

Funerals at a Time of COVID 19

As a parish and a diocese, we are so sorry for your loss. To lose the people that we love is always difficult and lonely. Losing the people that we love during this pandemic makes our grief all the harder and more complicated. The normal rituals and support systems of family, neighbours and friends that usually sustain, hold and heal us at times like this are no longer freely available. Due to government restrictions, funerals now either go straight to the graveyard or the Church. Gathering people in confined spaces for vigil prayers or rosaries is not possible. The Government has stipulated that only 10 people can attend the funeral Mass (if a Mass is possible). This is incredibly sad as families and friends have to make awful decisions and inevitably dear family and friends end up not being able to attend the funeral Mass of the one they love. Restrictions for families become even more difficult if a family member dies of Covid 19 as family members may be in 'isolation' themselves. With all this sadness in mind, below are a few important suggestions that may help you find ways to give expression to your grief and hopefully find healing and comfort at this difficult time.

Some Things That Might Help at this Time

Family Rosary/Prayer Time

Light a candle and pray the rosary in your small family groups at a set time the evening before. (For those not familiar with how to pray the rosary, you will find instructions online)

Funeral Mass/At the Graveside

Broadcast the Mass: Check into the possibility of the funeral Mass being available online via Church Webcams or Facebook or some other way. A family member could arrange this even if the local church does not have the facilities to hand. Include these details in the obituary.

Symbols

Think of including symbols of your loved one's life that those present can place at the foot of the altar when prompted during the Mass or at a graveside. Someone could explain them.

Readings

Choose readings, reflections and prayers of the faithful for the funeral Mass (or the graveyard). You can write your own prayers of the faithful using the template given. It might be nice to especially include those who cannot attend the funeral in the choosing of the readings and in the choosing and writing of the prayers of the faithful and the reflection.

Helping the Priest

Provide the priest with details of your loved one's life, their love's and passions, their virtues and habits, in order that he can paint a picture of your loved one that brings comfort to you. Inform the priest of the names of dear family who cannot attend and where they might be watching from, to ensure that they are sympathised with and included in the Mass.

Music

If you do not have a singer or musicians, someone could pick hymns in conjunction with the priest that as a family you play during the ceremony using whatever you have to hand.

Eulogy

There may be an opportunity for a family member to say a few words about the deceased. Ideally these words are to be appropriate to the setting both in content and length.

Giving Expression to our Grief

Placing letters, pictures or tokens in a coffin or in a grave can be a comfort to some people. For younger people (or for anyone) creating a memory box of those we have lost and loved can be helpful.

Give words to your grief - talk regularly to friends and family in whatever way is possible. If your local parish broadcasts weekend Masses, ask to have a loved one's picture or name included. Pray for and to your loved one and call on God for strength and grace.

Old Testament/First Readings (Pick One)

A Reading from the Book of Ecclesiastes

For everything there is a season, and a time for every matter under heaven: A time to be born, and a time to die; A time to plant, and a time to pluck up what is planted; A time to kill, and a time to heal; A time to break down, and a time to build up; A time to weep, and a time to laugh; A time to mourn, and a time to dance; A time to cast away stones, and a time to gather stones together; A time to embrace, and a time to refrain from embracing; A time to seek, and a time to lose; A time to keep, and a time to cast away; A time to rend, and a time to sew; A time to keep silence, and a time to speak; A time to love, and a time to hate; A time for war, and a time for peace. God has made everything beautiful in its time.

The Word of the Lord.

A Reading from the Book of Wisdom

The souls of the virtuous are in the hands of God, no torment shall ever touch them. In the eyes of the unwise, they did appear to have died, their going looked like a disaster, their leaving us, like annihilation; but they are at peace. If they experienced punishment as men see it, their hope was rich with immortality; slight was their affliction, great will their blessings be. God has put them to the test and found them worthy to be with him; he has tested them like gold in a furnace, and accepted them like a burnt offering. When the time comes for his visitation they will shine out; as sparks run through the stubble, so will they. They shall judge nations, rule over peoples, and the Lord will be their king for ever. Those who trust in him will understand the truth, those who are faithful will live with him in love; for grace and mercy await those he has chosen. **The Word of the Lord.**

A Reading from the Book of Wisdom

But the just man, though he dies before his time, will find rest. Length of days is not what makes age honourable, nor number of years the true measure of life; Understanding, this is man's grey hairs, untarnished life, this is ripe old age. He has sought to please God, so God has loved him. Coming to perfection in such a short while, he achieved a long life; his soul being pleasing to the Lord, he has taken him quickly. Yet people look on, uncomprehending; it did not enter their heads that grace and mercy await the chosen of the Lord, and he watches over his holy ones. **The Word of the Lord.**

A Reading from the Prophet Isaiah

On this mountain, the Lord of hosts will prepare for all peoples a banquet of rich food. On this mountain he will remove the mourning veil covering all peoples, and the shroud enwrapping all nations, he will destroy Death forever. The Lord will wipe away the tears from every cheek; he will take away his people's shame everywhere on earth, for the Lord has said so. That day, it will be said: See, this is our God in whom we hoped for salvation; the Lord is the one in whom we hoped. We exult and we rejoice that he has saved us.

