

# Order of Christian Funerals Intergenerational Program “The Funeral Liturgy in Word, Symbols, and Ritual”

## Learning Objectives

The Order of Christian Funerals guides learners of all ages to...

- develop a deeper understanding of the theology, symbols, and rituals of the funeral liturgy (*know-what*)
- recognize the importance of the paschal mystery in the funeral liturgy and the Catholic life (*know-why*)
- utilize their understanding to participate more meaningfully in the parish’s celebration of the funeral liturgy.

## Catechism Connection

1680-1690

## Background Readings

*Catechism of the Catholic Church*. Washington, DC: USCC Publishing, 1997.

*Order of Christian Funerals*. Congregation for Divine Worship, 1969. United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 1989.

Aridas, Chris. *The Catholic Funeral – The Church’s Ministry of Hope*. New York: Crossroad Publishing, 1998.

Champlin, Joseph. *Through Death to Life – Preparing to Celebrate the Funeral Mass*. Notre Dame, IN: Ave Maria Press, 1990.

Hughes, Kathleen. *Saying Amen – A Mystagogy of Sacrament*. Chicago: Liturgy Training Publications, 1999.

Richstatter, Thomas. *Sacraments – How Catholics Pray*. Cincinnati: St. Anthony Messenger Press, 1995.

## Potential Uses

- Preparation program before the celebration of Feast of All Saints or the Feast of All Souls
- Preparation program before the celebration of a remembrance of the dead
- Preparation program connected to Sunday Lectionary readings, such as the raising of Lazarus (John 11:1-45, Fifth Sunday of Lent, Cycle A)

## Participant Preparation before the Session

Each household (family or individuals) needs to bring reminders of the life of one or two deceased loved ones to this learning program (grandparent, great grandparent, parent, sibling, close friend, et al). Ask people to bring a photo and one or two significant reminders of the life of each person, e.g., objects symbolizing their family life, objects symbolizing the work they did or the hobbies they loved or their accomplishments in life, and objects symbolizing their religious life (e.g., rosary, pray card, Bible, crucifix). Remind people to put their photos and valuables in an envelope or plastic bag that seals so that they protect the contents.

Announce this assignment at earlier programs and through letters, postcards, bulletin insert, etc.

# Session Resources

## Before the Session

### Environment

Set up the large meeting space (or church) as if you were celebrating a funeral liturgy with all the symbols visible. Create a prayer/symbol center with a large box representing the casket, the pall, incense, a large bowl of water (or if you are in the church, the baptismal font), a large crucifix, paschal (Easter) candle, incense, Book of the Gospels or the Bible and *Order of Christian Funerals*.

## Materials for the Session

### Gathering

- Name tags
- Community building activities

### All Ages Opening Learning Experience

- Opening Prayer Service Handout
- Bible

### In-Depth Learning Experience

#### Supplies

- Casket (large box or similar container to resemble a casket)
- Pall
- Water for sprinkling: baptismal font, large bowl of water, or small bowls of water for table groups
- Easter candle
- Large cross or crucifix
- Bible or Book of the Gospels
- Incense
- Piece of cloth (for remembrance cloth) and markers
- File cards

#### Set-Up

- Several tables for memorial display
- Prayer space with the symbols of the funeral liturgy

#### Handouts

- *Celebrating the Funeral Liturgy: Rite, Prayers, and Symbols*
- *Scripture Readings for the Funeral Liturgy*
- *We Pray for Those Who Have Died*
- *My Headstone*

## Books

- New Testaments: one for each family / one for each table group

## Music

- Live music or CDs with recommended hymns and/or instrumental music
- Weave music throughout the session plan. Here are several suggestions of songs commonly used at funeral liturgies:
  - “Amazing Grace” (Traditional)
  - “We Have Been Told” by David Haas (GIA)
  - “I Know That My Redeemer Lives” by David Haas (GIA)
  - “Shepherd Me, O God” by Marty Haugen (GIA)
  - “I Am the Bread of Life” by Suzanne Toolan (GIA)
  - “On Eagle’s Wings” by Michael Joncas (New Dawn)
- For other song selections, consult:
  - Singing Our Faith – A Hymnal for Young Catholics* (Chicago: GIA Publications, 2001) [Hymnal, Leader’s/Catechist’s Manual, 11 CD set]
  - Walking by Faith – Music and Ritual Prayer for Children*. David Haas and Robert W. Piercy. (Chicago, GIA Publications, 1997.) [CD]
  - Spirit and Song – A Seeker’s Guide for Liturgy and Prayer*. (Portland: OCP Publications, 1999.) [Hymnal and 10 CD set]
  - Gather – Comprehensive*. (Chicago: GIA, 1994)

## Drama Resources

- Glavich, Mary Kathleen. *Acting Out the Miracles and Parables*. Mystic, CT: Twenty-Third Publications, 1988.
- Rousell, Sheila O’Connell and Terri Vorndran Nichols. *Lectionary-Based Gospel Dramas for Lent and the Easter Triduum*. Winona, MN: St. Mary’s Press, 1999.

## Background Materials for Teacher Presentations

- Rite of Funerals from the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* 1680-1690

## Sharing Learning Reflections and Home Application

## Closing

- Closing Prayer Service

# Session at a Glance

This intergenerational program is designed around the structure of the funeral liturgy.

