithful will be raised up and reunited in the new heavens and new earth, where death will be no more. The celebration of the Christian funeral brings hope and consolation to the living. While proclaiming the Gospel of Jesus Christ and witnessing to Christian hope in the resurrection, the funeral rites also recall to all who take part in them God’s mercy and judgment and meet the human need to turn always to God in times of crisis” (Order of Christian Funerals #5-7)*

Certainly, the death of someone whom we love can stir up intense emotions drawing us to seek for meaning as well as support. It is an experience that can be overwhelming. It can also help us to recognize how much we need God and our Christian faith. At the time of death of someone we love, the Church

helps us to draw strength from our faith and to find hope in Christ. Therefore, the liturgy of the Church for funeral is meant for us to take our faith to our hearts and minds. Hence, through preparation and celebration of funeral liturgy we may find support and consolation from God and from the church community. The prayer of the Church for the one who has died generally takes place in three principal ritual moments which include vigil/wake service, mass of Christian burial and committal service/rite at the cemetery.

In addition to the policies and guidelines described in this booklet for preparation and celebration of funeral liturgy at Sacred Heart Church, we also adhere to the Archdiocese of Hartford guidelines as well as the prescriptions of the Roman Rite of the Catholic Church as set forth in the official ecclesiastical documents.

### **Procedures and protocols**

#### **Contacting the parish and scheduling:**

1. To plan a funeral to be celebrated at Sacred Heart church, the family of the deceased has to contact the parish office first, before discussing with the Funeral Directors anything regarding funeral liturgy.
2. After that first contact with the parish staff, the family with the assistance of a parish staff will know the available dates and time in the parish within a relatively short period. The goal during this process of scheduling will be to work with the family to find a day and time that would work for both the family and for the parish. The Sacred Heart church office is usually open **8.30 am to 1.30pm Monday through Friday**. When the parish office is closed, the caller should follow the phone prompts and select the ‘**emergency**’ option. Once the ‘**emergency**’ option is selected, the caller will be routed to the emergency line where he/she will be able to speak with a parish staff member. In a rare situation where the voicemail comes up in the emergency line, the caller should leave a voice message. Messages received through emergency line are usually answered within a very short period of time.
3. Following the first reception of a death notice, the pastor/administrator will be immediately notified by the parish staff

who received the message. The parish staff will arrange a meeting with the family.

4. Arrangements for the funeral liturgy should be discussed with the pastor/administrator before they are finalized with the funeral director to be sure they are in keeping with the traditions and practices of the Roman Catholic Church.
5. If there is any special need(s) that the family has, the staff should let the priest know of the need(s) so that appropriate determinations will be made in response to the need(s).

**Wake/prayer service:**

A wake or prayer service may be offered for the deceased and for the bereaved usually the afternoon or evening preceding the funeral mass. The wake can be held at the church. One of the clergy staff of our parish ordinarily leads the prayer service which may include the reading of the Word of God, a brief homily and some common prayer. All who are gathered with the family are invited to take part in this prayer. The whole Christian community, through the Church and its Liturgy, offers its prayers for God's mercy for the deceased and His strength for the bereaved. The wake service may also provide an opportunity for anyone who wishes to offer words of remembrance about the deceased to do so.

**Preparation and celebration of the funeral mass:**

The church prefers to have the body of the deceased present in the church during the funeral mass. Burials and cremations should take place after the funeral mass. The Mass of Christian Burial expresses our faith in Jesus' victory over death and our share in that resurrection to new life. It does so through prayers, symbols, blessings, readings and songs. The priest wears white vestments symbolizing the new life of Jesus at the resurrection. The Easter candle stands at the head of the coffin as a similar reminder for all. The readings, songs and blessings all speak of our faith in Jesus and in his promise of eternal life for his faithful people. Please take note of the following:

1. Before Mass begins, all but the immediate family will be seated in the church. The immediate family will gather around the casket for the opening rites. The priest accompanied by other assisting ministers and members of Lazarus committee will meet the family at the main entrance of the church. The priest will bless the coffin with holy water

that recalls the deceased's baptism. The coffin is then clothed with a white pall recalling the white baptismal garment. Baptism is the first time a person is brought to the church and hears Jesus' promise of eternal life. The family members assisted by the funeral director follow the casket into the church.

