

The Liturgy of Christian Funeral

The end of our earthly pilgrimage and return to God, our Creator, is a part of our life and vocation. Death in the family is always a time of sadness and mourning. It is also a time to renew the faith and vocations to the Resurrection. The Church, the community of believers, shares in the suffering of the grieving family showing compassion, mutual help and prayer. Jesus, loving mankind, had compassion and wept at the grave of his friend Lazarus.

The Parish of St. Margaret Mary in Hamilton wants to convey, in the form of this letter, practical guidelines to meet the expectations of the family when it comes to the funeral liturgy. During the funeral arrangements and planning, please do not hesitate to speak with the Pastor for any help. The Pastor along with the parish team want to help and serve the family with great dedication.

Funeral Home

Please inform the priest of a death and make an appointment with him to meet as soon as possible: to set the day and time of the funeral, the day and hour of vigil prayers at the funeral home (this can be a Rosary, Liturgy of the Word of God – Wake Service, or both), prepare the Liturgy of the Word (readings and petitions), choose the hymns, choose the people who will place the pall (white cloth) on the coffin in the vestibule and bring gifts in the procession, rent a hall for refreshments, etc.



The day before the funeral, the priest or pastoral team go to the funeral home for the Vigil Service or to recite the Rosary. This usually starts at 7:00 or 8:00 PM. The exception is Sunday, when the Service will start at 3:00 PM. This practice allows more faithful to participate in common prayer on the Lord's Day. Evening time, especially in autumn and winter time, makes it more difficult for the elderly to drive.



The Funeral Liturgy at St. Margaret Mary

For the St. Margaret Mary faith community it is very important that the funeral Mass is celebrated at the church. Unfortunately, more and more families decide to only have the funeral service at the funeral home. However, it is the Eucharist that is the most beautiful gift given to us for the salvation of the deceased. As the Bible says: *It is therefore a holy and wholesome thought to pray for the dead that they may be loosed from their sins* (2 Mc 12:46).

The Parish recommends that the funeral Mass be celebrated in our church at 10:00 AM. There are cases when we perform two funerals on the same day. By celebrating the funeral at an earlier time, we make it possible to have another funeral in the afternoon.

The funeral ceremony starts in the vestibule of the church. Immediate family members (there may be several) cover the coffin with the pall, a white cloth. This ritual refers to the Sacrament of Baptism, during which the child receives the white robe as a sign of an unstained soul. This white robe symbolizes the unstained soul returning to our Heavenly Father after the end of his/her earthly pilgrimage.

During the Eucharistic celebration of the Liturgy of the Word, family members or friends can read two readings—one from the Old Testament and one from the New Testament—and the prayers of the faithful. It is advisable that three different people proclaim the readings. If there is difficulty finding designated readers, then one person can do all of them. A parish representative may help out if necessary. The readings are not usually led by the immediate family due to the emotional state they may be in.

After the sermon and petitions, the immediate family brings the gifts up to the sanctuary during the offertory hymn. Upon entering the church, on the left side, there is a small table which holds the gifts: water, wine and a ciborium (cup) with the hosts.

Members of our Catholic community who wish to receive Holy Communion and are in the state of grace—that is, without mortal sin—are invited to come forward to the altar. Others, crossing their arms on their chest, may ask the Eucharistic Ministers for a blessing. The Sacrament of Penance is offered prior to each weekday or Sunday Mass in our church.