Part One: Gathering (5 minutes)

Part Two: All Ages Learning Experience (40 minutes)

## **The Funeral Liturgy: Introductory Rites**

1. Introduction
2. Sprinkling with Holy Water
3. Placing of the Pall
4. Easter Candle
5. Placing of the Christian Symbols
6. Incense

Part Three: In-Depth Learning Experience (75 minutes)

## **Choose a Learning Group Format**

- Whole Group Format
- Age Group Format

## **Learning Plan**

1. The Funeral Liturgy: Liturgy of the Word
2. The Funeral Liturgy: Liturgy of the Eucharist
3. The Funeral Liturgy: Final Commendation
4. The Funeral Liturgy: Procession to the Place of Committal

Part Four: Sharing Learning Reflections and Home Application (25 minutes)

Part 5. Closing Prayer Service (5 minutes)

# Part 1

## Gathering (5 minutes)

### 1. Registration and Hospitality

- Welcome people and ask them to sign in for the program.
- Provide name tags or invite people to make their own.
- Distribute the Home Kit for the session, including any handouts participants will need for the session. (You can also distribute handouts for the In-Depth Learning program at the beginning of the activity.)
- Invite people to share a meal; depending on time of day, the program may end with a meal instead.

[spoken text] Welcome the participants to the program and introduce the theme of the session, using the words below or your own words.

The Order of Christian Funerals session presents an understanding of the theology, symbols, and rituals of the funeral liturgy. We are going to explore the importance of the paschal mystery in the funeral liturgy and the Catholic life. By becoming more familiar with the funeral liturgy we will be able to appreciate how it celebrates the Christian's journey from this earthly life to everlasting life with God.

### 2. Group Formation

Organize people into intergenerational small groups of approximately eight people OR table groups of families with children, adolescents, and adults. If you organize into intergenerational groups, participants will remain with their group for the entire program. Ask all members of the same family to sit together in these intergenerational groups. Each group should have as many of the following categories as possible: family (parents, children, teens), young adults, adults without children, and older adults. If members of the same family are intergenerational – children, teens, parents, and grandparents – keep them together in one group.

Conduct an icebreaker or community building activity if you wish.

### 3. Opening Prayer Service

Open the session with a song, such as “We Have Been Told” by David Haas (GIA) or “I Know That My Redeemer Lives” by David Haas (GIA), that introduces the theme of the learning program. For other song selections, consult:

- *Singing Our Faith – A Hymnal for Young Catholics* (Chicago: GIA Publications, 2001) [Hymnal, Leader's/Catechist's Manual, 11 CD set]
- *Walking by Faith – Music and Ritual Prayer for Children*. David Haas and Robert W. Piercy. (Chicago, GIA Publications, 1997.) [CD]

- *Spirit and Song – A Seeker’s Guide for Liturgy and Prayer.* (Portland: OCP Publications, 1999.) [Hymnal and 10 CD set]
- *Gather – Comprehensive.* (Chicago: GIA, 1994)

The entire learning session blends music, prayer, presentation, and activities.

## Part 2

### All Ages Learning Experience (15 minutes)

The session plan is a “guided tour” of the funeral liturgy and its symbols and five movements: Introductory Rites, Liturgy of the Word, Liturgy of the Eucharist, Final Commendation, and Procession to the Place of Committal. Use the handout, *Celebrating the Funeral Liturgy: Rite, Prayers, and Symbols*, as your participant handout through the session.

#### Preparation

- Environment: Set up the large meeting space (or church) as if you were celebrating a funeral liturgy with all the symbols visible. Create a prayer/symbol center with a large box representing the casket, the pall, incense, a large bowl of water (or if you are in the church, the baptismal font), a large crucifix, paschal (Easter) candle, incense, Book of the Gospels or the Bible and *Order of Christian Funerals*.

#### Introductory Rites

##### Background from the Order of Christian Funerals

“Since the church is the place where the community of faith assembles for worship, the rite of reception of the body at the church has great significance. The church is the place where the Christian life is begotten in baptism, nourished in the eucharist, and where the community gathers to commend one of its deceased members to the Father. The church is at once a symbol of the community and of the heavenly liturgy that the celebration of the liturgy anticipates. In the act of receiving the body, the members of the community acknowledge the deceased as one of their own, as one who was welcomed in baptism and who held a place in the assembly. Through the use of various baptismal symbols the community shows the reverence due to the body, the temple of the Spirit, and in this way prepares for the funeral liturgy in which it asks for a share in the heavenly banquet promised to the deceased and to all who have been washed in the waters of rebirth and marked with the sign of faith.” (#131)

“The rite of reception takes place at the beginning of the funeral liturgy, usually at the entrance of the church. It begins with a greeting of the family and others who have accompanied the coffin to the door of the church. The minister sprinkles the coffin with holy water in remembrance of the deceased person’s initiation and first acceptance into the community of faith. If it is the custom in the local community, a funeral pall, a reminder of the garment given at baptism, and therefore signifying life in Christ, may then be placed on the coffin by family members, friends, or the minister. The entrance procession follows. The minister precedes the coffin and the mourners into the church. If the Easter candle is used on this occasion, it may be placed beforehand near the position the coffin will occupy at the conclusion of the procession.” (#133)



“To draw the community together in prayer at the beginning of the funeral liturgy, the procession should be accompanied, whenever possible, by the singing of the entrance song. This song ought to be a profound expression of belief in eternal life and the resurrection of the dead as well as a prayer of intercession for the deceased.” (#135).

