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November 30, 2018

My Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ:

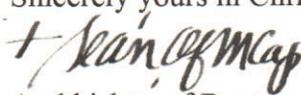
The prayers and rituals that the Church provides at the time of death and burial are an important expression of the richness of our faith. When a member of the Body of Christ dies, we come together to commend our loved one to the mercy of God in the sure and certain hope of Resurrection to eternal life as in prayer we express our belief that “for us, life is changed, not ended.” The Good News of the Gospel is that the mystery Christ’s death and Resurrection is intended for each of us. The Rites of Christian Burial help us to experience divine consolation in the midst of grief.

As we enter the Advent season and a New Year in the life of the Church I am pleased to promulgate the updated Archdiocesan policy for the Rites of Christian Burial. A copy of the updated policy is enclosed with this letter. This document strives to help our parishes celebrate the rites in the context of our pastoral plan *Disciples in Mission*.

On numerous occasions our priests and deacons have shared the challenges encountered as they seek to celebrate the Rites with reverence and dignity, especially in a culture that is increasingly secular. In response to these concerns Bishop Uglietto formed a commission to assess the funeral policy established in 1997 and suggest appropriate modifications. The updated policy was reviewed by our vicariates and brought to the Presbyteral Council, who provided their recommendation that it be approved. It is my hope this updated policy will enable our parishes to provide spiritual and pastoral care for those who are grieving the loss of a loved one.

When celebrated with care and reverence our rituals help people to experience more deeply the tender compassion of God. I am grateful to those who worked on updating this policy and all those in our parishes who participate in bereavement ministry. Together we ask for the intercession of our Blessed Mother, that Her Son comfort those who grieve and assist those who care for them.

With the assurance of my prayers, I remain,

Sincerely yours in Christ,

Archbishop of Boston

RCAB Policy on Ecclesiastical Funeral Rites

The celebration of a Christian funeral is rooted in our hope that death is not the end nor does it break the bonds that were forged in this life. In the face of death, the Church's mission is to share the Good News of the Gospel: that God has created each person for eternal life through the death and resurrection of His Son, Jesus Christ. The funeral rites of the Church are celebrated to offer worship, praise, and thanksgiving to God for the gift of a life which has now been returned to Him. Through these rites the Church intercedes on behalf of the deceased, and also ministers to those who are sorrowing with the strength and comfort of God's word and the sacrament of the Eucharist.

"If one member suffers in the body of Christ which is the Church, all the members suffer with that member" (1 Corinthians 12:26). All the members of the Church are called to a ministry of consolation to those who have suffered the loss of a loved one. The Church's ministers and all those who accompany the grieving through the funeral planning process are called first to be ministers of consolation and agents of hope. I pray that this funeral policy will help us to express more fully our faith and hope in Jesus Christ and in God's promise of eternal life for all who put their hope in him.

Upon recommendation of the Office for Worship and having heard the Presbyteral Council, I hereby promulgate the following *Policy on Ecclesiastical Funeral Rites and Instruction on Ecclesiastical Funeral Rites* for the Archdiocese of Boston¹:

1. With due regard for Canon 1184, the Catholic Faithful departed are to be given the Ecclesiastical Funeral Rites of the Catholic Church, which ordinarily includes the Vigil for the Deceased, the Funeral Mass, and the Rite of Committal. Application of the norms provided in Canon 1184 must be done in collaboration with the Office of the Vicar General.

¹ This Archdiocesan *Policy on Ecclesiastical Funeral Rites and Instruction on Ecclesiastical Funeral Rites* presuppose Church law on Ecclesiastical Funeral Rites as contained in the Code of Canon Law, canons 1176-1185; the Statutes of the Eighth Synod of the Archdiocese of Boston, Statutes IV:F1-4; the Policy on Stipends; the Policy on Offerings on the Occasion of Liturgical Celebrations; the *General Instruction of the Roman Missal*; the *Appendix to the General Instruction for the Dioceses of the United States of America*; the *Order of Christian Funerals*; and the *Ceremonial of Bishops*.

2. Care is to be taken that no one be deprived of proper Funeral Rites, including the Funeral Mass. Financial barriers should not become a burden for the poor or those unable to afford the customary offering to the Church.
3. The only Ecclesiastical Funeral Rite in English approved for use in the Archdiocese of Boston is the *Order of Christian Funerals* (1989). The only approved liturgical rite in Spanish is the *Ritual de Exequias Cristianas* (2002).
4. Rituals in other languages must be approved by the appropriate Episcopal Conferences prior to their use in the Archdiocese of Boston. In circumstances where there is a multi-lingual congregation, attention should be given to the languages in which the readings, prayers and sung responses are proclaimed.
5. Regarding Ecclesiastical Funeral Rites, catechumens are to be considered members of the Church.
6. All priests in good standing are granted the faculty to grant Ecclesiastical Funeral Rites, including the celebration of a Funeral Mass, for a baptized member of a non-Catholic Church or ecclesiastical community, provided such is not contrary to the previously expressed will of the deceased and the minister of the deceased is unavailable.
7. All priests in good standing are granted the faculty to grant Ecclesiastical Funeral Rites, including the celebration of a Funeral Mass, for a child who dies before Baptism provided the parents intended to have the child baptized.
8. When no priest or deacon is available to preside at the Vigil for the Deceased, a properly prepared lay minister may preside at the Vigil for the Deceased.
9. A Funeral Mass may be celebrated only in a church or in a chapel of a religious community or of a Catholic long-term care institution. A Funeral Mass is not to be celebrated in a private home or in a funeral home.
10. A Funeral Mass may be celebrated on any day except holy days of obligation, Holy Thursday, Good Friday, Holy Saturday, Easter Sunday, and the Sundays of Advent, Lent, and the Easter Season.
11. An announced intention Mass cannot be replaced by a Funeral Mass without prior consent of the person who requested the arranged intention Mass.
12. Regarding cremation, it is preferred that the Funeral Mass or Funeral Liturgy outside Mass be celebrated in the presence of the body of the deceased prior to its cremation.
13. All priests in good standing are granted the faculty to permit the celebration of the Funeral Mass in the presence of the cremated remains of the deceased.

