

FOOD *for* THOUGHT

Sadly, a practice has developed among some people when a family member dies. Relatives who might not be churchgoers themselves decide NOT to give the deceased person a Catholic Funeral, contrary to the wishes of the deceased. Sometimes they prefer to have a wake and burial and skip the Mass.

EVERY CATHOLIC HAS THE RIGHT TO THE CATHOLIC FUNERAL RITUAL. It should not be decided by relatives to take that right away.

A Catholic Funeral consists of a wake or visitation which could be brief, a Funeral Mass, followed by burial in or above ground or cremation. If cremation is selected, the cremated remains are to be buried or entombed in a niche or vault in a cemetery or columbarium.

THE WAKE

This period of visitation gives a family a chance to come together to mourn as well as celebrate the life of the deceased person. This is the proper time for flowers, gifts, photo tributes, eulogies and memorial items which celebrate the life of the person. Funeral Directors are expert in assisting families in all the different ways to memorialize the deceased. A person planning for their own future might even think of leaving a gift to the Church.

THE FUNERAL MASS

The General Introduction to the Order of Christian Funerals in paragraph 3 notes;

“In the Eucharistic sacrifice, the Church’s celebration of Christ’s Passover from death to life and the faith of the baptized in the paschal mystery is renewed and nourished. Their union with Christ and with each other is strengthened... Therefore when one of its members dies, the Church especially encourages the celebration of the Mass.” (#46)

The Mass is the opportunity for family and friends to pray for the deceased person as well as themselves. The Funeral Mass is less about the person who died but rather about Christ and His promise of new life. The Mass is never a judgement on the person who died but the family’s chance to renew their own beliefs in the gift of eternal life which Christ gave us on the day of our Baptism. The body of the deceased is brought to the church with reverence and dignity. In the presence of the body as well as family and friends gathered, the Priest offers the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass asking God to forgive any sins the deceased may have committed through human weakness and to open the gates of paradise for His servant.

THE BURIAL

The body of a deceased person is always treated with the utmost care and respect since it served as the dwelling place for God’s Spirit since Baptism. All Catholics are encouraged to bury their loved one in the consecrated ground of a Catholic cemetery. If this is not possible then the grave should be blessed at the time of the burial by a Priest or Deacon. Cremation is permitted by the Church providing it is not done because of the lack of faith in the Resurrection. If the body is cremated, the remains should then be buried or entombed in the same way as the body. The cremated remains should never be scattered or thrown in the wind or kept at home. They should be given the same respect as the body itself.

Thinking about these things now while you are alive gives the opportunity for you to discuss with your family your wish for a Catholic Funeral. Remember that these Sacred Rituals are your **RIGHT**.

If you have any questions feel free to speak to a Priest.