## Introduction

Introduce the participants to the funeral liturgy and the theme of this learning program, in your own words, using the following paragraphs:

“At the funeral liturgy the community gathers with the family and friends of the deceased to give praise and thanks to God for Christ’s victory over sin and death, to commend the deceased to God’s tender mercy and compassion, and to seek strength in the proclamation of the paschal mystery. Through the Holy Spirit the community is joined together in faith as one Body in Christ to reaffirm in sign and symbol, word and gesture that each believe through baptism shares in Christ’s death and resurrection and can look to the day when all the elect will be raised up and united in the kingdom of light and peace.” (*Order of Christian Funerals* #129)

“The participation of the community in the funeral rites is a sign of the compassionate presence of Christ, who embraced little children, wept at the death of a friend, and endured the pain and separation of death in order to render it powerless over those he loves. Christ still sorrows with those who sorrow and longs with them for the fulfillment of the Father’s plan in a new creation where tears and death will have no place.” (*Order of Christian Funerals* #239)

## Reflection Question

Invite the participants in groups (intergenerational or in family, teen, and adult groups) to reflect on their personal experience of the Catholic funeral liturgy. Use questions such as:

- Has anyone close to you died? Do you remember the funeral? Which elements of the funeral were a positive experience for you? Which elements of the funeral were a negative experience?
- How does a Roman Catholic funeral compare with funerals in other Churches?

## Overview

Through a series of activities the participants will explore the Introductory Rites to discover what they say to us about the Christian understanding of death and resurrection.

Using the handout, *Celebrating the Funeral Liturgy: Rite, Prayers, and Symbols*, present an overview the six elements of the Introductory Rites:

1. Greeting
2. Sprinkling with Holy Water
3. Placing of the Pall
4. Entrance Procession

5. Placing of the Christian Symbols
  1. Opening Prayer

## Sprinkling with Holy Water

Introduce the Sprinkling with Holy Water, in your own words, using the two paragraphs below:

“As the body of the deceased enters the church and passes the baptismal pool, water is taken from the pool and sprinkled on the casket. In this simple gesture we have summed up the meaning of the Catholic funeral rites: For those who have died with Christ in the waters of Baptism, the ‘second death’ can hold no terror: ‘If we have died with him we will also live with him’” (2 Timothy 2:11b). (From: *Sacraments – How Catholics Pray* by Thomas Richstatter. Cincinnati: St. Anthony Messenger Press, 1995. p. 122)

“Blessed or holy water reminds the assembly of the saving waters of baptism. In the rite of reception of the body at the church, its use calls to mind the deceased’s baptism and initiation into the community of faith. In the rite of final commendation the gesture of sprinkling may also signify farewell.” (*Order of Christian Funerals #36*)

### Activity

Provide an experience of blessing with water in one of two ways. Be sure to include music with the activity: sing a song appropriate to baptism and water or Christian funerals, or simply play instrumental music.

### Option 1. Sprinkling

The priest moves around the gather, sprinkling the community with holy water and praying several times: *In the waters of baptism you died with Christ and rose with him to new life. May you share with him eternal glory.*

### Option 2. Sign of the Cross

Using the Baptismal font (if possible) or a large bowl of water (in a central location) or a small bowls of water (at table groups), ask the participants to come forward and dip their hands in the water and make the sign of the cross. Throughout the ritual, repeat the following prayer several times: *In the waters of baptism you died with Christ and rose with him to new life. May you share with him eternal glory.*

## Placing of the Pall

Introduce the Pall, in your own words, using the two paragraphs below:

“The casket is then covered with a white cloth, reminding us of the garment we received at Baptism. ‘You have become a new creation, and have clothed yourself in Christ. See in this white garment the outward sign of your Christian dignity. With your family and friends to help you by word and example, bring that dignity unstained into the everlasting life of heaven’” (*Rite of Baptism for Children #99*). (From: *Sacraments – How*

*Catholics Pray* by Thomas Richstatter. Cincinnati: St. Anthony Messenger Press, 1995. p. 122)

“If it is the custom in the local community, a pall may be placed over the coffin when it is received at the church. A reminder of the baptismal garment of the deceased, the pall is a sign of the Christian dignity of the person. The use of the pall also signifies that all are equal in the eyes of God (see James 2:1-9).” (*Order of Christian Funerals* #38)

Place the Pall on the “casket.”

### **Activity**

Engage each family or individual in creating a remembrance cloth for a deceased love one, e.g., a family member: parent, grandparent, great grandparent, sibling; a friend, a colleague. (This is same person or persons they brought the reminders of.)

Think about four or five things you want to remember about the way he or she lived his or her life. Then draw a word or symbol on the remembrance cloth of each thing you want to remember, e.g., a heart for how the person’s love touched others, a basket of food for the person’s love of cooking and care for those in need.

When completed, ask the participants (families or individuals) to share the meaning of their symbols with their group.

Later they will bring-up their remembrance cloth, with the photo and the reminders they brought, to a memorial display.

## **Easter Candle**

Introduce the Easter Candle, in your own words, using the paragraph below:

“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 the victory by virtue of their initiation. It recalls the Easter Vigil, the night when the Church awaits the Lord’s resurrection and when new light for the living and the dead is kindled.” (*Order of Christian Funerals* #35)

Light the Easter Candle.

## **Placing of the Christian Symbols**

Review the two additional symbols that can be placed on or by the coffin. As you describe each one, have someone place a Bible and a Cross on or next to the casket.

**Bible:** A Book of the Gospels or a Bible may be placed on the coffin as a sign that Christians live by word of God and that fidelity to that word leads to eternal life.

**Cross:** A cross may be placed on the coffin as a reminder that the Christian is marked by the cross in baptism and through Jesus' suffering on the cross is brought to the victory of his resurrection.