14. The Funeral Mass or the Funeral Liturgy outside Mass may be celebrated in the presence of the cremated remains of the deceased person provided that the cremation was not chosen for motives in opposition to Catholic doctrine.
15. The homily at a Funeral Mass, as at all other Masses, and at a Funeral Liturgy outside Mass may be preached only by a bishop, priest, or deacon.
16. Ordinarily the Funeral Liturgy outside Mass is to be celebrated in a church or approved chapel.
17. The Funeral Liturgy outside Mass may be used when the Funeral Mass is not permitted due to the liturgical calendar, or when the pastor and the family judge that for pastoral reasons the Funeral Liturgy outside Mass is the more suitable form of celebration.
18. With regard to Words of Remembrance during the Funeral Mass, only one speaker, a member or a friend of the family, may speak briefly in remembrance of the deceased. The *Order of Christian Funerals* envisions that these words be shared following the prayer after Communion and before the Final Commendation. With respect for local custom and pastoral preference, parish policy may recommend that these words be shared before the Funeral Mass begins, before the Liturgical greeting and sprinkling of the body, instead of at the end of the Funeral Mass. Those who are planning the funeral for their loved ones are urged to consider other times when the Words of Remembrance might be more appropriate, such as at the vigil service in the funeral home or at the cemetery for the Rite of Committal.
19. Cremated remains should be buried or entombed in accord with the tradition of burying the dead. It is not permitted to scatter the ashes of the faithful departed in the air, on land, at sea or in some other way, nor may they be preserved in mementos, pieces of jewelry or other objects.
20. Local parish policy may not exclude priests from presiding at any of the rites contained in the *Order of Christian Funerals*.
21. The Office of Divine Worship is to be consulted prior to, and actively involved in, planning any funeral that will occur in the territory of the Archdiocese of Boston and be broadcast through television or other forms of media.
22. This policy governs for all funerals of laypeople in the Archdiocese of Boston, including those of civic leaders, members of the Armed Forces, and police and fire officers. However, special guidelines apply in the event of a death of a cleric; the Vicar General's office should be contacted immediately for direction upon such occasions.

RCAB Instruction on Ecclesiastical Funeral Rites

1. THE AUTHORITY OF THE ORDER OF CHRISTIAN FUNERALS

1. The only canonically approved liturgical rite in English is the Order of Christian Funerals (1989).
2. The only canonically approved liturgical rite in Spanish is the *Ritual de Exequias Cristianas* (2002).
3. Liturgical books in other languages must be approved by their proper Episcopal Conferences. Ministers in ethnic communities should take care that they are using the current approved translation of the Latin *Ordo Exsequiarum*.

2. ENTITLEMENT TO THE MINISTRY OF THE CHURCH AT THE TIME OF DEATH

Every Catholic, unless specifically excluded by the norms of law, is entitled to the Church's ministry at the time of death. Application of the norms provided in Canon 1184 must be done in collaboration with the Office of the Vicar General.

1. In coordination with the parish priest, the family of the deceased and the funeral director chosen by the family arrange the place and set the time for the Vigil, the Funeral Mass, and the Rite of Committal.

2. The Funeral Mass is the principal celebration of Catholic funerals in the Archdiocese of Boston, for it is in the eucharistic sacrifice that the Church celebrates Christ's Passover from death to life. When survivors hesitate to request a Mass, they should consult the pastor. The pastor should encourage the offering of Mass, explaining that the Funeral Mass is a prayer for God's mercy for the deceased and a solace for the living, including the entire faith community. If the family of the deceased chooses to celebrate the Funeral Liturgy outside Mass, then the parish should offer an intoned Mass for the repose of the soul of the deceased. In certain cases where there are not enough Masses available for these intoned Masses, then the parish should offer one monthly Mass for the sake of all those who died that month.

3. Catechumens may be given Ecclesiastical Funeral Rites.

4. In the Archdiocese of Boston, Ecclesiastical Funeral Rites, including the Funeral Mass, are permitted for a deceased baptized non-Catholic who might reasonably be presumed to desire or prefer the Catholic rite. Such a decision would be appropriate when non-Catholics worship regularly in the Catholic Church or identify with the Catholic Church more than any other.

