

November A Time to Remember Preparing for the Funeral (4)

November is the month we remember the faithful departed. Last week, I wrote about the Mystery of Eternal Life. This week I would like to discuss how to prepare for a funeral.

The time of death is a traumatic moment, especially if someone dies suddenly and unexpectedly. Even in those moments when death comes after a long illness, it still remains difficult to accept. For while we may think we are prepared for the death of someone we love, we are never completely prepared for the sense of loss and separation that follows. Moreover, making funeral arrangements can be daunting, especially if one has not made them before.

Working with a funeral director can relieve a great deal of stress. The funeral director will lead and guide you through the process and provide you with guidance and information. Thus one of the first things to do is to contact a funeral director. The funeral director will then be in contact with the local parish to make arrangements for the Funeral Mass and burial.

At St. Mary's we meet with the family after their meeting with the funeral director to discuss the Funeral Mass. To assist people in this process we have prepared a Funeral Guide that lists the scriptural readings and appropriate music for the Funeral Mass, as well as guidelines for those who wish to say a few words after communion. You can access these guidelines on our website, www.stmarysimsbury.org. On the homepage, go to the tab on the top right called "resources." Click "funerals," and you will find a link to "funeral guide." As you discuss the funeral liturgy with the priest, keep the following in mind.

First, the Funeral Mass is a moment when we pray for the deceased and celebrate our faith in the resurrection of Christ, which is the reason for our hope for eternal life. The readings the Church has chosen for the funeral liturgy and the music she suggests focus on our hope for resurrection life.

Second, the Funeral Mass provides opportunities for family members and friends to participate in the liturgy. For example, (1) they can read the scriptures, (2) bring up the gifts, (3) and one member can say a few words after communion on behalf of the deceased. Those who participate in the funeral liturgy should be people of faith who understand and believe in the central mystery that is being celebrated: the resurrection of Jesus Christ and our participation in that mystery.

Third, there is no need to create a funeral liturgy. The Church has already provided us with a powerful and faith-filled liturgy. Our task is to participate and share in it so that we can pray for the deceased, comfort the sorrowing, and celebrate our faith in the Lord's resurrection.

Next week, I will outline the major moments in the Funeral Liturgy: (1) The Vigil or Wake Service; (2) the Funeral Mass; and (3) The Rite of Committal at the Cemetery.

Father Matera

Please join us this Sunday Evening at 7:00 PM

Simsbury Interfaith Thanksgiving Service

Hosted by St. Mary's Parish
Reception to follow in the Parish Center