### **Activity**

Ask each household (family or individuals) to review the reminders of the life of a deceased loved one(s) they brought to this learning program, e.g., objects symbolizing their family life, objects symbolizing the work they did or the hobbies they loved or their accomplishments in life, and objects symbolizing their religious life (e.g., rosary, pray card, Bible, crucifix).

**Note:** If someone forgot to bring reminders, give them several large file cards and ask them to write or draw one reminder on each card. Use symbols or pictures to represent the objects.

In small groups (family cluster or age groupings), ask each household to share their reminders with their group members.

Conclude by inviting one member of each household to bring-up their remembrance cloth, with the photo and the reminders they brought, to the memorial display of tables at the front of the room.

Sing a song during the "offertory" or play instrumental music.

### **Incense**

Introduce the role of Incense in the funeral liturgy, in your own words, using the two paragraphs below:

"The body is honored with incense. In the Roman culture (which shaped the formation of our Catholic burial rites), burning incense was often carried ahead of a person passing through the streets of Rome so that the sweet fragrance would mask the odors of the city. As this luxury could only be afforded the rich, the custom came to be associated with honoring those of noble birth. In the funeral rites the fragrant incense gives honor to the body of the deceased, which became a dwelling of the Holy Spirit through the sacraments of initiation. As we see the smoke of the incense rise toward heaven, we ask that our prayers for the deceased may ascend before the throne of the living God."  
(From: *Sacraments – How Catholics Pray* by Thomas Richstatter. Cincinnati: St. Anthony Messenger Press, 1995. p. 122)

"Incense is used during the funeral rites as a sign of honor to the body of the deceased, which through baptism became the temple of the Holy Spirit. Incense is also used as a sign of the community's prayers for the deceased rising to the throne of God and as a sign of farewell." (*Order of Christian Funerals #27*)

### **Activity**

Incense the memorial tables, the symbols, and then the people in the congregation.

## Part 3

### In-Depth Learning Experience (90 minutes)

The In-Depth Learning Experience continues the “guided tour” of the funeral liturgy and its symbols and five movements: Liturgy of the Word, Liturgy of the Eucharist, Final Commendation, and Procession to the Place of Committal. Use *Celebrating the Funeral Liturgy: Rite, Prayers, and Symbols* as your participant handout through the session.

The In-Depth Learning Experience is designed so that it can work with the **Whole Group Format** (guiding the participants through the lesson plan in intergenerational groups) or the **Age Group Format** (using the lesson plan with break-out groups for families with children, adolescents, and adults).

#### Whole Group Format

This format guides the entire assembly through each of the learning experiences.

You might choose this format if you have:

- a large physical space with good acoustics/sound system and furniture to comfortably accommodate the learners
- a competent large group facilitator/master of ceremonies able to provide clear directions and to manage the dynamics and energy of a large group
- a group of catechists who feel comfortable moving through the assembly offering assistance, or a large enough team of table leader catechists to have one catechist work with each table group
- a learning topic that lends itself to everyone learning the same thing as the same time, but in different ways, in the same space

#### Facilitation Tips for This Format

Guide small groups through each of the activities at the same time.

- Organize people into table groups based on age groupings: families with children (grades 1-5), middle school adolescents, high school adolescents, young adults, and adults.
- The lead facilitator guides the entire group through each of the learning experiences. All presentations and activity instructions are given to the whole group.
- The age-appropriate learning activities within each learning experience are conducted in table groups.
- Where needed, catechists and small group leaders facilitate the work of the table groups.

#### Whole Group Format Outline

This learning plan works especially well with the Learning Group Format – everyone experiencing the session together and working in small groups (organized with multiple

generations in a small group or with families with children, teens, and adults in separate groups). There is one lesson plan for all ages. Only the Scripture activities in Part 2 are designed for age groups.

Guide groups through each of the symbol/ritual activities at the same time. Organize people into table groups. Groups can be intergenerational or organized by age groups, e.g., families with children, young adolescents, older adolescents, young adults, and adults. The lead facilitator guides the entire group through the lesson plan. All presentations and activity instructions are given to the whole group. The age-appropriate learning activities for each symbol/ritual are conducted in table groups. Where needed, catechists/small group leaders facilitate the work of the table groups.

## Learning Plan Outline

1. The Funeral Liturgy: Liturgy of the Word
2. The Funeral Liturgy: Liturgy of the Eucharist
3. The Funeral Liturgy: Final Commendation
4. The Funeral Liturgy: Procession to the Place of Committal

## Age Group Format

This format provides for three separate parallel learning programs. Though age groups are separated, each one is focusing on the same topic.

You might choose this format if you have:

- an adequate number of meeting spaces for the various groups to gather
- an adequate number of competent facilitators and catechists to work with each group
- a topic that is best explored through age-specific learning

## Facilitation Tips for This Format

- Organize participants into three or more parallel learning groups: families with children (grades 1-5), adolescents (grades 6-12), and adults.
- If there are a large number of adolescents, divide them into two groups: middle school and high school.

Organize separate groups for young adults, adults, and older adults. Or you can give the adults their own choice for forming small groups.

- Direct the adolescents and adults into small groups. Give them all the handouts and learning materials needed for the learning experiences
- Guide the families with children into table groups of two or more families. Give each table all the handouts and learning materials necessary for the learning experiences.
- A facilitator must guide all of the families through each learning experience, while catechist move from table to table assisting.

## Age Groups Format Outline

There is one lesson plan for all ages. Only the Scripture activities in Part 2 are designed for age groups.