5. To foster and respect family bonds, non-Catholic members of Catholic families may be interred in a Catholic cemetery. Clergy of other communions, vested if they desire, may conduct the cemetery rites according to their tradition, if the family so desires or if it was the expressed wish of the deceased.
6. The Church encourages the burial of Catholics in Catholic cemeteries (Canon 1180.1). Burial in the consecrated ground of a Catholic cemetery is a sign of baptismal commitment and gives witness, even in death, to faith in Christ's resurrection.
7. A child who dies before Baptism, or a stillborn or miscarried child, may be given ecclesiastical funeral rites if the parents intended to have the child baptized. The remains of fetuses or stillborns should always receive reverent Christian burial if this is at all possible. These remains may be placed either in specific individual graves or in a common burial area. Special care and pastoral outreach should be offered to the grieving parents.
8. The *Order of Christian Funerals* provides a complete funeral liturgy for children who have died (OCF #234-342). The various texts for a baptized child or a child who died before Baptism make these rites fully adaptable to various situations, and offer consolation for those suffering the extraordinary grief which comes with the death of a child.
9. There is no objection to Catholics making prior arrangements to donate their bodies or parts of them, after certain death, to advance medical science. Upon eventual disposition of the body or its parts, there should be reasonable assurance that the remains will be disposed of in a proper, reverential manner. The family of such a donor should be encouraged to celebrate a pro-burial Mass as soon as possible after death. Whatever remains of the body after an organ transplant or medical research should be given appropriate burial. The rite of final committal with final commendation (OCF #224-233) offers a model for concluding prayers for the donor and the donor's family (CCC 2300-2301).

3. INVOLVEMENT OF THE ENTIRE PARISH COMMUNITY

Since the ministry of consolation belongs to the entire Christian community, the entire community is to be involved in caring for the dying, praying for the dead, and comforting those who mourn.

1. Regular catechesis is encouraged to help parishioners understand their role in ministering to those who have suffered the loss of a loved one.
2. Parish policies, procedures, and ministerial resources are to be developed in light of these guidelines and communicated clearly to parishioners so they can take full advantages of the services available to them at time of death.

3. Parish priests should foster an attitude of respect and collaboration with local funeral directors, who are often the first people sought out by a family after the death of a loved one. Annual meetings on the vicariate level between local funeral directors and parish priests are strongly encouraged, especially in those cases where the relationship between the parish and local funeral home is not ideal. It is the responsibility of parish priests to inform funeral directors of the proper order and liturgical expression of the funeral rites set forth in the *Order of Christian Funerals*.

4. MINISTRIES IN THE RITES OF THE ORDER FOR CHRISTIAN FUNERALS

In keeping with the norms found in the Order of Christian Funerals, priests and deacons are to share the responsibility for planning and implementation of the Order with qualified lay ministers.

1. The rite, Gathering in the Presence of the Body (OCF #109-118), may be used if a priest, deacon, or parish minister is present at the time of death, or when the family first visits the body.

2. A pastoral outreach to the family by the priest of the parish is an expected part of the Church's ministry of consolation. The ministry of a bereavement group or ministry of consolation is an additional support to the pastoral outreach of the parish priest. The family and friends of the deceased should find hope and comfort in the Church's ministers, who grieve together with them.

3. Part of the priest's ministry to the grieving family may include the offer to celebrate the sacrament of reconciliation. This may be appropriate when the family has not participated in worship for some time. However, this does not warrant general absolution in the Archdiocese of Boston.

4. A full complement of liturgical ministers is recommended in the celebration of the various liturgies of the *Order of Christian Funerals*. "In liturgical celebration each person, minister or layman, who has an office to perform, should do all of, but only, those parts which pertain to his office by the nature of the rite and the norms of the liturgy" (*Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy*, #28).

5. The preparation of the liturgy may provide consolation for the mourners. However, the preparation of the liturgy should never become a burden for the family. In many cases it is pastorally prudent to simplify the number of choices that a family must make in planning the funeral of a loved one.

6. The *Order of Christian Funerals* recommends that family members be involved in some of the liturgical roles, unless they prefer not to be involved (OCF #15). Nevertheless, they might

designate the persons to place the pall or appropriate symbols on the casket at the reception at the doors of the church, as well as the persons to bring gifts of bread and wine to the altar (OCF #152).

7. Music selected for the *Order of Christian Funerals* should be appropriate for Christian prayer and conform to liturgical directives. The texts of the music should express the Paschal Mystery of Christ's passion, death, and resurrection. This is especially important for the Song of Farewell. Secular, non-liturgical songs are not to be used in the liturgy.

5. PRESIDING AT THE VIGIL

Parish policy may not exclude priests from presiding at this rite. When no priest or deacon is available to preside at the vigil, lay ministers who have been properly prepared may preside.

1. During the wake, the Vigil for the Deceased is the principal rite celebrated by the Church in the time following death and before the Funeral Liturgy. The practice of scheduling a specific hour for the Vigil for the Deceased is strongly encouraged when possible, in order for more of the faithful to participate in this liturgy. However, devotions such as the rosary are permitted at other times during the wake.

2. The Vigil for the Deceased may provide a chance to take part in the funeral rites for those unable to participate in the Funeral Mass or Rite of Committal.

3. When no priest or deacon is available, it is permissible for a trained lay minister to be designated by the pastor to preside at the Vigil for the Deceased, providing the person has been formed in an understanding of the *Order of Christian Funerals*, and is also skilled at leading public prayer. The Office for Worship will provide training and resources as needed and upon the request of the pastor.

4. When the Vigil for the Deceased is celebrated in a church, a priest or deacon is to be vested in an alb and stole. A priest may wear a cassock and surplice with stole.

5. When a wake takes place in the church, the Vigil for the Deceased with Reception at the Church (OCF #82) is to be celebrated.

6. Particular groups may be invited to celebrate a prayer service for the deceased in addition to the Vigil for the Deceased. In the case of religious communities of men and women, the customs and rituals of the community may be integrated into the Vigil for the Deceased or there may be distinct times of prayer within the wake. The Liturgy of the Hours, Office for the Dead, found in the *Order of Christian Funerals*, Part IV, provides a form of a Vigil for the Deceased. Morning prayer from the Office might also be celebrated on the day of committal, following an evening Funeral Mass.

