

# BURYING THE DEAD

**A guide to Catholic  
funeral planning**

SPECIAL SUPPLEMENT FROM TODAY'S CATHOLIC

## BURYING THE DEAD

**Truly my soul  
finds rest in  
God;**

**my salvation  
comes from  
Him.**

— Psalm 62

# Liturgical norms for the celebration of funeral rites



*Promulgated by  
Bishop John D'Arcy  
in June 2001  
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Unless otherwise  
noted, material in  
quotation marks is  
from the Order of  
Christian Funerals.*

FORT WAYNE — Death and passing over into eternal life are mysteries at the center of the Catholic Christian faith. Though popular culture at times recoils from death and denies its reality, the "Order of Christian Funerals" states: "In the face of death, the Church confidently proclaims that God has created each person for eternal life and that Jesus, the Son of God, by his death and resurrection, has broken the chains of sin and death that bound humanity."

## A celebration of the Church

Christian funerals are not private observances but celebrations of the whole Church, in which "Christians 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." These rites are celebrated, therefore, with appropriate choices of music, readings, gestures and decorations consistent with a Catholic Christian understanding of death.

When the Order of Christian Funerals is celebrated, the faithful gather not only to remember the deceased but also to comfort one another. "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."

## The role of community

The celebration of a Christian funeral is a time for members of the community to come together. St. Paul says, "If one member suffers in the body of Christ which is the Church, all the members suffer with that member." (1 Cor 12:26) No one is to be isolated in grief and mourning but to see the outstretched hands of fellow Christians, ready to help. For "those who are baptized into Christ and nourished at the same table of the Lord are responsible for one another." All the baptized, then, are called to comfort those who have lost a loved one.

## The role of the ministers

Pastors and their associates play a special role as "teachers of faith and ministers of comfort." Outside of Mass, when no priest is available, a deacon may preside at the funeral rites; when no priest or deacon is available for the vigil and the Rite of Committal, a layperson presides.

In addition to those who preside at the funeral rites, laypersons may serve as readers, musicians, pallbearers and extraordinary ministers of holy Communion. Both ordained and lay people must exercise their ministries with reverence and great care, that they may truly bring consolation to the mourners.

"Family members should be encouraged to take an active part in these ministries, but they should not be asked to assume any role that their grief or sense of loss may make too burdensome."

## The role of the parish

The parish is a community of Christian believers, and it is an organization with resources made available in the ministry of consolation. Parish members, therefore, should see each funeral as a parish celebration, not a gathering of strangers. The parish and its members should assist the mourners in their need and in preparing the funeral rites. Priests, musicians or other pastoral ministers meet with the family to prepare the funeral rites and to offer prayer and comfort.

The parish always celebrates the liturgy with reverence and joy, filled with the spirit of Christian hope. Such liturgical celebrations are a model for the celebration of the funeral rites.

## Celebration of the liturgy: general principles

"A careful selection and use of readings from Scripture from the funeral rites will provide the family and the community with an opportunity to hear God speak to them in their needs, sorrows, fears, and hopes," says the OCF.

The readings are most often chosen from the lectionary. Non-biblical readings may not replace the biblical readings. Well-prepared readers and the deacon proclaim the readings. "The presiding minister proclaims the readings only when there are not assisting ministers present."

The psalms give poetic voice to suffering and pain, hope and trust. They are the words that Jesus Himself used in prayer during His life on earth. The psalms provided for the funeral rites are eloquent communal prayers when sung between the readings, during the processions, during the vigil for the deceased, etc. The beauty of their musical settings enhances the prayerfulness of the psalms. "Since the psalms are songs, whenever possible, they should be sung."

"A brief homily based on the readings is always given after the gospel reading at the funeral liturgy and may also be given after the readings at the vigil service, but there is never a eulogy," according to the OCF.

Music and singing help bind mourners together as they walk. "For processions, ministers of music should give preference to settings of psalms and songs that are responsorial or in a litany style and that allow the people to respond to the verses with an invariable refrain."

In texts chosen from the ritual to conform to the circumstances of death and the needs of the mourners, "the presiding minister addresses God on behalf of the deceased and the mourners in the name of the entire Church." Responding to the word of God proclaimed and preached, the assembly prays prayers of intercession at the vigil and the funeral liturgy for the deceased and all the dead, for the mourners and the needs of the whole world. Models for intercession in the rites may be adapted according to pastoral needs.

In songs chosen with a Christian understanding of death in mind, human hearts are given a voice. In some pastoral settings, there has been increasing confusion about the appropriate types of music for funerals. The tendency to secularize the rites must be countered by prayerful reflection when choosing music for all parish liturgies and by sensitive guidance in the preparation of the funeral rites with the mourners. There are three elements to consider in choosing music for a Christian funeral: They are the liturgical judgment, the musical judgement and the pastoral judgment.

"Prayerful silence is an element important to the celebration of the funeral rites. Intervals of silence should be observed, for example, after each reading, after Communion and during the final commendation and farewell, to permit the assembly to reflect upon the word of God and the meaning of the celebration."