2. The family may spread the funeral pall over the casket during the welcoming rites of the Mass or leave that up to the Lazarus Committee.
3. If cremation must precede the funeral, the cremains should be brought to church in a suitable container and placed on a table in front of the altar where a coffin would normally be. In such a case, the family will take their seats before Mass begins.
4. The family may choose three Scripture readings from a list of appropriate texts which will be supplied during the initial meeting with a parish staff. There would be a passage from the Old Testament, a psalm to be sung, a passage from the New Testament, and a passage from one of the four Gospels.
5. Ordinarily, the readings at Mass should be proclaimed by one who is a trained liturgical lector but family and friends are welcome to read.
6. The bread and wine for the Eucharist may be brought to the altar by family members. Two people from the family would be enough. Any additional participants can carry flowers to be placed on the casket in front of the altar.
7. We observe the guidelines of the Catholic Church regarding the reception of Holy Communion during the funeral liturgy. These official guidelines are reprinted on the last page of this booklet.
8. At the end of the Mass the final commendation prayer is said in front of the altar. The coffin/cremains is also incensed to show the Church's respect for the human body and for the person.

**Songs:**

At least one cantor leads the songs during the Mass accompanied by the organist. If the family of the deceased would like to include in the Mass of Christian Burial a particular religious song that speaks of faith in Jesus or the

resurrection, the family should let us know and, if it is possible, we will try to accommodate their request. Non-religious or secular songs, if desired, may more appropriately be played at the beginning or end of the wake. In some instances, some appropriate non-religious or secular songs may be allowed to be played before the beginning of mass

### **Eulogies:**

The grieving process necessarily includes time to remember the life of the deceased loved one. In the Roman Catholic Church funeral rite, this is most appropriately done during the time of visitation, at lunch, or even at the Vigil/Wake Service. Therefore, eulogies are recommended to be done during those moments rather than the funeral Mass. However, one eulogy of **five minutes or less** may be permitted at the end of the funeral Mass before the final commendation is prayed. Because this is a time of unpredictable emotional expression, close family members may prefer to write a eulogy for someone else to read for them. The Lazarus Committee can provide such a reader. If eulogy is to be delivered by a family member, we strongly suggest that a second family member accompany the eulogist to the pulpit for support. The eulogy must be presented to the priest-celebrant in writing in advance of the funeral Mass. The eulogy is meant to recall the person's goodness, virtues, and faith in God. It should seek to cover areas such as these: *how the deceased positively touched the lives of others; the outstanding good qualities about the individual that he/she would be remembered for; how the deceased lived out his/her Christian vocation in his/her family, community, church, places of work, etc.* The eulogy need not be somber. Humorous short stories to illustrate a good quality about the deceased can be appropriate. However, humor should not dominate the eulogy. An appropriate balance of the serious and humorous materials works best.

### **Burial/Rite of Committal:**

The burial/rite of committal takes place at the cemetery and consists of prayers for the deceased, his/her family, and all the participants and the blessing of the grave. The rite of committal concludes the funeral liturgy for the deceased. The priest from Sacred Heart ordinarily leads in the committal rite

### **Guest Priest/Deacon**

If the family of the deceased requests a guest clergy to be part of the funeral liturgy, the pastor/administrator of Sacred Heart Church should be

informed. Ordinarily the funeral liturgy will be presided over by a Sacred Heart Church priest or deacon. The guest priest/deacon will always be welcome to concelebrate (or assist in the case of a deacon) as long as he is in good standing. At the discretion of the presider, the guest priest/deacon may be permitted to give the homily, final commendation or lead the service at the cemetery. Normally, a guest priest or deacon will not preside at a funeral liturgy. However, on some special situations, the pastor/administrator may permit a guest priest or deacon to preside during funeral liturgy at Sacred Heart Church.

**Other additional available support services at Sacred Heart Church:**

1. The family of the deceased may choose to have a luncheon in Fr. Picher Hall following the funeral, but the family is responsible for having the food provided for the luncheon either by a caterer or family and friends. The parish Lazarus Committee can help to provide desserts and coffee.
2. The parish will make arrangements for a cantor and an organist for the Mass.
3. The Sacred Heart church Lazarus Committee is prepared to offer the following services to assist and support the family:
  - a. Setting up the church for the wake
  - b. Providing greeters for the wake
  - c. Providing light refreshments for the wake
  - d. Providing servers and ministers for the funeral Mass
  - e. Setting up Fr. Picher Hall for the luncheon
  - f. Serving the buffet luncheon
  - g. Cleaning up after the luncheon

**Sample funeral arrangement form that a parish staff of Sacred Heart will assist the family to fill during the initial meeting**

**FUNERAL ARRANGEMENTS**  
***Sacred Heart Church Bloomfield***

Preparation for \_\_\_\_\_

Contact person: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone# \_\_\_\_\_

**WAKE**

Will there be a wake:      Yes \_\_\_\_\_      No \_\_\_\_\_

If yes:

Will the wake be the night before? Yes \_\_\_\_\_

No \_\_\_\_\_

If yes:

where \_\_\_\_\_

Time \_\_\_\_\_

Will there be a wake the day of the funeral? Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

If yes:

where \_\_\_\_\_

Time \_\_\_\_\_

Will there be an open casket, closed casket or ashes? \_\_\_\_\_

If at Sacred Heart:

What type of music would you like played? \_\_\_\_\_

How many people in the receiving line? \_\_\_\_\_

Items you will be bringing:

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Do you have any special requests?** \_\_\_\_\_

**FUNERAL ARRANGEMENTS**  
**Sacred Heart Church**

**Funeral Preparation for:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Readings:**

1<sup>st</sup> Reading \_\_\_\_\_

Read by: \_\_\_\_\_

2<sup>nd</sup> Reading \_\_\_\_\_

Read by: \_\_\_\_\_

Gospel \_\_\_\_\_

Prayer of the Faithful \_\_\_\_\_

Read by: \_\_\_\_\_

**Presentation of Gifts:** Minimum of 2 people, Any additional participants can put a flower on casket

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Comments after Communion:** (optional) Maximum of 5 minutes, written, one person should represent the family.

If yes, by whom \_\_\_\_\_

**Music:**

Entrance: \_\_\_\_\_

Offertory \_\_\_\_\_

Communion \_\_\_\_\_

Recessional \_\_\_\_\_

Psalm (between 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> readings) \_\_\_\_\_

Prelude: \_\_\_\_\_

**Additional Comments:**

**FUNERAL** \_\_\_\_\_

Will you be meeting at the church or funeral home: \_\_\_\_\_

**Program:**

Would you like a program: Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

If yes:

Color of program \_\_\_\_\_

Clip Art on Front:

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Dates: Full ex: January 15, 1942 – May 15, 2002

\_\_\_\_\_  
Years ex: 1942-2002

\_\_\_\_\_  
None: \_\_\_\_\_

What would you like on the back of the program:

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Would you like people invited to a reception after the mass or burial? If so, where

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Burial:**

Will there be a burial: Yes \_\_\_\_\_

No \_\_\_\_\_

Where will the burial be:

\_\_\_\_\_

Will the burial be directly after mass or at a later time: \_\_\_\_\_

**Reception:**

Would you like to use Fr. Picher Hall for a reception: Yes \_\_\_\_\_

NO \_\_\_\_\_

If yes: Will the luncheon be: Catered: \_\_\_\_\_ hot and cold food Cold food  
only \_\_\_\_\_

Family bringing food hot \_\_\_\_ cold \_\_\_\_\_

Other \_\_\_\_\_

**Any special requests**

### **Guidelines For the Reception of Communion**

***For Catholics:*** As Catholics, we fully participate in the celebration of the Eucharist when we receive Holy Communion. We are encouraged to receive Communion devoutly and frequently. In order to be properly disposed to receive Communion, participants should not be conscious of grave sin and normally should have fasted for one hour. A person who is conscious of grave sin is not to receive the Body and Blood of the Lord without prior sacramental confession except for a grave reason where there is no opportunity for confession. In this case, the person is to be mindful of the obligation to make an act of perfect contrition, including the intention of confessing as soon as possible (Code of Canon Law, canon 916). A frequent reception of the Sacrament of Penance is encouraged for all.

***For our fellow Christians:*** We welcome our fellow Christians to this celebration of the Eucharist as our brothers and sisters. We pray that our common baptism and the action of the Holy Spirit in this Eucharist will draw us closer to one another and begin to dispel the sad divisions which separate us. We pray that these will lessen and finally disappear, in keeping with Christ's prayer for us "that they may all be one" (Jn 17:21)

Because Catholics believe that the celebration of the Eucharist is a sign of the reality of the oneness of faith, life, and worship, members of those churches with whom we are not yet fully united are ordinarily not admitted to Holy Communion. Eucharistic sharing in exceptional circumstances by other Christians requires permission according to the directives of the diocesan bishop and the provisions of canon law (canon 844—4). Members of the Orthodox Churches, the Assyrian Church of the East, and the Polish National Church are urged to respect the discipline of their own Churches. According to Roman Catholic discipline, the Code of Canon Law does not object to the reception of communion by Christians of these Churches (canon 844—3 ).

***For those not receiving Holy Communion*** All who are not receiving Holy Communion are encouraged to express in their hearts a prayerful desire for unity with the Lord Jesus and with one another.

***For non-Christians:*** We also welcome to this celebration those who do not share our faith in Jesus Christ. While we cannot admit them to Holy Communion, we ask them to offer their prayers for the peace and the unity of the human family.