7. The presence of a cantor or other music minister at the Vigil for the Deceased can be helpful in leading the people in prayer, particularly in the singing of the psalms and responses of the liturgy.

8. If the church has appropriate space, it is permissible to hold the wake in the church building. This possibility is to be considered in the course of building or renovation projects.

6. SCHEDULING THE FUNERAL LITURGIES

1. The Funeral Mass may be celebrated at any hour of the day. Each parish should develop a clear policy on funeral schedules which is shared with parishioners and local funeral directors. It is advisable to share this policy with the surrounding parishes and with the office of the regional bishop. While local policy should take into account the daily Mass of the parish, the availability of priests, the scheduling of liturgies and other parish events, sensitivity to the grieving family should be paramount in scheduling the Funeral Mass.

2. Priests in the Archdiocese of Boston are entitled to regular time away from the parish, which usually consists of a weekly day off. While balancing the pastoral needs of the parish with the personal needs and health of the priests, care must be taken to clearly communicate these regular days off to the pastoral staff and to local funeral directors. As priests are being asked to take on more and more, it would be beneficial to coordinate days off with other local clergy, so as to ensure a pastoral presence in the event of funerals or other unexpected pastoral needs in the parish.

In the event that a family requests a funeral on a day in which a parish priest is not available because of another pastoral commitment or due to his regularly scheduled day off, the parish may allow the family to bring their own priest, provided he is a priest in good standing.

3. Parishes with many funerals may limit the number of funeral liturgies to be celebrated on any given day. It may not always be possible to have a Funeral Liturgy on a day or hour of one's choice. If a funeral cannot be scheduled on a particular day, ordinarily the funeral will be celebrated on the next available day.

4. If the Funeral Mass is celebrated in the evening, a sufficient length of time should separate it from the celebration of the Vigil for the Deceased. The schedule for the Rite of Committal, ordinarily the next day, should be announced and the faithful invited to reconvene at that time. With the growing number of immigrant communities in the Archdiocese of Boston, special consideration should be given to the work schedules of the family and friends of the deceased, who would often prefer to celebrate the Funeral Mass in the evening.

5. The Vigil for the Deceased should be celebrated at a convenient time. The time for the Vigil for the Deceased should ideally be published in the obituary notice, allowing the family and

friends of the deceased to participate in the Vigil as they desire. Often this will depend on the availability of the Church's minister who will preside over this rite.

6. Funeral Directors are asked to respect the correct names of the various liturgical rites in written obituary notices. Proper terms such as "Vigil for the Deceased", "Funeral Mass", "Funeral Liturgy outside Mass", and "Rite of Committal" are encouraged.

7. Morning Prayer and Evening Prayer from the Office for the Dead (OCF, Part IV) may be scheduled during the time of the wake. The Office for the Dead may be celebrated in the funeral home, church, or oratory of a religious community, or in the family home.

8. Funeral Masses may not be celebrated during the Paschal Triduum or on holy days of obligation. Also a funeral Mass may not be celebrated on Sundays of Advent, Lent and Eastertide. While funeral Masses are permitted on the Sundays of Ordinary Time, they are to be discouraged given the realities of multiple Masses already being offered in the parishes, often by the same priest.

9. On days when the Funeral Mass may not be celebrated, the appropriate Rite is the Funeral Liturgy outside of Mass. A pro-burial Mass may be offered on another day, that is, a Mass offered for the repose of the soul of the deceased after the remains of the deceased have already been interred.

10. Although the Funeral Mass is ordinarily celebrated in the parish church to which the deceased belonged, it is possible to choose any Catholic church for the Funeral Mass, provided the pastor of that church agrees and the pastor of the deceased has been informed (Canon 1177). As a rule, the funeral rites for religious may be celebrated in their own church or oratory. The Funeral Mass may also be celebrated in chapels of Catholic long-term care institutions.

11. If two or more families, or a religious community, desire it, a Funeral Mass may be celebrated for more than one person.

12. The Funeral Mass may be celebrated at one of the regularly scheduled daily Masses in the parish. Particularly in instances where the deceased does not have a large family or circle of friends, the presence of the daily Mass community is extremely consoling to the mourners. A core group of readers, extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion, funeral choir, and servers may emerge from the daily Mass community.

13. When a Funeral Mass is to be celebrated as the daily Mass, every effort will be made to announce this to the daily assembly well in advance. If an announced Mass has been scheduled for a daily Mass, it is not possible to substitute a Funeral Mass without the consent of the person who has requested the announced Mass. If it is the parish's policy to give precedence to a funeral Mass over the regularly scheduled Mass intention, every effort

should be made to inform those requesting daily Mass intentions of this policy at the time of booking.

7. PRESIDING AT THE FUNERAL LITURGY

1. Only a bishop, priest or deacon is allowed to preach the homily at the funeral liturgy.
2. A eulogy is not appropriate where a homily is prescribed (OCF #27), although examples from the person's life may be used in the homily. The literary genre of eulogy is not a homiletic form. Rather, the homily is to "illumine the mystery of Christian death in the light of the Risen Christ (CCC #1687)" as proclaimed in the readings.
3. Excellence in preaching is of critical importance to the evangelizing task of the Church, especially at a moment when the faithful who live apart from the regular life of the Church may yearn for a message of faith and Christian hope.
4. In the Archdiocese of Boston, one speaker chosen by the family may offer a brief remembrance of the deceased at the Funeral Liturgy, either before the Funeral Mass begins or before the final commendation. The remarks are to be simple, prepared and brief, ordinarily not to exceed five minutes. Care must be taken to follow this. Some priests have found it helpful to see the text beforehand. Within the context of a liturgy, the tone should remain one of faith and hope.
5. Other occasions might offer opportunities for individuals to share remembrances of the deceased, such as during the wake service or at the cemetery. It might also be suggested to print words of remembrance in a special program booklet or worship aid, especially when there are requests for more than one person to speak, or when the time limit is too restrictive.