## Symbols give concrete witness to faith

The Easter candle "...reminds the faithful of Christ's undying presence among them, of his victory over sin and death, and of their share in that victory by virtue of their initiation," according to the OCF.

Holy water "...reminds the assembly of the saving waters of baptism."

Incense ... is "a sign of honor to the body of the deceased...a sign of the community's prayers for the deceased rising to the throne of God and a sign of farewell."

Other symbols include the pall, which may be placed on the coffin as a sign of the baptismal garment and the equality of all Christians. A cross may be placed on the coffin as a reminder of Jesus' suffering and the victory of his resurrection. A Bible may be placed on the coffin as a reminder that the word of God is present to us throughout our lives. Fresh flowers may enhance the setting. But "only Christian symbols may rest on or be placed near the coffin during the funeral liturgy. Any other symbols, for example, national flags or flags or insignia of associations, have no place in the funeral liturgy."

The liturgical color is another symbol. For all funeral rites, vestments may be white, violet or black.

## Final commendation

During the final commendation, there will be an invitation to prayerful silence, followed by a song of farewell. This is the climax of the rite. It is a song for all, either a responsorial song led by the cantor or choir, or a hymn that allows the assembly to take its leave of the deceased. This is not the time for a solo.

## Procession to the place of committal

As the procession leaves the church, the choir or cantor may chant the traditional "In Paradisum" in English or Latin or both. The choir or cantor may sing another appropriate sacred song, or instrumental music may accompany the procession. A congregational hymn may be sung if mourners have provided a worship aid. This is not the time for a congregational hymn from the hymnal since all are in the procession. Secular music is forbidden at this time.

## Rite of Committal

As the procession approaches the grave, the cantor or choir may sing the "In Paradisum" or other appropriate song.

The song will be followed by an invitation Scripture verse, prayer over the place of committal, committal of the deceased, intercession, the Lord's Prayer, concluding prayer and a prayer over the people. Another song may conclude the rite.



Joshua Schipper

# The importance of the Catholic funeral Mass

BY KAREN CLIFFORD

Death is a subject most people don't usually wish to talk about. But communicating final wishes to loved ones is vital.

Msgr. Michael Heintz, vicar general Father Mark Gurtner, and Pat McGann, director of McGann Hay Funeral Home in South Bend and a St. Pius X, Granger, parishioner, offered their views on the importance of preparing for a Catholic funeral.

Father Gurtner and Msgr. Heintz pointed out that just as a will is important in expressing a person's desires after death, a written document specifying wishes for a funeral can be made by Catholics as well.

"I think people should definitely prepare a document with their funeral wishes," said Father Gurtner. "You don't know what the situation will be in the future and where your family members are going to be at in terms of the faith, so for family members to have something specifically spelled out for you is very important."

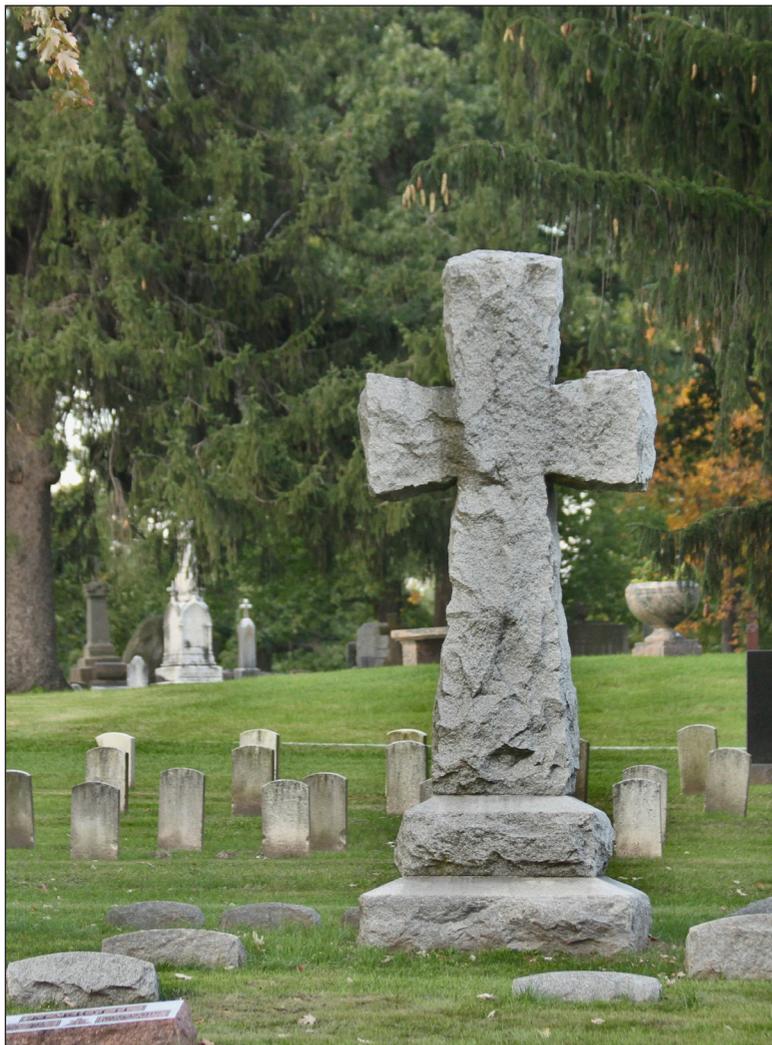
When children leave the Church, Father Gurtner pointed out, they often do not realize the importance of the funeral Mass. "What we see happening is people that are good faithful Catholics, who go to Mass every week, sometimes every day, are denied a funeral Mass because the children don't know their wishes."