### Learning Plan

1. The Funeral Liturgy: Liturgy of the Word
2. The Funeral Liturgy: Liturgy of the Eucharist
3. The Funeral Liturgy: Final Commendation
4. The Funeral Liturgy: Procession to the Place of Committal

# Order of Christian Funerals

## Learning Experience

### Supplies

- Casket (large box or similar container to resemble a casket)
- Pall
- Water for sprinkling: baptismal font, large bowl of water, or small bowls of water for table groups
- Easter candle
- Large cross or crucifix
- Bible or Book of the Gospels
- Incense
- Piece of cloth (for remembrance cloth) and markers
- File cards

### Set-Up

- Several tables for memorial display
- Prayer space with the symbols of the funeral liturgy

### Handouts

- *Celebrating the Funeral Liturgy: Rite, Prayers, and Symbols*
- *Scripture Readings for the Funeral Liturgy*
- *We Pray for Those Who Have Died*
- *My Headstone*

### Books

- New Testaments: one for each family / one for each table group

### Music

- Live music or CDs with recommended hymns and/or instrumental music
- Weave music throughout the session plan. Here are several suggestions of songs commonly used at funeral liturgies: “Amazing Grace” (Traditional), “We Have Been Told” by David Haas (GIA), “I Know That My Redeemer Lives” by David Haas (GIA), “Shepherd Me, O God” by Marty Haugen (GIA), “I Am the Bread of Life” by Suzanne Toolan (GIA), “On Eagle’s Wings” by Michael Joncas (New Dawn).
- For other song selections, consult:
  - *Singing Our Faith – A Hymnal for Young Catholics* (Chicago: GIA Publications, 2001) [Hymnal, Leader’s/Catechist’s Manual, 11 CD set]
  - *Walking by Faith – Music and Ritual Prayer for Children*. David Haas and Robert W. Piercy. (Chicago, GIA Publications, 1997.) [CD]
  - *Spirit and Song – A Seeker’s Guide for Liturgy and Prayer*. (Portland: OCP Publications, 1999.) [Hymnal and 10 CD set]
  - *Gather – Comprehensive*. (Chicago: GIA, 1994)

### Drama Resources

- Glavich, Mary Kathleen. *Acting Out the Miracles and Parables*. Mystic, CT: Twenty-Third Publications, 1988.
- Rousell, Sheila O’Connell and Terri Vorndran Nichols. *Lectionary-Based Gospel Dramas for Lent and the Easter Triduum*. Winona, MN: St. Mary’s Press, 1999.



# Liturgy of the Word

## Introduction

Introduce the second movement of the liturgy, the Liturgy of the Word, in your own words, using the two paragraphs below:

“The body is brought into the church and we hear the word of God, the word which assures us of Christ’s victory over sin and death. We celebrate the Eucharistic meal which proclaims and brings about our union with the risen Christ: ‘I am the living bread that came down from heaven. Whoever eats of this bread will live forever...’” (John 6:51). (From: *Sacraments – How Catholics Pray* by Thomas Richstatter. Cincinnati: St. Anthony Messenger Press, 1995. p. 122)

“The reading of the word of God is an essential element of the celebration of the funeral liturgy. The readings proclaim the paschal mystery, teach remembrance of the dead, convey the hope of being gathered together again in God’s kingdom, and encourage the witness of Christian life. Above all, the readings tell of God’s design for a world in which suffering and death will relinquish their hold on all whom God has called his own.” (*Order of Christian Funerals* #137)

Through a series of activities the participants will explore the Christian understanding of death as found in the Liturgy of the Word of the funeral liturgy. There are a variety of readings to choose from in the funeral liturgy (#344-45). The following readings have been selected to guide the participants in discovering the message and meaning of the funeral liturgy.

Distribute copies of *Scripture Readings for the Funeral Liturgy* for the participants to use in following presentations and experiencing the activities.

## Old Testament Reading: Isaiah 25:6a, 7-9

Use the following process to present and reflect on the Scripture reading:

1. Begin by reading the passage from Isaiah.
2. Share one or two key insights on the Scripture reading with the group.
3. Ask the participants In groups (or as individual families) to discuss what they heard (images, message) and how this reading helps them to understand the Christian understanding of death.

## Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 23

Use the following process to present and reflect on this very well know Psalm:

1. Begin by reading the Psalm, singing the Psalm (“Shepherd Me, O God” by Marty Haugen, GIA), or leading the group in a Responsorial Psalm (see below).
2. Share one or two key insights on the Psalm with the group.

3. Ask the participants In groups (or as individual families) to discuss what they heard (images, message) and how this reading helps them to understand the Christian understanding of death.

### **The Lord is My Shepherd (Psalm 23)**

Response: The Lord is my shepherd; there is nothing I shall want.

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

The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want.  
In verdant pastures he gives me repose;  
Beside restful waters he leads me;  
he refreshes my soul.

*Response*

He guides me in right paths  
for his name's sake.  
Even though I walk in the dark valley  
I fear no evil; for you are at my side  
With your rod and your staff  
that give me courage

*Response*

You spread the table before me  
in the sight of my foes;  
You anoint me head with oil;  
my cup overflows.

*Response*

Only goodness and kindness follow me  
all the days of my life:  
And I shall dwell in the house of the Lord  
for years to come.

*Response*

### **New Testament Reading: 2 Timothy 2:8-13**

Use the following process to present and reflect on the Scripture reading:

1. Begin by reading the passage from 2 Timothy.
2. Share one or two key insights on the Scripture reading with the group.
3. Ask the participants In groups (or as individual families) to discuss what they heard (images, message) and how this reading helps them to understand the Christian understanding of death.