8. THE FUNERAL MASS

In the dioceses of the United States, the principal rituals in the Order of Christian Funerals are the Vigil for the Deceased, the Funeral Mass, and the Rite of Committal. The Funeral Mass is the central liturgy of the Christian funeral in the Archdiocese of Boston.

1. The Eucharist is the heart of the Paschal reality of Christian death (*Catechism of the Catholic Church* #1689). In the celebration of the Eucharist, the Church most perfectly expresses her communion with those who have died. The celebration of the Eucharist at the funeral is an opportunity for the community of the faithful, and for the family, to "learn to live in communion with the one who has 'fallen asleep in the Lord,' by communicating the Body of Christ of which he is a living member and, then, by praying for him and with him" (*Catechism of the Catholic Church* #1689).

2. The Introductory Rites of the Funeral Mass presume a greeting of the mourners who accompany the body to the doors of the church. They are greeted by the priest and liturgical ministers, and other persons who have gathered at the church to await the procession from the funeral home or family home. The ritual plan for a parish must take into account the structure of the liturgy, the size of the assembly, the architecture of the church, and the vicissitudes of climate.

3. It is not ordinarily permitted to seat the family members who accompany the body before the body is presented for blessing. Parishes are called upon to develop, in collaboration with funeral directors, policies which result in seating on both sides of the church and towards the front of the assembly area.

9. THE FUNERAL LITURGY OUTSIDE MASS

The Church identifies the Funeral Mass as the most fitting expression of prayer on behalf of the deceased. In consultation with the parish priest, some families may choose not to celebrate a Funeral Mass but rather the Funeral Liturgy outside Mass. This form of celebration might be more suitable especially for those families who are away from the regular practice of the faith. In any event, parishes should offer to celebrate a memorial Mass at a later date following the burial of the deceased.

1. The Funeral Liturgy outside Mass (OCF #177-203) is celebrated when a Mass is not possible or not deemed appropriate. It is ordinarily celebrated in the parish church, but it may also be celebrated in a funeral home, the home of the deceased or cemetery chapel (OCF #179). The pastoral advice of the parish priest is essential in determining what is appropriate.

2. The family may choose to celebrate a funeral outside of Mass, and schedule a memorial Mass at a later date, when it is determined in consultation with the parish priest that this form of the funeral liturgy is a more suitable form of celebration.

3. When the funeral liturgy is celebrated outside Mass, the community nonetheless gathers to hear the message of Easter hope proclaimed in the liturgy of the word and to commend the deceased to God. An invitation to a priest to "say some prayers" at a service does not constitute the liturgy of the Church.

4. The readings are chosen from those approved for Masses for the Dead.

5. Although the Order of Christian Funerals includes the possibility of Holy Communion in this form of the liturgy, this practice is not encouraged in the Archdiocese of Boston.

6. Music is an essential element of this form of celebration, which includes the entrance or gathering song, the responsorial psalm, the gospel acclamation, and especially the song of farewell at the final commendation.

10. MUSIC IN THE FUNERAL MASS

It is the pastoral responsibility of parishes to provide liturgical music at all Funeral Masses. Sacred music is integral to the funeral rites, able to console, uplift, and unite the assembly in faith and love. (*Sing to the Lord: Music in Divine Worship*, #246) The same liturgical norms applied to music at any Mass apply to the Funeral Mass.

1. An organist, instrumentalist, a cantor, and even a choir where possible should assist the full participation of the assembly in the songs, responses, and acclamations of the funeral Rites (OCF #33).

2. Certain musical texts are primary and should be sung at the Funeral Mass: the responsorial psalm, the gospel acclamation, the three acclamations of the Eucharistic Prayer, the "Lamb of God" litany, and the "Song of Farewell." These should not be sung by cantor, choir, or soloist alone. Rather, they belong to the assembly.

3. In the *Order of Christian Funerals*, as in all the reformed liturgical books, the cantor/leader of song has an important task. The task of the cantor is to animate and direct the singing of the assembly. With the exception of the responsorial psalm, which is sung from the ambo, the cantor ordinarily leads the assembly from a lectern. The Office of Divine Worship is charged with providing regular opportunities for cantor development and enrichment.

4. A hymnal or worship program is called for, so that the gathered community may participate fully. Copyright licenses and permissions are necessary, and many parishes have found annual licenses to be both convenient and inexpensive. A separate sheet might be prepared for the participation of the faithful in the committal at the cemetery.

5. A choir has proven of great worth in many parishes. Members of a funeral choir are often recruited from parishioners who are retired, self-employed, or whose work gives them freedom of schedule.