Msgr. Heintz encouraged parishioners to plan their funeral rites and is happy to assist them. "This includes not only music and readings for the Mass, but also the vigil service at the funeral home and the committal service at the place of burial," he said.

Father Gurtner recommended having several copies of funeral arrangements in several places, such as filed with the will, in the church office and with family members.

When the death of a Catholic is near the priest should be notified. "If you know the death is coming soon, you should call the priest so they can hear their last confession, anoint the person and give Communion," said Father Gurtner.

"There is often a misunderstanding by some that a person will die and then the priest is called to give the last rites or



Joshua Schipper

anointing of the sick. The anointing of the sick can only be given to the living," he continued.

Both priests agree it is preferred that a funeral home should be contacted first following the death of a family member. "A funeral home director serves as a kind of intermediary and can assist the family with many of the decisions that need to be made about the particulars of which they are more competent to deal with," said Msgr. Heintz.

McGann spoke about the role of the funeral home in the Catholic Mass.

"Over the years, the funeral director's role has evolved and will continue to evolve as the Catholic Church adapts to societal changes. We guide and advise the family members regarding local customs in the arrangement conference at the funeral home or the family's home."

The music at a funeral Mass should be liturgically appropriate. Father Gurtner recognized that while some popular Christian music is liturgically

appropriate for a funeral Mass, some should be used only at the funeral home.

As for cremation, according to McGann, the bishop has asked funeral directors in this area to share with Catholic families that are thinking about cremation the order of the Church's preference in this area. They are:

- That the whole body be brought to church for the celebration of the Mass of Christian Burial; and that a vigil, rosary, wake or prayer service be held the day before at the funeral home with cremation later, followed by burial in a consecrated cemetery.
- If the whole body is not brought to church, the ashes and urn should be brought to church for the celebration of the Mass and burial following.
- A memorial Mass can be held for the deceased without the

body or the ashes and urn if the other two options are not possible or wanted.

Father Gurtner concluded, "The priest blesses the cremains and the Church says that they must be sealed, usually in an urn. They must be treated just like a casket. You can't keep it on your mantel. You can't spread it around. And they should either be buried or sealed in a mausoleum. That is the reverent way to treat the cremains."

## BURYING THE DEAD



Francie Hogan

*My soul is thirsting for you, O Lord my God.*

— Psalm 63

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# Guidelines for the funeral liturgy with cremated remains present

FORT WAYNE — The Church clearly prefers and urges that the body of the deceased be present for the funeral rites. The presence of the body forcefully reminds the faithful that they are temples of the Holy Spirit and destined for future glory at the resurrection of the dead. In addition, the body, which lies in death, recalls the personal story of faith, the past relationships and the continued spiritual presence of the deceased person. Thus, the presence of the body is important for the grieving process of family and friends.

Making the decision to cremate primarily on the basis of convenience is inappropriate in light of the Church's teaching. In extraordinary circumstances, the diocesan bishop may grant permission for the pastor or his delegate to celebrate the funeral liturgy in the presence of the cremated remains following the guidelines as outlined here.

It is recommended cremation take place after the funeral liturgy, which allows the full celebration of the funeral rites as found in the Order of Christian Funerals.

All funeral Masses are to be celebrated in the church, not the funeral home.

Appropriate music always must be a significant part of the funeral liturgy. Psalms, hymns and antiphons that express our sustained and insistent prayer commending the deceased person to God's merciful care should

be chosen so his or her place in the communion of the just may be assured.

## Respect for cremated remains of a body

According to the OCF, "The remains of cremated bodies receive the same respect given to the corporeal remains of a human body. This includes a worthy, sealed vessel to contain the ashes, the manner in which they are carried, the care and attention to appropriate placement and transport, and their final disposition."

Cremated remains are entombed in a mausoleum or columbarium; they may also be buried in a common grave in a cemetery. The practices of scattering cremated remains on the sea, from the air or on the ground, or keeping cremated remains in the home of a relative or friend of the deceased, are not the reverent disposition the Church requires.

## Part I: Cremation following the funeral liturgy

At the conclusion of the funeral liturgy, the rite of final commendation and farewell take place using the alternate form of the dismissal. The body is then taken to the place of cremation, where the rite of committal may

be celebrated. Then the cremation of the body takes place.

When the cremated remains are given to the family, they reverently are taken to a place of burial or entombment and the rite of committal may be repeated using the alternate form provided.

## Part II: Cremation and committal before the funeral liturgy

The "Prayers after Death" and the "Vigil for the Deceased" from the OCF may be adapted as necessary and appropriate and celebrated before the funeral liturgy.

When the interment of the cremated remains takes place before the celebration of the funeral Mass, the rite of committal and final commendation is celebrated at the time of interment (before the Mass). The alternate form is used for the words of committal.