## Gospel Reading: John 11:1-44 (Raising of Lazarus)

The story of the Raising of Lazarus is central to the Christian understanding of death. Part 1 provides three all-ages learning methods to explore the Raising of Lazarus: 1) put yourself into the Gospel story, 2) dramatize the Gospel story, or 3) watch and discuss a video. There are two additional methods that are suitable for children (and parents). Part 2 is a brief presentation summarizing the Gospel reading.

### Part 1. Exploring the Gospel

#### **All Ages Option 1: Putting Yourself in the Gospel – Creative Imagination Activity**

Review the questions with the group so that they are prepared to listen attentively to the Gospel story. You might want to put the key questions on a sheet of newsprint or poster board.

Slowly read the Gospel story of the Raising of Lazarus (John 1-44). The story's length and structure lends itself to a dramatic reading involving several people. You may wish to select people in the group to read each of the following parts: narrator, Mary, Martha, the disciples, Jesus, and Thomas. (For children: Use a children's Bible or the Contemporary English Version from the American Bible Society.)

Give the participants time to imagine themselves inside the story. After you have read the story once, now re-read the story stopping frequently to invite the participants to answer the questions below. You may want them to write their observations on paper each time you pause in telling the story.

#### Observation Questions

Ask everyone to step into the story and become a part of it. Ask them to imagine themselves as disciples traveling with Jesus.

- What is happening in the story?
- What is Jesus doing? What is he saying? What is happening to Jesus?
- Who is with Jesus and what are they doing or saying
- 

#### Reflection Questions

Invite the group to reflect on the meaning of the story.

- How would you feel if you were the disciples? What would you have said to Jesus?
- How would you feel if you were Mary and Martha? What would you have said to Jesus?
- How would you feel if you were Lazarus? What would you have said to Jesus?
- Why does Jesus raise Lazarus from the dead?
- Do you think the disciples, Mary and Martha, and the crowd understood why Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead.

### All Ages Option 2: Dramatizing the Gospel Story

Involve participants in dramatizing the story of Lazarus or prepare the drama presentation in advance and present it to the group.

**Children:** Use the playlet: The Raising of Lazarus in *Acting Out the Miracles and Parables* by Mary Kathleen Glavich (Mystic, CT: Twenty-Third Publications, 1988).

**Adolescents-Adults:** Use the drama on the Fifth Sunday of Lent in *Lectionary-Based Gospel Dramas for Lent and the Easter Triduum* by Shelia O'Connell-Roussell and Therese Vorndran Nichols. (Winona: St. Mary's Press, 1999).

After the drama/role play discuss the following questions:

- How would you feel if you were the disciples? What would you have said to Jesus?
- How would you feel if you were Mary and Martha? What would you have said to Jesus?
- How would you feel if you were Lazarus? What would you have said to Jesus?
- Why does Jesus raise Lazarus from the dead?
- Do you think the disciples, Mary and Martha, and the crowd understood why Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead.

### All Ages Option 3: Video Presentation

Consider showing the Raising of Lazarus from *Jesus of Nazareth*. (The Raising of Lazarus is found at the end of the second video.)

#### Reflection Questions

Invite the group to reflect on the meaning of the story.

- How would you feel if you were the disciples? What would you have said to Jesus?
- How would you feel if you were Mary and Martha? What would you have said to Jesus?
- How would you feel if you were Lazarus? What would you have said to Jesus?
- Why does Jesus raise Lazarus from the dead?
- Do you think the disciples, Mary and Martha, and the crowd understood why Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead.

### Children Option 1: Tell the Story from a First-Person Viewpoint (Children)

Read the "Raising of Lazarus" from a first person perspective in *I Remember Jesus – Stories to Tell and How to Tell Them* by Diane Crehan (Mystic, CT: Twenty-Third Publications, 1999).

#### Reflection Questions

Invite the group to reflect on the meaning of the story.

- How would you feel if you were the disciples? What would you have said to Jesus?
- How would you feel if you were Mary and Martha? What would you have said to Jesus?

- How would you feel if you were Lazarus? What would you have said to Jesus?
- Why does Jesus raise Lazarus from the dead?
- Do you think the disciples, Mary and Martha, and the crowd understood why Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead.

### **Children Option 2: Pantomime the Raising of Lazarus (Children)**

Lead the parents and children in a pantomime of the Gospel story. Begin by saying:

*Listen carefully to the story so you can do the actions I tell you to do. This is the story of a man named Lazarus, who got sick and died. His sisters, Mary and Martha, were very sad when he died. Whenever you hear the names "Mary" and "Martha," cover your face, and pretend to sob. When you hear the name "Lazarus," hold your nose, and say, "Pee-yew!" because has been dead for days before Jesus arrived. When you hear the word "tomb," lie on the floor with your eyes closed and your hands folded over your chest.*

Using a children's Bible or the CEV Bible (American Bible Society), read aloud John 11:1-44. Pause to let the children respond to the suggested cues. You may want to use a pencil to underline the key words in your Bible.

#### Reflection Questions

Invite the group to reflect on the meaning of the story.

- How would you feel if you were the disciples? What would you have said to Jesus?
- How would you feel if you were Mary and Martha? What would you have said to Jesus?
- How would you feel if you were Lazarus? What would you have said to Jesus?
- Why does Jesus raise Lazarus from the dead?
- Do you think the disciples, Mary and Martha, and the crowd understood why Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead.