6. The selection of music for the funeral liturgy is often a highly sensitive issue for bereaved families, parish musicians, and pastoral staff. Therefore, it should be chosen with great care. Sacred music at funerals should console and uplift the grieving while expressing a spirit of hope in the Christian's share in Christ's victory over death. (OCF #31) The choice of music for Christian funerals must be in accord with all the recommendations governing music in liturgy, especially those found in *The Order of Christian Funerals (OCF)*, *Sing to the Lord: Music in Divine Worship (SttL)*, and *the General Instruction on the Roman Missal (GIRM)*. When choosing music, there are three standards of judgment put forth in *Sing to the Lord: Music in*

Divine Worship (SttL) that must be considered. 1) The Liturgical Judgment: is a particular musical composition's form, placement and style congruent with the nature of the liturgy? (SttL #127) 2) The Pastoral Judgment: The actual gathered community is taken into consideration. Does a particular musical composition help the assembly pray and draw them closer into the sacred mysteries being celebrated? (SttL #130) 3) The Musical Judgment: is this composition technically, aesthetically, and expressively worthy to carry the weight of the mysteries being celebrated? (SttL #134)

7. The principle of progressive solemnity, described in *Sing to the Lord* (SttL), applies to the rites found in *The Order of Christian Funerals*. The dialogues and acclamations, antiphons and psalms, and the Song of Farewell have priority in funeral liturgies (SttL, #115). Many of these may be drawn from the repertoire of the Sunday assembly.

Designated in many places during the funeral rites, singing the psalms takes priority as “they powerfully express the suffering and pain, the hope and trust of people of every age and culture. Above all the psalms sing of faith in God, of revelation and redemption.” OCF (#25-26)

8. The responsorial form of psalm singing, in which the psalmist or choir sings the verses and the assembly responds with a brief antiphon, is well suited to the funeral liturgy. The practice of substituting paraphrased texts and metrical hymns for the Responsorial Psalm is not encouraged, as it is part of the Liturgy of the Word. It ‘holds great liturgical and pastoral importance, because it fosters meditation on the word of God.’ (GIRM, #61)

9. The request for “favorite songs” of the deceased often result in inappropriate performances of music incapable of bearing the weight liturgy demands. Secular music, even if personally meaningful to the deceased or mourners, is never appropriate for the Sacred Liturgy. (SttL #246) Popular songs, sentimental ethnic music, songs from theater or film, and even non-liturgical or quasi-religious music are never to substitute for music of the funeral liturgy. Furthermore, “music should never be used to memorialize the deceased, but rather to give praise to the Lord, whose Paschal Sacrifice has freed us from the bonds of death.” (SttL #248)

10. Music is preeminent among the signs expressed by the participants in any liturgy. Therefore, recorded music is not to be used within the liturgy to replace the congregation, the choir, the organist, cantor, or other musicians. (SttL, #93-94).

11. THE RITE OF COMMITTAL

The Rite of Committal is celebrated at the place of burial or interment and never in the church.

1. The Rite of Committal, whether at an interment chapel, at a mausoleum or at a graveside, is a gathering of the faithful for prayer.
2. Military services and certain cultural or social rites are permissible at the cemetery. These other services should be arranged in advance with the local parish priest and coordinated in such a way that they do not disrupt or distract from the integrity of the liturgical committal service. Funeral directors are called upon to assist in the coordination of these elements, and to safeguard the integrity of the Church's liturgy at the Rite of Committal.
3. If a lengthy time has passed since the celebration of the Funeral Mass, or if the funeral has been conducted overseas or in a distant state, the Rite of Committal with Final Commendation (OCF #224-233) may be more appropriate.

12. CREMATION

While the Church recommends that the pious custom of burying the bodies of the dead be observed, cremation is permitted as long as it has not been chosen for reasons contrary to Catholic teaching (Canon 1176.3 Catechism of the Catholic Church, #2301). Given the increased practice of cremation in recent years, special care must be given to communicate the proper disposition of the remains in keeping with Christian tradition and respect for the body.

1. It is preferred that the Funeral Mass or the Funeral Liturgy outside Mass be celebrated in the presence of the body of the deceased prior to its cremation. (OCF Appendix Cremation #411-438)
2. The significance of having the body of the deceased present for the funeral liturgy is indicated throughout the Mass texts and ritual actions. Therefore, when arrangements involving cremation are being made, the parish priest is to recommend that: a) following a wake, or a time of visitation, the Funeral Mass be celebrated in the presence of the body of the deceased person, and that following the Funeral Mass, the body of the deceased be cremated; b) the Funeral Mass conclude with the final commendation in the church; c) at an appropriate time, usually some days later, the family gather at the cemetery for the burial of the cremated remains. The Rite of Committal takes place at this time with the inclusion of the proper prayers for the committal of ashes (OCF #406.3).
3. If cremation has already taken place before the Funeral Mass, the pastor may permit the celebration of the Funeral Mass in the presence of the cremated remains of the deceased person.
4. Special circumstances occur, such as health concerns or out-of-state or overseas transport which prompt families to arrange for cremation before making funeral arrangements. If

cremation has taken place, the parish priest is to recommend: a) gathering with family and friends for prayer and remembrance of the deceased; b) celebration of a Funeral Mass; c) gathering with family and friends for the interment of cremated remains at the cemetery in the Rite of Committal.

5. Cremated remains should be treated with the same respect given to the remains of a human body, and should be buried or entombed. It is not permitted to scatter the ashes of the faithful departed in the air, on land, at sea or in some other way, nor may they be preserved in mementos, pieces of jewelry or other objects.

13. THE BISHOP IN THE ORDER OF CHRISTIAN FUNERALS

1. It is fitting when a bishop is present at a Funeral Mass that he be the Principal Celebrant. If he is not the Principal Celebrant at a Funeral Mass, in the Archdiocese of Boston he participates and leads the Rite of Commendation (Ceremonial of Bishops, #175).

