



OUR LADY'S IMMACULATE HEART Funeral Planning Questions

Q: When should a priest be called for anointing/last rites?

A: Most of us usually think of asking for this anointing only when we are nearing death through sickness or old age. However, if this is the case, we would be missing out on the opportunity for God to heal and help us at times when we might need Him the most - when we are having surgery, dealing with a physical, mental, emotional, or even spiritual affliction. It is during these difficult times that we need the Holy Spirit's gifts of strength, faith, peace, and courage. It is during these times, as well, that we should seek to receive this God-given sacrament.

Last Rites (Final Prayers of the Church) often happens in conjunction with or following after the administration of the Sacrament of Anointing of the Sick. Last Rites/Viaticum centers around the reception of Holy Communion and Anointing of the Sick when death is near. Viaticum may also be accompanied by an apostolic blessing that gives a plenary indulgence to the dying person.

Q: Who should I call when my loved ones dies?

A: If your loved one is in the hospital, hospice or at home hospice the medical staff will pronounce the death. The funeral home will need to be called to pick up the deceased. You can call a priest/deacon if you would like one to be with the family. You have a few hours to say your goodbyes before the funeral home will stop by.

Q: What happens if the death occurred away from home (vacation/snowbird)?

A: Contact your "home" funeral home. They will contact a local funeral home near the place of death and arrange for preparation and transportation of the remains back to your "home" funeral home or help arrange for funeral services prior to having the family member returned to your home area.

Q: Does the church allow for the deceased to be cremated?

A: The church does allow the deceased to be cremated as long as it is done with respect to the human body. The church prefers that the body of the deceased be present for the funeral rites. When the choice has been made to cremate a body, it is recommended, but not required, that the cremation take place after the funeral.

The cremains should be treated with the same respect given to the human body. The use of a worthy vessel to contain the cremains, the manner in which they are carried, and the final disposition should all be kept sacred and dignified. The cremated remains should be buried in a grave or entombed. The practice of scattering cremains is not the reverent disposition the Church requires.

Q: Does the Church allow the deceased to donate organs or donate the remains to science?

A: Yes, the Church allows this and for medical reasons the donation will take place within 24 hours of death. Even for someone who has donated organs it is still possible to have a funeral with an open casket.

Q: When will the funeral take place?

A: Usually a funeral is planned for 3-7 days after death. Within 72 hours of death, the body will need to be either embalmed, cremated or buried.

Q: What information will I need to tell the funeral home/church?

A: After your loved one has passed away, you will need to contact the funeral home and priest. They will set up a time to meet and discuss with you: what type of funeral (Mass or Memorial Service), the place, time and date of funeral, readings and music to be used and other planning details. (See Funeral Information Form and Planning Sheet.)

Q: Can someone who is NOT Catholic, participate in the Funeral Mass?

A: Yes, a non-Catholic can assist as a pall bearer, cross bearer, or reader/lector.

Q: Can we have our loved one's favorite secular song at the funeral?

A: Many families have a special song that reminds them of their loved one, and so this is encouraged at the Vigil/Wake Service or at the graveside. Liturgical music is reserved for the Funeral Mass.

Q: Can we pray the Rosary?

A: The deceased individual and/or family might have a strong devotion to the Blessed Mother. The family can gather to pray the Rosary approximately 30 minutes prior to the Visitation. This is an appropriate way to gather the family in prayer prior to receiving friends paying their respect. If the deceased was a member of the Catholic Daughters or Knights of Columbus, these groups will normally send a representative(s) to lead this devotion.