Following the committal, the family and friends of the deceased join the Christian community for the funeral Mass. Prayers should be chosen that do not make reference to burying the body of the deceased since this already has been done. A number of options may be found in the Roman Missal under the heading "Masses for The Dead." The OCF also offers suggested opening prayers and Scripture reading. The rite of final com-

mendation is omitted since this already has taken place.

Following the prayer after communion, the blessing is given and the people are dismissed in the usual way. It is appropriate to conclude the funeral liturgy with a hymn, antiphon or psalm which expresses our belief that for those who have died, "life is changed, not ended. When the body of our earthly dwelling lies in death, we gain an everlasting dwelling place in heaven."

When the funeral liturgy is celebrated outside of Mass, the rite of final commendation is omitted since this already has taken place at interment.

## BURYING THE DEAD



Joshua Schipper

Following the Lord's Prayer, a blessing is given and people are dismissed in the usual way.

## Part III: Funeral Mass in the presence of cremated remains

Sometimes it is not possible for the body to be present for the funeral Mass. When extraordinary circumstances make the cremation of the body prior to the funeral liturgy the only feasible choice, pastoral sensitivity must be exercised by all who minister to the family of the deceased.

In extraordinary circumstances, the diocesan bishop may grant permission to a pastor or his delegate to celebrate the funeral liturgy in the presence of the cremated remains in the church. Two options exist in this situation: contact the Office of Worship for more information or visit [diocesefwsb.org/diocesan-guidelines-and-norms/](http://diocesefwsb.org/diocesan-guidelines-and-norms/).

*Promulgated by Bishop John M. D'Arcy for the Diocese of Fort Wayne-South Bend. Re-issued 2005*

***Though I walk in the valley of darkness, I fear no evil, for you are with me.***

— Psalm 23

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# BURYING THE DEAD

*The Lord is my light and my salvation;*

*whom should I fear?*

*The Lord is my life's refuge;*

*of whom should I be afraid?*

— Psalm 27

## Funeral planning and wills

FORT WAYNE — Indiana lawmakers established a way years ago to address common questions about funeral planning, wills, and how to legally document a person's preferences for their own funeral services. The passage of Indiana's Funeral Planning Declaration statutes remove some of the uncertainty, and perhaps some disagreements, regarding the funeral arrangement process.

The law, which went into effect July 1, 2009, provides a vehicle for any competent person 18 years of age or older to designate a family member, friend or other trusted individual as the person who is authorized to carry out funeral wishes specified in the declarant's Funeral Planning Declaration. The full text of the law, which includes a Funeral Planning Declaration form, can be viewed at [www.in.gov/legislative/ic/code/title29/ar2/ch19.html](http://www.in.gov/legislative/ic/code/title29/ar2/ch19.html).

A Funeral Planning Declaration could be invaluable as a means of assuring a declarant that his/her desired funeral ceremony and burial preferences will be carried out after the declarant's death. A Catholic's end of life worship preferences are no less important or meaningful than those undertaken during life.

The law provides that a Funeral Planning Declaration must be separate from a will, power of attorney or similar document. It is a standalone document and takes precedence over certain other documents concerning decision making on the disposition of the declarant's body after death; the disposition of the declarant's remains; the provision of funeral services for the declarant; religious ceremonies to be performed after the declarant's death; the casket, urn or other merchandise necessary for the disposition of the declarant's body after death; direction



Jennifer Barton

of funeral arrangements; and grave memorials. The declarant designates the individual who is authorized to carry out the declarant's preferences on such items, or who is entrusted to make those decisions on behalf of the declarant after the declarant's death if no preference is provided. Either way, the law presents a means to take guesswork out of who is authorized to direct the funeral planning process and gives a declarant some

level of assurance that their religious preferences will be honored after death. If the declarant has a change of heart after making a valid Funeral Planning Declaration, the document can be destroyed, rendering it invalid, and another can be executed.

A declarant's ability to have preferences that are designated in a Funeral Planning Declaration carried out as requested could be limited by such things as the declarant's

financial resources at the time of death or contractual agreements, such as a prepaid plan with a funeral home. Consult a priest to determine the suitability of liturgy preferences. Anyone who is interested in a Funeral Planning Declaration should coordinate it with their other estate plans and talk with a priest to avoid roadblocks to having their preferences carried out after their death.

As we continue to be challenged by COVID-19 and its variants, we honor the souls of our loved ones and of those who have perished during this pandemic.