14. CUSTOMARY OFFERINGS

1. Care is to be taken that the poor are not deprived of a proper funeral, including the celebration of the funeral Mass. Funeral directors are to be advised that fees associated with the church are to be listed only as offerings, and as such are not required for the proper celebration of a funeral. In accordance with traditional custom, offerings may be accepted by the parish on the occasion of a funeral. The offerings which are given are to be placed in the parish account (Synodal Statute V-8, also Archdiocesan Policy Handbook, p. 2603).

2. The offering on the occasion of a funeral does not include the professional fees for an organist, cantor, or other support services, unless this is part of the contract for the professional musician. Fees for musicians should be established on the parish level by the pastor in consultation with the musicians involved (Pastoral Guidelines and Policies Book II, p. 6316 or Offerings on the Occasion of Liturgical Celebrations). Each parish is to have a plan for assisting families with financial hardship. Priests and deacons whose responsibilities include the spiritual care of patients or residents at various institutions and hospitals may want to initiate action for charity burials when the deceased has no relative to do this. Funeral directors should be informed that no offering is expected from the poor or those unable to afford an offering.

15. MINISTRY OF CONSOLATION

The establishment of a bereavement ministry is encouraged for every parish of the Archdiocese.

1. A bereavement ministry is a part of the ministry of the Church. "Those who are baptized into Christ and nourished at the same table of the Lord are to be responsible for each other" (OCF #8). This ministry of mutual charity, caring for others in sickness, death, and mourning, is a call to every believer — priest, deacon, religious, layperson. The responsibility of the bereavement ministry rests with the community, which is to be instructed in this care by pastors, parochial vicars, and other ministers.
2. The ministry of bereavement extends well beyond the time of the funeral.
3. Hospice chaplains and health care providers who have accompanied the deceased and their family in the last days of life often come from a diverse background. The best role for them at the time of the funeral rites is often not in the liturgy but rather to accompany the family in prayer and support.

16. CONCELEBRATION AT THE FUNERAL MASS

Frequently, the decision is made that a Funeral Mass be concelebrated by several priests. Priests who are invited to concelebrate should be aware of the prescriptions of canon 905: "For a just cause, a priest is permitted to celebrate Mass twice on any given day." The norms set forth in the General Instruction of the Roman Missal #199 - 251 are to be followed carefully, as well as the NCCB document "Guidelines for the Concelebration of the Eucharist" (1987).

1. Concelebration is a sign and a strengthening of the fraternal bond of priests and of the whole community, and is "the preeminent manifestation of the Church in the unity of sacrifice and priesthood and in the single giving of thanks around the one altar" (*In celebrationae Missae*, August 1973, #1).
2. Families planning to invite priests to concelebrate at the funeral liturgy or to fulfill other roles in the course of the funeral rites are encouraged to communicate these plans to the pastor. As a courtesy to liturgical planners, priests who expect to participate in this way should contact the parish or religious community in advance.
3. Concelebrants should be seated together as a group. They should not be intermingled with the assembly, nor should anyone be seated between the concelebrants and the altar. Concelebrants must not be placed in such a way as to form a barrier between the altar and the Faithful, who kneel during the Eucharistic Prayer. Their position should not obscure the fact that only one bishop or presbyter presides over the entire action. Care is to be taken that the concelebrants neither usurp the place nor limit the functions of other liturgical ministers.
4. In the Archdiocese of Boston concelebrating clergy are expected to wear the white "Boston Chasuble".

DECREE OF PROMULGATION

In Nomine Domini.

In consideration of the time that has gone by and in light of current pastoral needs and the implementation of the Pastoral Plan for the Archdiocese of Boston, *Disciples in Mission*, a task force (hereafter, the “Task Force”) was created to revise the Policy on Ecclesiastical Funeral Rites, including the Instruction on Ecclesiastical Funeral Rites (hereafter “Funeral Policy”), originally promulgated in 1997. The Task Force was composed of clergy and laity. The Task Force began meeting to discuss revisions to the Funeral Policy in March of 2017. The concern voiced at the Presbyteral Council at the outset of the work of the Task Force was that the revisions to the Funeral Policy not be overly legalistic, but more Pastoral in its approach.

The Task Force met on five different occasions to discuss the revisions to the Funeral Policy. On September 28, 2017, the draft of the revisions to the Funeral Policy was distributed to the members of the Presbyteral Council. The drafts were discussed at the Vicariate Meetings, and the feedback was brought to the Presbyteral Council for further discussion on October 26, 2017. Further discussions were held by the Presbyteral Council on December 7, 2017, January 11, 2018 and the draft was further revised based upon this feedback to create the final draft (hereafter “Revised Funeral Policy”). At the June 19, 2018 Presbyteral Council Meeting, the membership overwhelmingly voted in favor of implementing the Revised Funeral Policy. There were no votes against implementation and one abstention.

Therefore, in accord with canons 8, 29, 381 §1, and 391 I hereby decree and promulgate as particular law for the Archdiocese of Boston, the Revised Funeral Policy, to be known as the *RCAB Policy on Ecclesiastical Funeral Rites*. In accord with canon 34, I also hereby decree and promulgate as an Instruction to the *RCAB Policy on Ecclesiastical Funeral Rites*, the *RCAB Instruction on Ecclesiastical Funeral Rites*.

This Decree and the *RCAB Policy on Ecclesiastical Funeral Rites* and the *RCAB Instruction on Ecclesiastical Funeral Rites* shall be published and made known to the priests of the Archdiocese of Boston by electronic mail, as well as by posting on the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Boston Curia website.