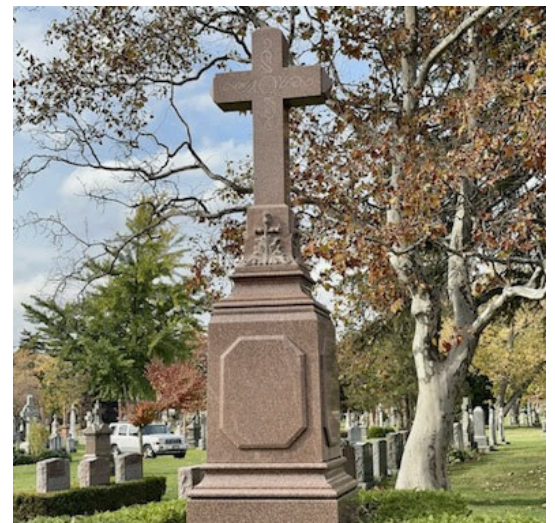


Some Christian communities include a eulogy in the Funeral Liturgy. The Bishop of the Diocese of Hamilton forbids this form of saying goodbye during the Funeral Masses. Nevertheless, a eulogy can be delivered after the Liturgy of the Word at the funeral home, at the cemetery or at the reception hall.

The Vatican has published an instruction regarding the burial of bodies of the deceased as well as the keeping of the cremated remains. The Holy See reminds that the Church prefers the burial of bodies of deceased, but that the Church does not forbid cremations. The Vatican forbids the scattering of cremated remains in the water, air or soil, keeping them at home or keeping them as mementos. They are supposed to be buried in a short time after death. In the document, we read that the Church strongly encourages that the bodies of the deceased be buried at the cemetery or at a sacred place [columbarium], as this assists with the memory and prayer for the dead. Such practice also allows the living to make visits and pilgrimages to the places of the eternal rest of the dead. The cremation of the deceased is not in opposition to the Church teachings, though it is not the preferred option.

When the priest meets with the family to discuss the Funeral Liturgy, the family often brings up questions about the flowers being brought to the church from the funeral home for the Mass. Yes, flowers can be brought; however, it is suggested that some of them remain in the sanctuary to continue to adorn the altar in memory of the deceased person. During the visitation, the family can point out to the funeral staff which flowers can be delivered to the church. Those in pots or vases are best suited to stay in the church.

There is an opportunity to rent the parish hall for the reception. The family makes an arrangement with a caterer to provide the food, and ladies of the Catholic Women's League (CWL) set out and serve the food. The free donation for the Hearth Room covers the operating costs (hydro, gas, water and cleaning). The payment can be made in cash or by cheque (payable to St. Margaret Mary Parish) at the parish office before the funeral date.



The Diocese of Hamilton – Grief Relief

Has someone you cared about died? Are you grieving the loss of the person's presence in your life? Are you looking for relief from the feelings associated with the loss of this loved one? Are you wondering if your feelings are normal? The Diocese of Hamilton offers a special bereavement support program: Grief Relief. This program can be accessed by Zoom or in-person at the Chancery Office at 700 King St. West. To register, go to hamiltondiocese.com and look for the start date under Upcoming Events.

Parish Ministry

The name of the deceased person is added to the petitions during Mass on the Lord's Day and condolences are published in the parish bulletin.

The Parish office accepts the Mass intentions for the deceased. The date and time of the intention Mass is published in the parish bulletin and on the church website: stmargaretmaryparish.ca. Also, in the month November there is an Annual Memorial Mass celebrated for deceased parishioners who passed away over the last year. The names of the deceased are read at this Mass. After the Mass there is a reception in the Hearth Room.

Please consider St. Margaret Mary Church as you prepare or update your estate and financial plan. A modest gift by the way of bequest or insurance can make a substantial difference to the future of our Parish. We can all ensure that our church will be in a stable and secure position for future generations.

The Parish kindly asks the family of the deceased to consider requesting donations to St. Margaret Mary Parish in the obituary notice.

*O God, who willed that your
Only Begotten Son, having conquered death,
should pass over into the realm of heaven,
grant, we pray, to your departed servants
that, with the mortality of this life overcome,
they may gaze eternally on You,
their Creator and Redeemer.
Through Christ our Lord.
Amen.*

*Eternal rest grant unto them, O Lord.
And let perpetual light shine upon them.
May they rest in peace.
Amen.*

*May their souls and the souls of all the
faithful departed, through the mercy of God,
rest in peace.
Amen.*

Fr. Adam Wroblewicz, C.R.



ST. MARGARET MARY
Roman Catholic Church