The Word of the Lord.

See below for Readings, Prayers of the Faithful and Reflections

Possible New Testament/Second Readings (Pick One)

A Reading from the First Letter of St. Paul to the Corinthians

Be ambitious for the higher gifts. And I am going to show you a way that is better than any of them. If I have all the eloquence of men and of angels, but speak without love, I am simply a gong booming or a clanging cymbal. If I have the gift of prophecy, understanding all the mysteries there are, and knowing everything, and if I have faith in all its fullness, to move mountains, but without love, it will do me no good whatsoever. Love is always patient and kind; it is never jealous; love is never boastful or conceited; it is never rude or selfish; it does not take offence and it is not resentful. Love takes no pleasure in other people's sins but delights in the truth. It is always ready to excuse, to trust, to hope and to endure whatever comes. Love does not come to an end. **The Word of the Lord.**

A Reading from the Second Letter of St Paul to Timothy

My life is already being poured away as a libation and the time has come for me to be gone. I have fought the good fight to the end; I have run the race to the finish; I have kept the faith; all there is to come now is the crown of righteousness reserved for me, which the Lord, the righteous judge will give to me on that Day; and not only to me but to all those who have longed for his appearing. The Lord will rescue me from all evil attempts on me, and bring me safely to his heavenly kingdom. To him be glory for ever and ever. Amen.

The Word of the Lord.

A Reading from the First Letter of St John

See what love the Father has bestowed on us that we should be called the children of God and so we are. The reason the world does not know us is that it did not know him. Beloved, we are God's children now; what we shall be has not yet been revealed. We do know that when it is revealed we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is. **The Word of the Lord .**

A Reading from the Second Letter of St Paul to the Corinthians

For we know that if the earthly tent we live in should be destroyed, we have a building from God, a dwelling not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. So we are always of good courage; we know that while we are at home in the body we are away from the Lord, for we walk by faith, not by sight. We are of good courage, and we would rather leave the body and go home to the Lord. So whether we are at home or away, we make it our aim to please him. For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may receive good or evil, according to what he did in the body. **The Word of the Lord.**

A Reading from the Letter of St Paul to the Romans

Nothing therefore can come between us and the love of Christ, even if we are troubled or worried, or being persecuted, or lacking food or clothes, or being threatened or even attacked. These are the trials through which we triumph, by the power of him who loved us. For I am certain of this: neither death nor life, no angel, no prince, nothing that exists, nothing still to come, not any power, or height or depth, nor any created thing, can ever come between us and the love of God made visible in Christ Jesus our Lord.

The Word of the Lord.

Prayers of the Faithful – (An Average of Six are Used, Feel Free to Edit These)

1. _____ touched the lives of all of us in a very special way and both in life and in sickness s/he was an example to us all. May we strive to imitate his/her virtues and so play our part in making the world a better place. **Lord hear us.**
2. Lord, we ask your blessing today on all those who are seriously ill, especially those sick with the virus, draw close to them and their families and bring them healing, light and peace. Bless and strengthen the family and friends and all who care for the sick and dying. **Lord hear us.**
3. We pray for strength and peace for _____'s family, his/her husband/wife_____, his/her daughters _____, his/her sons _____, his/her parents_____, his/her beloved grandchildren, brothers _____, sisters _____, his/her sons and daughters-in-law and all his/her relatives and friends, those here and sadly those broken hearted because they can't be here. May they find healing, peace and grace at this sad time. **Lord hear us.**
4. We pray in thanksgiving for the gift that was _____. We thank you for the blessings, light, humour and inspiration we received in and through him/her. **Lord Hear Us.**
5. For _____'s many friends and neighbours who are also mourning and sadly cannot express their sympathy in the normal ways. We pray in thanksgiving for their love and support and we pray that they too will find healing and peace. **Lord Hear Us.**
6. We pray in gratitude for those who cared for _____ – especially his/her family, his/ her carerswe also remember especially the care of Dr _____ and especially the nurses and staff of _____ who cared so lovingly for _____. May God continue to bless and strengthen them in their work. **Lord Hear Us.**
7. We pray for _____'s gentle soul. Help us to trust that s/he is now free from all sickness and limitation and may s/he be reunited with his/her husband/wife _____, his/her parents and all those whom s/he loved and have gone on before him/her. Together may they enjoy the peace, warmth and love of God's Kingdom. **Lord Hear Us.**
8. In the midst of our pain, we pray that God will grant us the serenity to accept the things we cannot change, the courage to change the things we can and the wisdom to know the difference. **Lord Hear Us.**
9. _____'s faith was an example to us all. S/he found both life and comfort in his/her faith. May we as family and friends also find life and comfort in and through our faith and may we trust in faith that _____'s love and light will be with us always. **Lord Hear Us.**