Please join us for our annual *All Souls Day Mass*

Bishop Kevin Rhoades and Fr. Zach Barry, presiding

Tuesday, November 2, 12 noon

Catholic Cemetery

3500 Lake Avenue, Fort Wayne



260.426.2044 | 3500 Lake Avenue | [www.divinemercuryfuneralhome.com](http://www.divinemercuryfuneralhome.com)

*ava's grace*

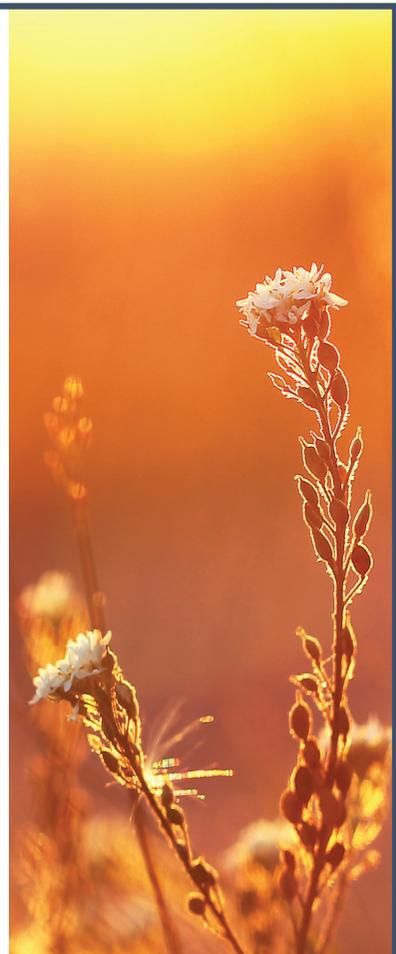
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# BURYING THE DEAD

## Catholic cemeteries in the Diocese of Fort Wayne-South Bend

The following cemeteries have been designated as sacred places by a Catholic bishop's blessing. If a Catholic is instead buried in a non-Catholic cemetery, the priest who leads the burial rite will include a prayer of blessing for the grave.

**Divine Mercy Funeral Home and Catholic Cemeteries**  
3500 Lake Ave., Fort Wayne, IN  
46805-5572  
www.divinemercyfuneralhome.org

**Arcola**  
St. Patrick Cemetery  
St. Patrick Parish  
260-625-4151

**Auburn**  
Immaculate Conception Cemetery  
Immaculate Conception Parish  
260-925-3930

**Avilla**  
St. Mary of the Assumption Cemetery  
St. Mary of the Assumption Parish  
260-897-3261

**Besancon**  
St. Louis Cemetery  
St. Louis Parish  
260-749-4525

**Columbia City**  
St. Paul of the Cross Cemetery  
St. Paul of the Cross Parish  
260-244-5723

**St. Catherine of Alexandria Cemetery**  
St. Catherine of Alexandria Parish  
260-672-2838

**Decatur**  
St. Joseph Cemetery  
St. Mary of the Assumption Parish  
260-724-9159

**Ege**  
Immaculate Conception Cemetery  
Immaculate Conception Parish  
260-693-9578

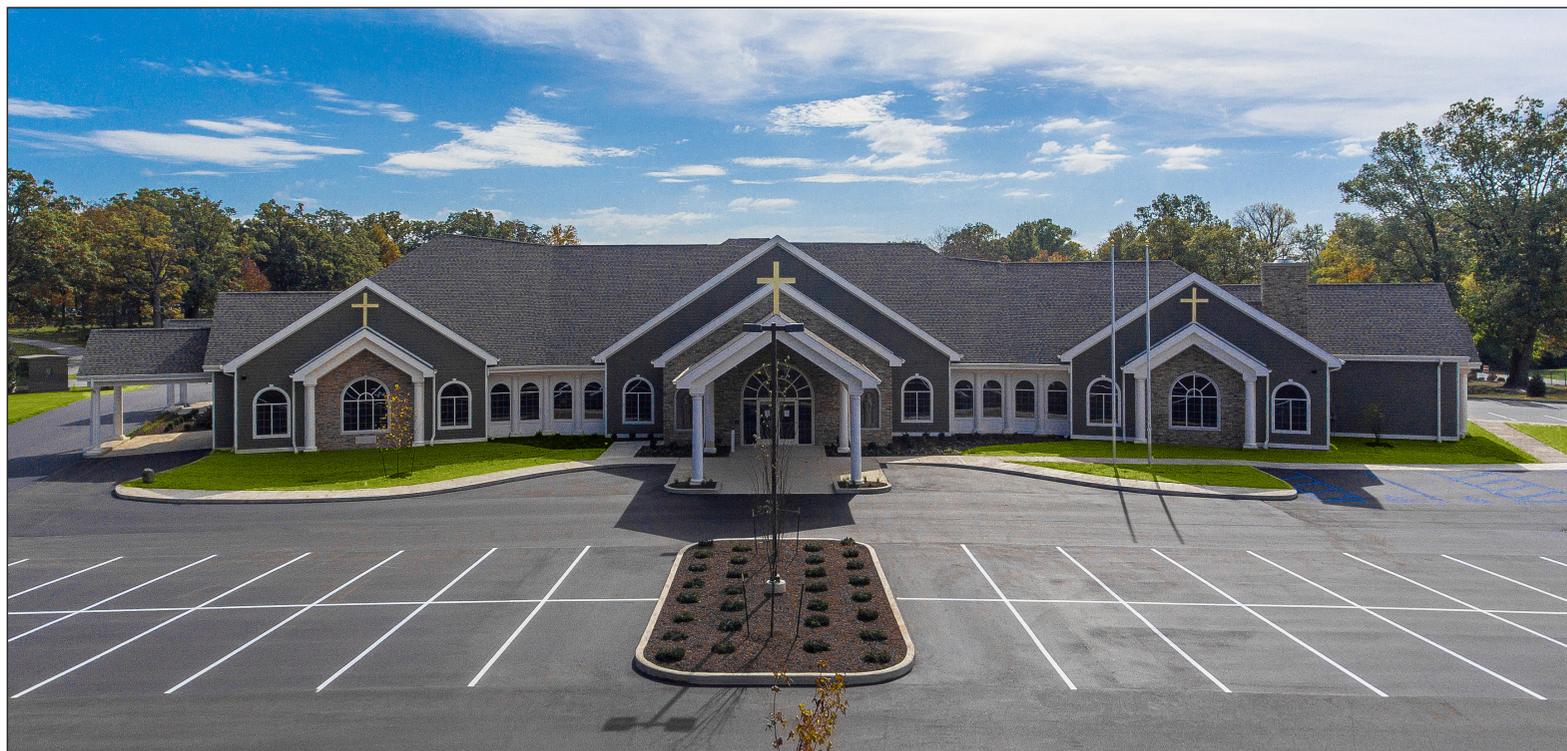
**Elkhart**  
St. Vincent de Paul Cemetery  
St. Vincent de Paul Parish  
574-293-8231

