

The Church of Saint William



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A Parish Guide to Planning When Death Occurs

The journey begins with prayers immediately after death. It continues with prayers during the next days of wake and preparation, the funeral liturgy itself, followed by the final commendation, the journey to the place of burial or interment, and finally the committal to the grave.

The whole funeral ritual sees the time after death as a time of procession from the deathbed to the grave, a time of farewell and grief, a time of prayer and of strong hope in the loving kindness of God.

"Christians celebrate the funeral rites to offer worship, praise and thanksgiving to God for the gift of a life which has now been returned to God, the author of life and the hope of the just. The Mass, the memorial of Christ's death and resurrection is the principal celebration of the Christian funeral." -- General Introduction, *Order of Christian Funerals*

Plan Ahead

It is useful to consider "preplanning" some details of one's own funeral. For Christians, planning for death is primarily an act of faith begun in baptism. Our pastoral staff can meet with you to do this planning.

However, too much preplanning could make the survivors feel completely left out with no way to deal with their own grief. The revised *Order of Christian Funerals* strongly invites the family and close friends to take part in the planning and celebration of the various rites (The Vigil Service, Funeral Liturgy, Committal).

You might want to choose a funeral director in advance. Contact several to compare their fees. Check with relatives and friends for recommendations. We can let you know with whom we have worked.

In the case of serious illness or accident, please call us to arrange pastoral care.

When Death Occurs

We are most happy to help you as you deal with your loss. Normally, we do not turn anyone away from the Church of Saint William.

We invite you to call the parish office as soon as you are able (763-571-5600). Someone will respond within a few hours.

As soon as possible, a representative of the parish will arrange another time to gather with the family to begin the preparation of the funeral rites.

Call the funeral director to arrange a meeting with the family members. This usually occurs within 24 hours of the certification of death. The funeral director will propose options and point out the value of various choices rather than present a "packaged deal." The funeral director assists with the preparation of the obituary notice as well as making arrangements with the parish and cemetery.

Gather Information

The funeral recalls the entire life of the deceased. You will be asked to provide the dead person's vital statistics, including names of parents, birth date, etc. Some of this information will also be included in the obituary -- such as survivors, cause of death, etc.

The existence of insurance policies, service in the armed forces, membership in a union, etc. are also helpful for the director to know in determining the availability of death benefits.

Consider the role of distant relatives and others close to the deceased such as co-workers. The arrival of relatives from long distances might dictate the delay of services for a day or two.

Can I be Cremated?

Yes. Cremation is allowed in the Catholic Church. This should be worked out with the funeral director. The Church strongly prefers that the body of the deceased be present for the funeral rites, since the presence of the human body most clearly brings to mind the life and death of the person. The memorial service is a gathering that differs from a funeral only that the body is not present. Most often the cremated remains are present during the service in an urn.

Receiving the Body at the Church

This can happen at three different times:

- at the beginning of the vigil (if it is held at the parish)
- at the beginning of the funeral
- between the vigil and the funeral liturgy

This is an important part of the funeral rites of the church because it proclaims a message about the meaning of the church building and the church community celebrated in the funeral. It also speaks of the dead person as one who is baptized.

The Vigil or Wake for the Deceased

The purpose of the vigil is for the Christian community to keep watch with the family in prayer and find strength in Christ's presence.

You have options about scheduling the wake and the funeral. Evening funerals can be arranged.

Planning the vigil/wake and funeral liturgy is part of the healing process and we would be glad to assist you with this. You will be invited to choose scripture readings and music to be proclaimed at the vigil and the funeral. The wake is the ideal place for storytelling about the deceased. It is a time for a more personal expression of the family's sorrow and faith.

The Funeral Liturgy

The family of the deceased is invited to plan the funeral liturgy. This will include:

- Selecting scripture readings. (You will be given a small booklet called *Through Death to Life*, which includes appropriate scripture readings from which to choose.)
- Suggesting music possibilities to be included in the celebration (hymns and other songs that have special meaning for the family as well as choices that will encourage faith-filled participation.) Music is integral to the funeral rites and should be chosen with care. Its purpose is to support, console and uplift the participants and help to create a spirit of hope. The music director is available to assist you with suggestions.

Family members or others are invited to read, bring up the gifts, serve as pallbearers, etc. Composing prayers of petition is another way of personalizing the ceremony. The eulogy ("remarks of remembrance") can be part of the liturgy.

The Rite of Committal

This is celebrated at the cemetery. A member of the pastoral staff will accompany the procession and preside at the graveside.

Worship Aid (Program)

We will prepare a worship aid, which will include all the necessary music, prayers, etc. for your funeral liturgy.

Hospitality

If you want to have a meal or refreshments, we invite you to use Keefe Hall free of charge. We will assist with the arrangements. Let us know when we plan the funeral.

Follow-Up

A member of the staff will contact you and your family shortly after the funeral to offer assistance in the grief process. There are various support programs that may be helpful for survivors.

For more information, please call 763-571-5600 or e-mail mjrozek@stwilliams.com.