Any policy or particular law of the Archdiocese that is contrary to the *RCAB Policy on Ecclesiastical Funeral Rites* and the *RCAB Instruction on Ecclesiastical Funeral Rites* is hereby repealed and abrogated.

This Decree shall become effective at 12:01 AM on December 2, 2018, the first Sunday of Advent.

Given at the Pastoral Center of the Archdiocese of Boston in Braintree, Massachusetts this 19th day of November, 2018.



Archbishop of Boston



Chancellor



Revised RCAB Funeral Policy ~ What's new? What's not?

Cremation

With the increasing number of our faithful requesting cremation at the time of death, there are often many questions surrounding the proper disposition of the cremated remains once the funeral has been celebrated. The revised policy seeks to clarify the church's teaching on the resurrection of the body. The new language concerning cremation comes from the Holy See's instruction, "Ad resurgendum cum Christo" ("To Rise with Christ"), "regarding the burial of the deceased and the conservation of the ashes in the case of cremation."

- *RCAB Policy, #19*: "Cremated remains should be buried or entombed in accord with the tradition of burying the dead. **It is not permitted to scatter the ashes of the faithful departed in the air, on land, at sea or in some other way, nor may they be preserved in mementos, pieces of jewelry or other objects.**"

Words of Remembrance

The issue of words of remembrance (*eulogies*) continues to be a hotly debated topic. The revised policy makes no change to the policy on eulogies in the Archdiocese.

- *RCAB Policy, #18*: "Following the prayer after Communion... only one speaker, a member or a friend of the family, may speak for not more than five minutes in remembrance of the dead."
- *RCAB Instruction, 7.4 & 7.5 (p. 9)*: "In RCAB one speaker chosen by the family may offer not more than a five-minute remembrance of the deceased at the Funeral Liturgy before the final commendation. The remarks are to be simple, brief, and prepared.... Some priests have found it helpful to see the text beforehand. Within the context of a liturgy, the tone should remain one of faith and hope.
"Other opportunities might offer opportunities for individuals to share remembrances of the deceased, such as during the wake service or at the cemetery."

Some RCAB parishes have dealt with the issue of words of remembrance by moving them to the beginning of the funeral Mass. Others have chosen to ban them altogether in preference for these remembrances to be shared at the wake or cemetery. The policy of RCAB is to simply reiterate what is already contained in the rubrics for the *Order of Christian Funerals*, #170: "A member or a friend of the family may speak in remembrance of the deceased before the final commendation begins."

Televised Funeral Masses of Politicians and Public Safety Personnel

Many priests have expressed concern over recently televised funeral Masses of local politicians and public safety personnel in which RCAB funeral policy was not followed, especially regarding the number of speakers during a funeral Mass. In most cases, the Office of Worship was never consulted

in preparation for the funeral, resulting in a very public liturgy that did not follow liturgical norms and directives. With the hope of avoiding these situations in the future, two new items have been introduced into the funeral policy:

- RCAB Policy, #21: **“The Office of Divine Worship is to be consulted prior to, and actively involved in, planning any funeral that will occur in the territory of the Archdiocese of Boston and be broadcast through television or other forms of media.”**
- RCAB Policy, #22: **“This policy governs for all funerals of laypeople in the Archdiocese of Boston, including those of civic leaders, members of the Armed Forces, and police and fire officers. However, special guidelines apply in the event of a death of a cleric: the Vicar General’s office should be contacted immediately for direction upon such occasion.”**

Scheduling of Funerals and a Priest’s Day Off

Some priests have expressed concern over scheduling funerals on a day which has been designated as the priest’s day off. The Funeral Policy Committee discussed the need for a separate RCAB policy for priests and their time off. This type of policy would not be limited to funerals, but to the many pastoral activities associated with a priest’s ministry. In the absence of such a policy, this revised funeral policy includes two new sections in the instruction which cover the question of the scheduling of funerals and a priest’s availability:

- RCAB Instruction, 6.1 & 6.2 (pp. 7-8): **“In the event that a family requests a funeral on a day in which a parish priest is not available because of another pastoral commitment or due to his regularly scheduled day off, the parish may allow the family to bring their own priest, provided he is a priest in good standing. “Parishes with many funerals may limit the number of funeral liturgies to be celebrated on any given day. It may not always be possible to have a Funeral Liturgy on a day or hour of one’s choice. If a funeral cannot be scheduled on a particular day, ordinarily the funeral will be celebrated on the next available day.”**

Music in the Funeral Liturgy

The section on liturgical music has been edited to include the most recent instructions issued by the USCCB in their document, *Sing to the Lord: Music in Divine Worship*. While the revised policy repeats the prohibition on secular music, it also speaks more specifically about what constitutes sacred music that is appropriate for a funeral. The three standard judgments put forth in *Sing to the Lord* are a helpful tool in discerning what is and is not appropriate music for a funeral liturgy:

- RCAB Instruction, 10.6 (p. 12): **“1) The Liturgical Judgment:** is a particular musical composition’s form, placement and style congruent with the nature of the liturgy? **2) The Pastoral Judgment:** The actual gathered community is taken into consideration. Does a particular musical composition help the assembly to pray and draw them closer into the sacred mysteries being celebrated? **3) The Musical Judgment:** Is this composition technically, aesthetically, and expressively worthy to carry the weight of the mysteries being celebrated?”
- RCAB Instruction, 10.9 (p. 12): **“Music should never be used to memorialize the deceased, but rather to give praise to the Lord, whose Paschal Sacrifice has freed us from the bonds of death.”**