**Fort Wayne**  
St. Leo Cemetery  
260-426-2044

**St. Michael Cemetery**  
Pierre Settlement  
260-426-2044

**St. Vincent de Paul Cemetery**  
St. Vincent de Paul Parish  
260-489-3537

**Garrett**  
Calvary Cemetery  
St. Joseph Parish  
260-357-3122



## Diocesan funeral home a rare blessing

BY JENNIFER BARTON

For more than a hundred years, the Diocese of Fort Wayne-South Bend has maintained a Catholic, diocesan-operated cemetery; but until a few years ago, there has not been a funeral home with a coordinating mission. Divine Mercy Funeral Home officially opened its doors in 2017 and recently aided their 1,000<sup>th</sup> family with funeral preparations.

What is truly unique about Divine Mercy is its status as one of only five diocesan-operated funeral homes in the country, and the only one east of the Mississippi River.

"We're truly blessed to have Divine Mercy; it's a benefit to the Catholic community and the non-Catholic community," said Casey Miller, director. Building a Catholic funeral home had been on the minds of the board of directors for the Catholic Cemetery for several years before Miller joined the board.

Since the Catholic Church supports education for young people, hospitals for the ill and a nursing home for the elderly, Miller said it simply made sense to have a funeral home on the grounds of the diocesan cemetery.

He sees the mission of Divine Mercy as filling the corporal work of mercy to bury the dead. It does this not only for Catholics, but for anyone seeking to make funeral plans.

Many minds came together in making the funeral home a reality, though Miller pointed toward Bishop Kevin C. Rhoades as the driving force behind it. "I commend Bishop Rhoades because without his approval and his tenacity, if you will, in making Divine Mercy come to fruition, this never would have happened."

Through a contact in Indianapolis, Miller and board members were able to speak with other funeral center directors



Photos provided by Jason Mann

to discover both the good and challenging aspects of their diocesan funeral homes and to learn from them. That helped William Carr of Grinsfelder Associates Architects design the roughly 14,000 square foot building, keeping the Catholic mission forefront in the design.

Bishop Rhoades chose the names for the funeral home's two visitation rooms – St. Faustina Kowalska and St. John Paul II – and Father Daniel Scheidt, with help from Father Thomas Shoemaker and Father Mark Gurtner, chose Scripture passages for the walls. The mosaic image of the Divine Mercy was created by Christopher Botti, an Italian artist, and shipped in 1-foot by 1-foot squares to be reconstructed on the wall in the entranceway. It's the first thing most visitors see when they enter the building.

Catholic Cemetery was consecrated in 1873, though some of the graves date back even earlier because people who had been buried on the grounds of nearby Cathedral Square were moved when expansions of the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception required more space. Miller stated, "To make accommodations for the cathedral, this tract of land was purchased, and those bodies that were buried at

the cathedral were moved here, along with the tombstones. This, then formally established the Catholic cemetery."

The oldest part of the cemetery is the inner circle near the altar. The Resurrection Mausoleum, the cemetery's first chapel mausoleum, was completed in 1919 and is maintained in the same perfect condition as it was a hundred years ago.

Everything involved with funerals and burials is done at Divine Mercy. Record-keeping, administration and even cremation is all completed in one building. In line with Church teaching, there are two things that Divine Mercy does not do, however: scattering and/or separating the ashes of a deceased person, and creating keepsake jewelry out of the ashes.

According to the instruction "Ad resurgendum cum Christo," put forth by the Congregation for the Doctrine of Faith, cremation is acceptable for Catholics, but Christian burial is still required in those cases.

"In memory of the death, burial and resurrection of the Lord, the mystery that illumines the Christian meaning of death, burial is above all the most fitting way to express faith and hope in the resurrection of the body."

It continues: "In order that every appearance of pantheism, naturalism or nihilism be avoided, it is not permitted to scatter the ashes of the faithful departed in the air, on land, at sea or in some other way, nor may they be preserved in mementos, pieces of jewelry or other objects."

