



Diocese
of
Cleveland

Cathedral Square

OFFICE FOR PASTORAL LITURGY

On Words of Remembrance at the Funeral Liturgy

Diocese of Cleveland
Policy from the Office for Pastoral Liturgy
Approved by the Most Reverend Anthony M. Pilla, D.D.
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Confident in Jesus' presence among them in the living word, the living sacrifice, the living meal, those present in union with the whole Church offer prayers and petitions for the deceased, whom they entrust to God's merciful love.

Order of Christian Funerals, 154.

Human words seem inadequate at the time of death. And yet, words must be spoken—words of comfort and consolation, compassion and hope. Some gathered come seeking answers to the agonizing questions about the mystery of death. Others search for words to fill the enormous void in their lives caused by the loss of a loved one. Ultimately, all the faithful assembled come seeking a "word from the Lord."

It is the ministry of the homilist to speak this Word:

Attentive to the grief of those present, the homilist should dwell on God's compassionate love and on the paschal mystery of the Lord, as proclaimed in the Scripture readings. The homilist should also help the members of the assembly to understand the mystery of God's love and the mystery of Jesus' victorious death and resurrection were present in the life and death of the deceased and that these mysteries are active in their own lives as well. Through the homily, members of the family and community should receive consolation and strength to face the death of one of their members with a hope nourished by the saving word of God (OCF, 27).

In short, the deceased person's death points beyond the now to the hope of everlasting life that the paschal mystery proclaims. To avoid this is to avoid the message that makes the Christian funeral unique.

Other words are needed. Concrete reminiscences, personal stories within the context of faith do much to bring about healing and consolation. Such expressions help to bring the gathered faithful a more complete knowledge of the one who has died. *The Vigil (Wake)*, with its more intimate and solemn setting, is the most appropriate place for family members and friends to engage in this sharing of consoling memories (OCF, 52, 64, 80).

Words of remembrance, by a family member or a friend at the discretion of the presiding minister, may also be included in the Funeral Liturgy. Because of the more formal and solemn nature of this liturgy, its integral connection to the homily, and its placement *before the Final Commendation*, the family member or friend should submit a *brief remembrance* (one type-written or two hand-written page[s]) to the presiding minister in advance of the liturgy. Such a remembrance will do much to assist the presiding minister in making particular the praise and gratitude to God for his gifts, especially the gift of Christian life, to the one who has died (OCF, 5).

The Lord's Word as well as these words of remembrance in the face of death can only be a reassuring message of hope in the resurrection of Jesus Christ who brings comfort and life to us all.