

PLANNING A CATHOLIC FUNERAL AT  
*Saint Mary Basilica*  
Natchez, Mississippi

**What is the purpose of a Catholic Funeral?**

The Catholic funeral differs in many ways from a funeral in the secular world. While non-Catholics use funerals as opportunities to celebrate the life of the deceased, in a Catholic funeral the Church fulfills the spiritual work of mercy to pray for the dead. We know in faith that our earthly life is not the end, but is merely a preparation for eternal life — a life which we hope to share with Christ Jesus the Lord. For this reason, we have a duty to our deceased loved ones to pray for them and beg for the mercy of God, that all their sins will be forgiven and washed away, and that they will be raised to the eternal joy of heaven.

The elements chosen for a Catholic funeral reflect our belief and aid us by encouraging us to pray for our deceased loved one. The options given below are provided as a guide in selecting appropriate texts for the Catholic funeral Mass.

**Readings from Sacred Scripture:**

Three readings are selected from sacred scripture. The first reading is taken from the Old Testament (outside Eastertime) or from Acts of the Apostles or Revelation (during Easter). The second reading is taken from a letter in the New Testament. The Third is from one of the four Gospels. Additionally, a Psalm is chosen to be sung. The options provided here are determined by the ritual of the Catholic Church and no substitutions are permitted. To assist you, the more popular selections are \*marked.

The family may select one or two readers or the parish may provide readers for you. Readers must be practicing Roman Catholics. It is recommended that members of the immediate family of the deceased not serve as readers.

	<b>First Reading (Outside Eastertime):</b>
*2 Maccabees 12:43-64	“...he made atonement for the dead...”
Job 19:1,23-27	“...I know that my vindicator lives...”
*Ecclesiastes 3:1-8	“...A time to be born, a time to die...”
*Ecclesiastes 3:1-15	<i>(A longer version of the above)</i>
*Wisdom 3:1-9	“...the souls of the just are in the hand of God...”
*Wisdom 3:1-6:9	<i>(An abbreviated version of the above)</i>
Wisdom 4:4-14	“The righteous one, though he die early, shall be at rest...”
Sirach 2:1-11	“...in fire gold is tested...Compassionate is the Lord...”
Isaiah 25:6,7-9	“...he will destroy death forever...”
Isaiah 26:7-19	“...your dead shall live, their corpses shall rise...”
Isaiah 35:1-10	“Here is your God, he comes with vindication”
Isaiah 40:1-11	“Comfort, give comfort to my people...”
Lamentations 3:17-26	“My portion is the Lord, says my soul...”
Ezekiel 37:12-14	“O my people, I will open your graves and have you rise...”
Daniel 12:1-3	“...the wide shall shine brightly...”
Micah 7:7-9	“...though I sit in darkness, the Lord is my light...”

**First Reading (In Eastertime):**

\*Acts 10:34-43  
Acts 10:34-36, 42-43  
Revelation 14:13  
Revelation 20:11-21:1  
\*Revelation 21:1-5, 6-7

“Everyone who believes in him will receive forgiveness of sins...”  
*(An abbreviated version of the above)*  
“Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord...”  
“The sea gave up its dead then Death and Hades...”  
“I saw a holy city, a new Jerusalem...”

**Responsorial Psalm:**

\*Psalm 23  
Psalm 25  
Psalm 27  
\*Psalm 42

\*Psalm 63  
\*Psalm 103  
Psalm 116  
Psalm 122

\*Psalm 130  
Psalm 143

“The Lord is my shepherd, there is nothing I shall want.”  
“To you, O Lord, I lift my soul.”  
“The Lord is my light and my salvation”  
“My soul is thirsting for the living God:  
    when shall I see him face-to-face?”  
“My soul is thirsting for you, O Lord my God.”  
“The Lord is kind and merciful.”  
“I will walk in the presence of the Lord in the land of living.”  
“I rejoiced when I heard them say:  
    let us go to the house of the Lord.”  
“Out of the depths, I cry to you, Lord.”  
“O Lord, hear my prayer.”