10. Family meant everything to _____ and s/he loved his/her family with every essence of his/her being. May we imitate the various virtues that s/he put before and especially strive to continue to strengthen the bonds of love that knit us together as family. **Lord Hear Us.**

Possible Post Communion Reflection (Optional)

A Mother's Love

A mother's love is something that no one can explain,
It is made of deep devotion and sacrifice and pain.

It is endless and unselfish and enduring come what may
For nothing can destroy it or take that love away...

It is patient and forgiving when all others are forsaking,
And it never fails or falters even though the heart is breaking...

It believes beyond believing when the world around condemns,
And it glows with all the beauty of the rarest brightest gems...

It is far beyond defining, it defies all explanation,
And it still remains a secret like the mysteries of creation....

A many splendored miracle, No-one can understand
And another wondrous evidence of Gods' tender guiding hand.

Miss Me – But Let Me Go!

When I come to the end of the road
And the sun has set for me
I want no rites in a gloom filled room
Why cry for a soul set free?

Miss me a little, but not too long
And not with your head bowed low.
Remember the love that we once shared
Miss me but let me go.

For this is a journey we all must take,
And each must go alone
It's all part of the Master's plan
A step on the road to home.

When you are lonely and broken hearted
Go to the friends we know
And bury your sorrow in doing good deeds.
Miss me - but let me go.

I'm Free

Don't grieve for me, for now I'm free
I'm following the path God has laid you see.
I took His hand when I heard him call
I turned my back and left it all.

I could not stay another day
To laugh, to love, to work, to play.
Tasks left undone must stay that way
I found that peace at the close of day.

If my parting has left a void
Then fill it with remembered joy.
A friendship shared, a laugh, a kiss
Oh yes, these things I too will miss.

Be not burdened with times of sorrow
I wish you the sunshine of tomorrow.
My life's been full, I savored much
Good friends, good times, a loved one's touch.

Perhaps my time seemed all too brief
Don't lengthen it now with undue grief.
Lift up your hearts and peace to thee
God wanted me now; He set me free.

Dad

You may have thought I didn't see, or that I hadn't heard,
Life lessons that you taught to me, but I got every word.

Perhaps you thought I missed it all, and that we'd grow apart,
But Dad, I picked up everything, it's written on my heart.

Without you, Dad, I wouldn't be the person I am today;
You built a strong foundation no one can take away.

You're the person I look up to, whose advice I always seek,
Without your presence near me, life would be so bleak.

Although you may not say it, I know your love is true,
It's written in your caring heart, and all the things you do.

I've grown up with your values, with a love both strong and mild,
So here's to you, dear father, from your forever grateful child.

When a Good Person Dies

Night is coming on. The last birds fly hurriedly to their nests. Slowly but surely darkness takes possession of the world. However, no sooner has darkness fallen, than the lights begin to come on below us, around us, above us, near us and far away from us, a candle in a window, a lamp in a cellar, a beacon in a lighthouse, a star in the sky.

And so we take heart and find our way again. When a good person dies darkness descends on us. We feel lost, bereft, forlorn. But gradually the lights begin to come on as we recall the good deeds done by the deceased. They spring up all over the place. We are amazed at how much light is generated. In this strange and beautiful light we not only find our way but find the meaning of life itself.

All is Well

Death is nothing at all';

I have only slipped away into the next room.

I am I, and you are you;

Whatever we were to each other, that we are still.

Call me by my old familiar name,

speak to me in the easy way which you always did.

Put no difference into your tone; wear no forced air of solemnity or sorrow.

Laugh as we always laughed at the little jokes we enjoyed together.

Play, smile, think of me, pray for me. Let my name be ever the household word it was. Let it be spoken without effect. Without the ghost of a shadow on it.

Life means all that it ever meant.

It is the same as it ever was; there is absolutely unbroken continuity.

Why should I be out of mind because I am out of sight?

I am but waiting for you, for an interval, somewhere very near, just around the corner,
All is well.