Instead, Miller explained, "What we believe is appropriate is shortly thereafter the cremation process, the cremated body — the whole body — be interred in a Catholic cemetery."

He went on to clarify that the funeral home is more than willing to work with any other Catholic cemetery, often ones operated by individual parishes, to ensure that a person's ashes are properly interred after cremation.

Divine Mercy and the Catholic Cemetery continue to move forward on new projects, creating a singular blend of new and old behind the cemetery's gates. "We have something very exciting that is in the works right now and we hope to have it completed by the summer of next year," Miller shared. "It is called the All Saints Columbarium."

The new columbarium will have an upper level with glass-fronted columbaria niches and the lower level will be a catacomb structure similar to St. Peter's Basilica in Rome. Stained glass windows will feature saints chosen by Bishop Rhoades and the floor will be made of marble.

Miller proudly described it as "very unique; there's nothing like it in the Fort Wayne or northern Indiana area."

Since it is owned by the diocese, Divine Mercy is a nonprofit organization. Miller takes great pride in the artwork displaying the home's Catholicity and his staff's welcoming and pleasant attitude to all who enter. As one of the few diocesan funeral homes in the country, Divine Mercy will continue its mission to provide personal and reverent burials for years to come.

# Frequently asked questions about Catholic Christian funerals in the Diocese of Fort Wayne-South Bend



## May Catholics be cremated?

Yes, as long as Catholic beliefs in the resurrection of the body are respected. Cremation should take place after the funeral liturgy.

## May we celebrate a funeral Mass in the presence of cremated remains?

The Church prefers that the funeral liturgy be celebrated in the presence of the body, which we reverence as God's good creation. However, for a serious reason, it is possible to celebrate the funeral liturgy in the presence of cremated remains. In this case, the urn containing the cremated remains may be placed on a table or stand where the body would normally be during the liturgy, but the urn is not incensed. This is only done to reverence the body, which is not present. The cremated remains must be buried or entombed.

## May we celebrate a Christian funeral for an unbaptized infant?

Yes, if the parents intended to baptize the child. The appropriate rites and texts are used from the Order of Christian Funerals.

## May we celebrate a Christian funeral for a stillborn infant?

Yes, the consolation of the funeral rites is offered for the parents of stillborn or miscarried infants. The appropriate rites and texts are used from the Order of Christian Funerals.

## May we celebrate a Christian funeral for a nonpracticing or lapsed Catholic?

Yes, if it can be determined that this would not be contrary to the wishes of the deceased.

## May we celebrate a Christian funeral for a baptized person who is not a Roman Catholic?

Yes, if the minister of the deceased is not available, a spouse or family member has requested the funeral, and it would not have been contrary to the will of the deceased. If a funeral Mass is celebrated, the name of the deceased is not mentioned in the Eucharistic Prayer, when only those in full communion with the Catholic Church are mentioned. In case of doubt, contact the chancellor of the diocese.

## May we celebrate a Christian funeral for a catechumen?

Yes, catechumens are entitled to the rites of Christian burial since they are members of the household of the Church.

## May we celebrate a Christian funeral for an unbaptized person who is not a catechumen?

No. The Christian burial rites are for the baptized, catechumens and unbaptized infants only. It may be pastorally sound to participate in a funeral service of the Word and prayer for an unbaptized person, but the Christian rites may not be celebrated.

## May we celebrate a Christian funeral for a person who has committed suicide?

Yes. We may not judge the state of mind or the condition of the soul of the deceased, whom we commend to God's mercy.

## Where may a Christian funeral be celebrated?

The vigil is normally celebrated in a funeral home, though under special circumstances it may be celebrated in the home of the deceased or in the parish church.

The funeral liturgy is celebrated in the parish church of the deceased.

When this is not possible, another church or chapel may be used if approved by the pastors involved and the diocese. In case of doubt, check with the chancellor's office. The funeral liturgy is not to take place in the home of the deceased, in a funeral home, or a cemetery chapel.

Though many people are lax about registering in a parish and participating in parish life, the parish is the basic unit of faith life. The parish church is the public place in which the Catholic community — the Body of Christ — professes its corporate faith. Grief is difficult, and some may prefer to grieve in private, but funeral liturgies are public, celebrated in the midst of a community gathered to bolster the faith and hope of the mourners.

The committal normally takes place at the grave site.

## May the coffin be draped with the American flag?

If a national flag or other flag is on the coffin, it should be removed before entry into the church. As a community of faith, what we celebrate is beyond any national or organizational boundaries. Only the pall, a sign that the baptized person has put on Christ, may be used in the church.

## When will the eulogy be given?

A eulogy is a text praising the deceased. There is no eulogy during the Catholic funeral rites. During the vigil and the funeral liturgy, a homily based on the Scriptures is preached and words of comfort are shared. Brief words of remembrance may be shared by family members or friends of the deceased, according to diocesan guidelines. The most appropriate time for such words is after the celebration of the vigil or at the funeral dinner.

## When is the rosary prayed for the deceased?

The rosary is a prayer which offers consolation to the family

of the deceased. This prayer may be prayed at any time during the visitation at the funeral home or at the church. The rosary should not take the place of the vigil. However, it may be prayed as part of the vigil or after the vigil.