**Second Reading:**

Romans 5:5-11  
Romans 5:17-21  
\*Romans 6:3-9

Romans 6:3-4, 8-9  
Romans 8:1-11  
Romans 8:14-23  
\*Romans 8:31-35, 37-39  
Romans 14:7-9, 10-12  
1 Corinthians 2:6-10  
1 Corinthians 15:12-20  
\*1 Corinthians 15:20-28  
\*1 Corinthians 15:51-57  
2 Corinthians 5:1, 6-10  
2 Corinthians 5:1, -10  
Philippians 3:7-14  
Philippians 3:20-31  
\*1 Thessalonians 4:13-18  
2 Timothy 2:8-13  
2 Timothy 4:1-2, 6-8  
1 John 3:1-2  
1 John 3:14-16

“We were reconciled to God through the death of his Son...”  
“...through one righteous act acquittal and life came to all...”  
“...if we have died with Christ,  
    we believe that we shall live with him...”  
*(An abbreviated version of the above)*  
“There is no condemnation for those who are in Christ...”  
“Those who are led by the Spirit of God are Children of God”  
“If God is for us, who can be against us?”  
“This is why Christ died and came to life...”  
“Eye has not seen, and ear has not heard...”  
“If there is no resurrection of the dead...”  
“In Adam all die, so too in Christ shall all be brought to life.”  
“Death where is your victory?”  
“The one who raised the Lord Jesus will raise us...”  
“We would rather leave the body and go home...”  
“I run toward the prize to which God calls me...”  
“He will change our lowly body...”  
“If we believe that Jesus died and rose...”  
“Remember Jesus Christ, raised from the dead...”  
“I have competed well, I have finished the race...”  
“Beloved, we are God’s children now...”  
“We know that we have passed from death to life...”

**Gospel:**

Matthew 5:1-12  
\*Matthew 11:25-30  
Matthew 25:1-13  
Matthew 25:31-4

The Beatitudes  
“come to me...and I will give you rest.”  
“Look! The bridegroom comes. Go out to meet him.”  
“Come, you whom my Father has blessed...”

Mark 15:33-39	“My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?”
Mark 15:33-1:6	<i>(A longer version of the above including the death of Christ)</i>
Luke 7:11-17	“Young man, I say to you, arise.”
Luke 12:35-40	“Be prepared, for at an hour you do not expect...”
Luke 23:33, 39-43	“Today you will be with me in paradise.”
Luke 23:44-49	“Father, into your hands I commend my spirit.”
Luke 24:13-35	“Was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer?”
Luke 24:13-16, 28-35	<i>(An abbreviated version of the above)</i>
John 5:24-29	“Whoever hears my word and believes has passed from...”
*John 6:37-40	“All who believe in the Son will have eternal life...”
*John 6:51-58	“All who eat this bread will live for ever...”
John 11:17-27	“I am the resurrection and the life...”
John 11:21-27	<i>(An abbreviated version of the above)</i>
*John 11:32-45	“Lazarus, come out”
John 12:23-28	“If a grain of wheat falls on the ground and dies...”
John 12:23-26	<i>(An abbreviated version of the above)</i>
*John 14:1-6	“There are many rooms in my Father’s house...”
*John 17:24-26	“Father, I want those you have given me to be with me...”
John 19:17-18, 25-39	“Jesus bowed his head and gave up his spirit.”

### **Musical Selections:**

The musical selections provided here reflect the meaning and theme of the Catholic funeral. In general, other selections will not be permitted — especially those taken from pop music. It should be noted that some songs which are commonly heard at non-Catholic funerals do not adequately reflect the Catholic understanding of grace and forgiveness, thus they do not appear below.

At all funeral Masses, the organist and singers are provided by the Basilica Choir. Other musicians may be permitted by approval of the Director of Sacred Music.

