

# LITURGY NOTES



## A Resource for Worship & Spirituality Commissions

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Diocese of Gary

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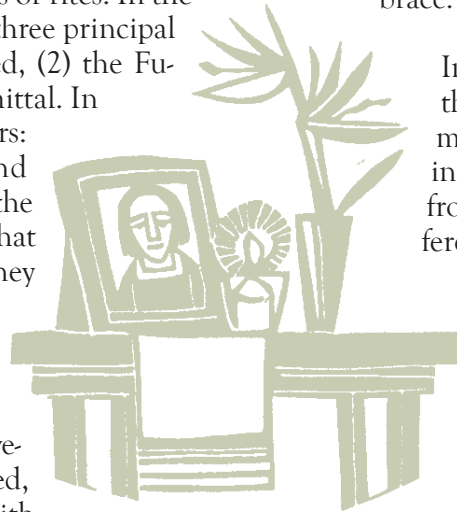
## Welcome!

Welcome to our second issue of *Liturgy Notes*. This issue focuses on the Order of Christian Funerals. In 1989, a new book containing the funeral liturgy rites was promulgated for the Dioceses of the United States. An "Order" is a compilation of various liturgies or rites. In the Order of Christian Funerals there are three principal liturgies: (1) the Vigil for the Deceased, (2) the Funeral Liturgy and (3) the Rite of Committal. In addition the Order contains other prayers: For example, prayers after death and prayers for gathering in the presence of the body. The "genius" of the Order is that there are rites and prayers for the journey of bereavement. Bereavement, as we know, does not happen overnight, but takes a while. Thus, bereavement is a process. The prayers and rites along the journey connect the process of bereavement with the faith of the one who died, the faith of those who grieve and the faith of the Church. The prayers and rites help us face the mystery of death with faith, hope and love. Our prayers for the deceased gives us a hope that looks beyond empty tombs to the God of Jesus Christ that brings life from death, joy from tears, consolation from pain, and peace from heartache.

Using this issue as a foundation, you are invited and encouraged, in your worship and spirituality commissions, to discuss the issue of funerals and the ministry of consolation. November is a good time for parish-wide catechesis. The readings during November go well with preaching and catechesis on the various rites and prayers of the Order, the availability and selection of rites/prayers, respect for the deceased body, issues of cremation, and the mystery of death.

Death for us is not an end, but a deepening of the com-

munion that we have with God, through Christ Jesus and in the power of the Holy Spirit. Discipleship does not end at death, but is changed in a new way. At death, we pray that the angels may lead the deceased to see God face to face, to enter deeper communion with the Triune God, to find rest, peace and joy in our Abba's embrace.



In the mystery of death, the liturgies of the Order of Christian Funerals effect and manifest the great gift of God's transforming death into life. Just as God raised Jesus from death to life, so too disciples are offered the hope of life made new. God's reversal of Jesus' death, and our own deaths, is why Saint Francis could call death, "Sister Death." Despite and through death, God offers hope in the embrace of life, peace and light.

The funeral procession is itself an enactment of the journey we all will make from death to life. The liturgies and prayers of

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## Resources

*Here are some resources for your worship and spirituality commission.*

❖ "Does the Catholic Church Allow Cremation?" is a free bulletin insert published by LTP and available at <http://www.pastoralliturgy.org/resources.php>

❖ "Funeral Preparations" is another free bulletin insert: <http://www.pastoralliturgy.org/resources.php>

❖ "Questions Concerning Cremation, The Funeral Liturgy, and the Catholic Church" is a pamphlet by the Federation of Diocesan Liturgical Commissions, (c) 2000. and may be ordered online: [www.fdlc.org](http://www.fdlc.org) or via email: [publications@fdlc.org](mailto:publications@fdlc.org)

## This Issue

# Order of Christian Funerals

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the Order of Christian Funerals ~ from the moment of death to time beyond the burial of the body ~ helps to move the bereaved person from loss to healing to hope. Death is loss; separation can cause fear and isolation. The life our Triune God offers is the opposite: God meeting us where we are, offering communion/union, peace and hope through the rituals, music, gestures, prayers, and the community called Church. God is speaking in the present to the mourning community. God's words and actions are comforting those who mourn and moving them to see hope despite despair.



Bereavement is a human process, and is a time of remembering the life lived and as a gift from God. The Order of Christian Funerals: prayers, rites, scripture,

music, gestures, are lenses through which we are invited to see hope as God comes to the community.

Even though the body /cremated remains is buried, the mourning process is not over. Up to the fifth century, 40 days after the death, the community would gather at the gravesite for a meal and also yearly on the birthdate. This was later moved to the date of death as the birth of the person into eternal life. During my own grandfather's death, with whom I was close, while it was hard the first two weeks after his death, it was the month and two months after his death that was harder. Adjusting to new ways of living without his physical presence, no more cards, offers of sympathy, no more rituals or stories of what he meant to people. It was during this time I needed the church community to help me pray, remember, and look to the future and present with hope and faith in God's offer of life. ❖

### Questions for Discussion:

1. How does the parish and its ministries currently journey with those who bereave? Does the parish have a ministry of consolation? Who helps prepare the funeral liturgies? What ministries are involved?
2. In what ways could the parish's ministry of consolation improve without it becoming a purely educational enterprise?
3. In many parishes there are powerful prayer services on the Commemoration of All the Faithful Departed (All Souls' Day, November 2nd) to remember the deceased over the past year, which is usually followed by a dinner. Are there other opportunities for the parish to journey with the bereaved? What could the parish do that would show its presence to those bereaving?
4. What catechetical needs do parishioners need about the funeral rites? How might this be done?

### Notable Quote:

*When a member of Christ's Body dies, the faithful are called to a ministry of consolation to those who have suffered the loss of one whom they love. The Church calls each member of Christ's Body ~ priest, deacon, layperson ~ to participate in the ministry of consolation: to care for the dying, to pray for the dead, to comfort those who mourn."*

(The Order of Christian Funerals, article 8)

