(Rites from Pastoral Care of the Sick)

Prayers After Death

Gathering in the Presence of the Body

Vigil for the Deceased

Vigil for the Deceased with Reception at the Church

Transfer of the Body to the Church or Place of Committal

Reception as part of the Funeral Liturgy

Funeral Liturgy (Mass or Outside Mass)

With Final Commendation

W/O Final Commendation (or if no funeral liturgy)

Rite of Committal

Rite of Committal with Final Commendation

THREE TASKS
1. intercede for the dead
2. minister to the sorrowing (or, for the bereaved, to move through “crisis grief” and begin the “work of mourning”)
3. offer worship, praise, and thanksgiving to God for the one deceased

Key Concepts
The body is the “sacrament” of the person, and therefore is to be respected.

The liturgical rites must be seen in the context of global pastoral care for the dying and bereaved.

Movement is an important part of the OCF. The processions “sacramentalize” both the journey through life and the journey through grief. Likewise, the emphasis in the OCF shifts from shock and grief to thanksgiving and intercession to final farewell and hope.
The Vigil

The ministry of the Church in the time after death is to accompany mourners in their bewilderment, shock, and grief. The Vigil and related rites are intended to help “Mourners express their sorrow and to find strength and consolation” in the paschal mystery of Christ (OCF §52). The importance of the Christian community’s support to mourners is stressed, as is the central importance of the word of God as source of consolation (OCF §§51, 56, 59-60; see also Rutherford and Barr, 163, 167).

Structure

Introductory Rites
  Greeting
  Opening Song
  Invitation to Prayer
  Opening Prayer (for the deceased or for the bereaved)

Liturgy of the Word
  First Reading
  Responsorial Psalm
  Gospel
  Homily

Prayer of Intercession
  Litany
  Lord’s Prayer
  Concluding Prayer (for the deceased or for the bereaved)

[Speaking in remembrance of the deceased]

Concluding Rite
  Blessing
  (note: no dismissal)

The First Procession: from (funeral) home to church

There are two key processions in the normative structure of the OCF: the first from the (funeral) home to the church, and the second from the church to the place of burial. The OCF notes that “[t]he procession to the church is a rite of initial separation from the deceased; the procession to the place of committal is the journey to the place of final separation of the mourners from the deceased: (OCF §120). As such, these transitional times may be very difficult for mourners. Therefore, the mourners are to be supported through these transitions by the pastoral presence of the church’s ministers as well as by prayer and song (OCF §§120, 149).
The Order of Christian Funerals

The Funeral Liturgy & Rite of Final Commendation

While the Funeral Liturgy (within and outside of Mass) still remains attentive to the mourners, these rites focus primarily on giving “praise and thanks to God for Christ’s victory over sin and death” and on commending “the deceased to God’s tender mercy and compassion” (OCF §129). This latter aspect is especially evident in the Final Commendation, which may be celebrated either as part of the Funeral Liturgy or, if necessary, with the Rite of Committal (OCF §146).

Structure

Introductory Rites (Reception of the Body)
  Greeting (note: no sign of the cross)
  Sprinkling with Holy Water
  [Placing of Pall] (no national flags or insignia of organizations)
  Entrance Procession (and song)
  [Placing of Christian Symbols] (no national flags or insignia of organizations)
  Opening Prayer (for the deceased)

Liturgy of the Word
  First Reading / Psalm / (Second Reading) / Gospel
  Homily
  Prayer of the Faithful

[Liturgy of the Eucharist]

[Speaking in remembrance of the deceased]

Final Commendation
  Invitation to Prayer
  Silence
  [Signs of Farewell – such as incense]
  Song of Farewell
  Prayer of Commendation

Procession to the Place of Committal
  No dismissal (but invitation to “take our brother/sister to his/her place of rest”)
  Psalmody

The Second Procession: from church to cemetery
**The Order of Christian Funerals**

The Rite of Committal

The emphasis in the Rite of Committal is on hope in the face of the stark and final reality of death (OCF §§206, 209; Rutherford and Barr, 201). This rite makes the faith professed in the Rite of Commendation concrete and “bonds the Church on earth with the Church in heaven” as farewell and welcome are simultaneously celebrated; grief and joy coexist and both are acknowledged (Rutherford and Barr, 200, 203-4).

**Structure**

- Invitation (note: no sign of the cross)
- Scripture verse
- Prayer over the place of committal
- Committal (note: it is intended that the body be placed in the ground as part of the rite, either here or at the end)
- Intercessions
- Lord’s Prayer
- Concluding Prayer
- Prayer over the People
- Blessing and Dismissal

**Cremation**

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