### Summary Presentation

Here is a brief commentary on the Gospel reading (Fifth Sunday of Lent, Cycle A). Consult other commentaries for further reflections. Prepare a brief presentation summarizing the understanding of death and resurrection presented in the Gospel story.

"Lazarus is sick and the sisters send word to Jesus but 'he remained for two days in the place where he was.'

"Jesus conversation with his disciples makes it clear that his actions are to lead us to a level quite beyond the literal. He is calling us to seeing and believing, to light and life. When Jesus arrives in Bethany Lazarus had been in the tomb four days, certainly long enough for him to be quite dead ('Lord, by now there will be quite a stench'). There can be no misinterpretation of Jesus' ensuing actions. This is no lucky bringing someone out of a coma; Lazarus is surely dead.

“His human emotion is genuine enough, but seems a contradiction. On the one hand, he is perturbed and deeply troubled (possibly angry at the other mourners and their lack of belief? see Matt 9:24); on the other hand, he is deeply moved and weeps over the loss of his friend. In the midst of this he prays to his Father (common in John’s Gospel) and thus instructs the crowd so ‘that they may believe that you sent me.’ Then Jesus calls out to Lazarus, he comes out, and Jesus commands those standing by to ‘untie him and let him go.’ All of these events bring ‘many of the Jews’ to seeing and believing.

The story has implications beyond Lazarus’ return to life. The deeper meaning is that the life which Jesus gives us is a life in which we never die at all. Resurrection is not returning to live more of this life; it is a gift of life that is due to ‘the Spirit of the One who raised Jesus from the dead dwelling in us.’ Beyond the literal level, the story of Lazarus takes us into the Easter mystery in which we share in Jesus’ resurrected life.

Jesus promises Martha (and us) that whoever ‘lives and believes in me will never die.’ The amazing fact of our living the dying and rising of the paschal mystery is that we *already* share in this eternal life. Its fullness will be known only after we die, to be sure; the grace of it, however, is already received. This is so because we already live in the Spirit.

We readily see the dying in our everyday lives – the pain, suffering, death, sinfulness, self-emptying, discipline, giving up our wills. This gospel challenges us to see and believe equally signs of the grace of new life – glory, joy, peace, forgiveness, mercy, trust, kindness. Living the paschal mystery draws us to see these dyings and risings as two aspects of the same mystery. The *already* of eternal life is God grace *already* working in our lives. This is why the dying isn’t all there is.” (From: “Fifth Sunday of Lent” in *Living Liturgy*, Year A 2002 by Zimmerman, Greisen, Harmon, and Leclerc. Colleagueville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2001. p. 80)

## Intercession

**Preparation:** Make copies of the *We Prayer for Those Who Have Died* sheet and hole-punch the paper so that it can be placed in a binder.

Explain that the Liturgy of the Word concludes with the intercessions (see *Celebrating the Funeral Liturgy: Rite, Prayers, and Symbols*). Give each group one or more copies of *We Prayer for Those Who Have Died*. Ask each family or individual to write the names of deceased loved ones that want included the parish community’s prayer.

Collect the *We Prayer for Those Who Have Died* sheets and place them in a 3-ring binder. Place the binder on the memorial table or other central place.

At the conclusion of the session everyone will prayer the intercessions for the dead.

# Liturgy of the Eucharist

## Overview

Briefly review the place of the Liturgy of the Eucharist in the funeral liturgy using the paragraph below:

At the funeral Mass, the community, having been spiritually renewed at the table of God's word, turns for spiritual nourishment to the table of the eucharist. The community with the priest offers to the Father the sacrifice of the New Covenant and shares in the one bread and the one cup. In partaking of the body of Christ, all are given a foretaste of eternal life in Christ and are united with Christ, with each other, and with all the faithful, living and dead: 'Because there is one bread, we who are many are one body, for we all partake of the one bread'" (1 Corinthians 10:17). (*Order of Christian Funerals* #143)

## Final Commendation

### Background from the *Order of Christian Funerals*

"The final commendation is a final farewell by the members of the community, an act of respect for one of their members, whom they entrust to the tender and merciful embrace of God. This act of last farewell also acknowledges the reality of separation and affirms that the community and the deceased, baptized into the one Body, share the same destiny, resurrection on the last day. On that day the one Shepherd will call each by name and gather the faithful together in the new and eternal Jerusalem." (#146)

"The rite begins with the minister's opening words and a few moments of silent prayer. The opening words serve as a brief explanation of the rite and as an invitation to pray in silence for the deceased. The pause for silence allows the bereaved and all present to relate their own feelings of loss and grief to the mystery of Christian hope in God's abundant mercy and his promise of eternal life.

"Where this is customary, the body may then be sprinkled with holy water and incensed, or this may be done during or after the song of farewell. The sprinkling is a reminder that through baptism the person was marked for eternal life and the incensation signifies respect for the body as the temple of the Holy Spirit.

"The song of farewell, which should affirm hope and trust in the paschal mystery, is the climax of the rite of final commendation. It should be sung to a melody simple enough for all to sing. It may take the form of a responsory or even a hymn. When singing is not possible, invocations may be recited by the assembly.