<b>Entrance:</b>	The Antiphon: “Eternal rest, grant unto him/her, O Lord”
<b>Mass Setting:</b>	The Belmont Mass    OR    Mass XVIII (Chant)
<b>Psalm:</b>	(As selected above)
<b>Alleluia/ Acclamation:</b>	The verse: “If we die with Christ, we shall live with him...”
<b>Offertory:</b>	<i>A hymn selected from the list below</i>
<b>Communion:</b>	The Antiphon: “Let perpetual light shine upon him/her, O Lord” <i>followed by a hymn selected from the list below</i>
<b>Meditation:</b>	(Optional: Schubert's <i>Ave Maria</i> OR    Frank's <i>Panis Angelicus</i> )
<b>Commendation:</b>	The Responsory: “Saints of God...receive his/her soul...”
<b>Recessional:</b>	The Antiphon: “In paradisum...”    OR    “May the angels lead you...”

### Options for Hymn Selections:

Abide with Me  
All Creatures of Our God and King  
Alleluia! Sing to Jesus  
At that First Eucharist  
At the Lamb's High Feast  
Be Thou My Vision  
Draw Near and Take the Body of the Lord  
I Heard the Voice of Jesus Say  
I Know that My Redeemer Lives  
Jerusalem, My Happy Home  
Jerusalem the Golden  
Jesus, My Lord, My God, My All  
My Shepherd Will Supply My Need  
My Song is Love Unknown  
O God Our Help in Ages Past  
Shepherd of Souls  
Sweet Sacrament Divine  
The King of Love My Shepherd Is  
The Strife is O'er  
What Wondrous Love Is This

### **Miscellaneous Notes:**

#### **Altar Servers**

You are welcome to provide trained servers from among family and friends. Servers must be Catholic, have received their First Holy Communion, and have experience serving at their own parish. The Basilica is always able to provide servers for you.

#### **Intercessions**

The intercessions used in the Funeral Mass are provided by the ritual. A copy is available in this packet. The intercessions may be read by either reader who has already been selected, or by a third reader.

#### **Remarks from Family/Friends**

The most appropriate place for remarks and eulogies is at the Visitation and Vigil. However, one (1) speaker may provide brief (2-3mins) remarks before the Funeral Mass as part of the welcome and greetings.

#### **Visitation and Vigil**

Because funerals usually occur during work days when people are not always able to attend, we recommend a visitation take place the night before. This may occur at the Basilica, and in this situation the body or remains of the deceased may be left overnight in the Basilica which will be locked and secure. (This is to avoid any additional cost to transfer the body to and from the funeral home).

If the family desires it, a Vigil may also occur at the end of visitation. An outline is given on the next page:

### Vigil For the Deceased

1. Visitation occurs for the duration desired.
2. Then, everyone is invited to find a seat in the Basilica.
3. A prayer is offered. Followed by a reading from Scripture (This reading may be taken from the above selections or from any other section of the Bible.)
4. [Remarks or reflections are made by pre-selected friends or family members.]
5. A closing prayer is said, followed by a blessing and dismissal. Or, the Rosary may be prayed, led by either the Priest or by a family member or friend.

Alternatively, the family may choose to hold visitation before the funeral, or at the funeral home. In this case, a formal Vigil is not held, but the Priest is available to come and pray with the family or offer the Rosary.

### **Other Ministers and Guest Celebrants/Homilists**

The other ministers required for the Mass are, in general, provided by the Basilica parish (e.g. Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion, Ushers, etc.) Friends and family members may serve as ushers if desired.

If the family desires that the Celebrant of the funeral be another priest who is not in residence at the Basilica, the family needs to make this request directly to the Rector. Priests who are not incardinated in the Diocese of Jackson will be required to provide a Letter of Suitability from their Diocese. Even if the Celebrant is a guest priest, the regulations given in this packet are to be followed for all Funerals at the Basilica parish.

Concelebrating priests are always welcome for all liturgies at the Basilica. Deacons who are not incardinated in the Diocese of Jackson will similarly be required to provide a Letter of Suitability from their Diocese.

A visiting concelebrant or deacon is welcome to serve as homilist at the request of the family.