## Who will lead the music for the funeral liturgy?

A parish cantor and parish instrumentalist(s) support the singing of the congregation. Guest musicians may be welcome to take part, but this must be verified with the parish musicians. When guest musicians participate, they do not take the place of parish musicians, but join them in the musical ministry. Many parishes have funeral choirs that support the singing of the congregation.

## When may favorite songs be sung?

Hymns and liturgical songs consonant with diocesan guidelines may be used during the funeral liturgy. Sacred songs that are not connected with the liturgy, e.g., "Ave Maria," "Panis Angelicus," and favorite songs of Mary or the saints, may be sung or played as part of the prelude before the funeral Mass or after the vigil at the funeral home. Secular songs may not be performed in the church but may be performed at the funeral home after the vigil, or at another time, or at the funeral dinner.

## Where can I find resources for celebrating Christian funerals?

The most important resource is the ritual book, Order of Christian Funerals, prepared by the International Commission on English in the Liturgy and approved by the USCCB in 1989. The Order of Christian Funerals is also available in a study edition. Both can be purchased through the Good Shepherd Books and Gifts. The bookstore will also be able to assist in locating other funeral resources.

*Source: Office of Worship*

For more information visit [www.diocesefwsb.org/worship](http://www.diocesefwsb.org/worship).

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574-533-3385

**Hessen Cassel**  
St. Joseph Cemetery  
St. Joseph Parish  
260-639-3748

**Huntington**  
Mount Calvary Cemetery  
St. Mary Parish  
260-356-4398

**SS. Peter and Paul Parish**  
260-356-4798

**Lagro**  
St. Patrick Cemetery  
St. Bernard Parish, Wabash  
260-563-4750

**Lakeville**  
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Sacred Heart of Jesus Parish  
574-291-2826

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St. Joseph Parish  
574-255-6134

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St. Rose of Lima Cemetery  
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**New Haven**  
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St. Gaspar del Bufalo Parish  
260-854-3100

**South Bend**  
Sacred Heart Cemetery  
Our Lady of Hungary Parish  
574-287-1700

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St. Michael the Archangel Cemetery  
St. Michael the Archangel Parish  
260-837-7115

**Yoder**  
St. Aloysius Cemetery  
St. Aloysius Parish  
260-622-4491

# Prayers for the dead help the living, too, pope says

BY CINDY WOODEN

VATICAN CITY (CNS) — Praying for the dead and asking God to welcome them into his presence forever helps Christians remember what life and death are really about, Pope Francis said.

Such prayers “instill in us a true vision of life; they reveal to us the meaning of the trials we must endure to enter the kingdom of God; they open our hearts to true freedom and inspire us unceasingly to seek eternal riches,” the pope said last year on Nov. 5, during a memorial Mass.

The annual Mass at the Altar of the Chair in St. Peter's Basilica offered prayers for the six cardinals and 163 bishops who had died over the past year, including 16 bishops from the United States and three from Canada.

Cardinal Giovanni Battista Re, dean of the College of Cardinals, and Cardinal Francis Arinze, a retired Vatican official, were the principal concelebrants.

One of the prayer intentions during the liturgy asked God to “welcome into your loving embrace the cardinals and bishops who died this year and give them the reward reserved for your faithful servants.”

In his homily, Pope Francis focused on Jesus' promise: “I am the resurrection and the life; whoever believes in me, even if he dies, will live, and everyone who lives and believes in me will never die.”

Jesus' promise is a challenge to believers, the pope said. “We,



Jennifer Barton

too, are called to believe in the resurrection, not as a kind of distant mirage but as an event already present and even now mysteriously at work in our lives.”

However, he said, like Jesus, who cried at the tomb of his friend Lazarus, “our faith in the resurrection neither ignores nor masks the very human bewilderment we feel in the face of death.”

“As we pray for the cardinals and bishops deceased in the course of this last year,” the

pope said, Christians should ask the Lord “to dispel that unholy grief which we occasionally feel, thinking that death is the end of everything — a feeling far from faith, yet part of that human fear of death felt by everyone.”

Faced with “the riddle of death,” with its end of earth life and beginning of eternal life, Christians are called to conversion, he said.

“We are called daily to leave behind our instinctive image of death as the total destruction of a person,” Pope Francis said.

“We are called to leave behind the visible world we take for granted, our usual, commonplace ways of thinking, and to entrust ourselves entirely to the Lord who tells us: ‘I am the resurrection and the life.’”

When Christians believe that, he said, their prayers for the deceased are “truly Christian” prayers.

Such prayers “enable us to have a truly realistic vision of the lives they lived, to understand the meaning and the value of the good they accomplished, their strength, their commitment and their generous and unselfish love,” he said. And they also help people “understand the meaning of a life that aspires not to an earthly homeland, but to a better, heavenly homeland.”

## BURYING THE DEAD

**Relieve the troubles of my heart;**

**and bring me out of my distress.**

**Put an end to my affliction and my suffering;**

**and take away all my sins.**

**To you, O Lord, I lift my soul.**

— Psalm 25

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