“A prayer of commendation concludes the rite. In this prayer the community calls up God’s mercy, commends the deceased into God’s hands, and affirms its belief that those who have died in Christ will share in Christ’s victory over death.” (#147)

## Overview

Using the background information and the prayer texts in *Celebrating the Funeral Liturgy: Rite, Prayers, and Symbols*, briefly describe the five elements of the Final Commendation:

1. Invitation to Prayer
2. Silence
3. Sings of Farewell
4. Song of Farewell
5. Prayer of Commendation

## Procession to the Place of Committal

Using the paragraph below briefly summarize the Procession to the Place of Committal:

“The community, filled with hope in the resurrection, accompanies the body of the deceased to the place of burial for the ‘Rite of Committal.’ The Lord Jesus Christ, by his own three days in the tomb, has ‘made the grave a sign of hope that promises resurrection even as it claims our mortal bodies’ (*Order of Christian Funerals* #218). Here at the grave the community makes its final gestures of leave-taking. The Christian journey is completed.” (From: *Sacraments – How Catholics Pray* by Thomas Richstätter. Cincinnati: St. Anthony Messenger Press, 1995. p. 122)

## Activity

Every person will create their own headstone. There two options you can use:

**Option 1:** Give everyone a fine-tip marker and invite them to choose a stone from a basket of small stones. Tell them to imagine living into their 80s or 90s. Their little stone will be their headstone and that because the stone is small, they will be allowed just one word on it as memorial of their life. Invite the participants to think about their life. Ask: “At the end of your life, how do you hope to be remembered? What one word will you write on this stone?” If the group is slow in starting, offer the following suggestions: loving, successful, forgiving, wife, husband, grandpa, grandma, faithful, generous, caring, strong, joyful.

**Option 2:** Give everyone a copy of *My Headstone*. Tell them to imagine living into their 80s or 90s. On the *My Headstone* sheet they are going to design their headstone. Invite the participants to think about their life. Ask: “At the end of your life, how do you hope to be remembered? What words, phrase, or quote will you write on your headstone?” If the group is slow in starting, offer the suggestions.

Give everyone a little time to think and to write on their stone or on their worksheet. Then invite them to share their work with the group.



## Part 4

# Sharing Learning Reflections and Home Application (25 minutes)

### Advanced Preparation

- Determine what each group will bring back to the large group or to their small group to share as a result of their learning.
- Determine how each group will share their reports or projects so that they “teach” the other groups about the event and theme.

**Suggestions:** There are many ways to engage the participants in sharing their learning with the large group. Consider asking each group to share their reflections on the Gospel story of the Raising of Lazarus or sharing several of their headstones (from the final activity).

### Home Kit

Develop an Order of Christian Funerals Home Kit that *extends* and *expands* the learning that has taken place through the intergenerational learning program. It should *engage* families and individuals in living their faith at home through traditions and celebrations, rituals, symbols, prayers, service projects, learning activities, and enrichment activities. Include specific activities on the event that you have selected as a focus for the session. These additional activities can include learning activities about the event, Scripture readings, table rituals, prayers, and so on.

Use a variety of design formats for your activities, such as a prayer card, stand-up card, poster, placemat, newsletter, booklet, magnet, bookmark, and artwork.

## 1. Whole Group Sharing and Reflection

The whole group sharing experience provides an opportunity for each age group to share something they have learned with the entire group. If the session has been conducted in intergenerational groups ask participants to remain with their group. If the session was conducted in the age group format, ask family members to rejoin their own family and individual adolescent and adult participants to stay with their age groups from the In-Depth Learning Experience.

First, ask the participants to share what they learned in a small group setting or by inviting participants or groups, representing families, teens, and adults, to share projects or reflections with the entire.

[spoken text] Second, present the following information using the words below or your own words:

Think of everything we have done in this session to learn about the funeral liturgy – its symbols, readings, and ritual. Take a few minutes to reflect on what you have learned in this session:

- What is one thing you learned about the funeral liturgy that you did not know before?
- What will you look for when you attend a funeral in the future?
- Why do you think the funeral liturgy is so important for us as Catholics?

Review the Home Kit for the event containing prayers, rituals, service projects, family enrichment, and learning activities. Guide everyone in developing an individual or family action plan for living at home using the Home Kit, and planning for participation in the sacrament.

## 2. Reflection—Application Strategies

Prepare strategies and activities to guide individuals and families in *reflecting* on the meaning of their learning and their participation in the Church event and in *applying* their learning to daily living as a Catholic. The goal is to help people apply the beliefs and practices to their daily life, and report or “publish” their learning with others in the parish community.

Reflection and application activities and strategies can be included with the Home Kit. You can also include a time for feedback in your next intergenerational learning program

There are a variety of formats for reflection – application activities. Reflection tools include unfinished sentences, reflection questions, learning journals, and a structured reflection activities. Application tools include action plans, practice plans, “to do” lists, and resolutions.

Art and media strategies can also be used to express reflection and application. Consider activities such as a bumper stickers, picture collages, “recipe for living” cards, posters, photos, and projects that create and bring back to Sunday Mass or the next intergenerational learning program.

## Part 5

### Closing Prayer Service (5-10 minutes)

Close with the intercessory prayers for the dead. Lead this as you would the prayer petitions at Sunday Mass. Conclude with the prayer by Fr. Thomas Richstatter.

*Lord Jesus, for our sake you opened your arms on the cross  
to put an end to death and reveal the resurrection.*

*In your death our own fear of death has been conquered.*

*Each day help us to die to sin,  
to die to all that keeps us from following you.*

*May we observe all that we promised in Baptism  
so that we may be filled in heaven  
with the blessings of the most high Father  
and on earth with the blessing of the beloved Son  
with the most Holy Spirit, the Paraclete.*

*May we strive after those things which you promised. Amen.*

Close in song.