

word worship^{on}

A NEW FUNERAL RITE

"What! A new funeral rite! I thought we already had a new one!" This reaction to the new *Order of Christian Funerals* (OCF) is readily understandable until we recall once again the process of liturgical reform inaugurated by the Second Vatican Council. Three stages of renewal are envisioned. The first stage is the publication of the Latin original, the "typical edition" for the universal Church, which for funerals appeared as early as 1969 (*Ordo Exsequiarum*). The second stage is the translation of the Latin into the vernacular language, which was undertaken by the International Commission for English in the Liturgy (ICEL) and with ecclesiastical approval introduced in 1970 (*Rite of Funerals*). The third and final stage is one of inculturation, whereby the Latin *editio typica* is not only translated but also adapted to the temperament and tradition of the people. This third stage has already been reached in the case of *Rites for the Sick* (1983) and the *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults* (1988); it is especially important for funerals which admit of such a diversity of customs in the universal Catholic Church. The ICEL revision was canonically approved by the National Conference of Catholic Bishops in November 1985. In April 1987 the NCCB received the decree of the Congregation for Divine Worship confirming the American Bishops' approval of the revised and adapted version of the *Ordo Exsequiarum*. The Congregation also asked that some ten pages of minor modifications be made, most of them having to do with the originally composed prayers. These changes being effected, Archbishop John May, President of the NCCB directed that the OCF may be published and used on October 1st and, as the official Roman Catholic ritual for funerals in this country, must be implemented by November 2nd, All Souls Day, 1989.

The pastoral experience of more than fifteen years with the *Rite of Funerals* is reflected in the OCF in such wise that the revised and adapted ritual can be characterized by the following features: an improved ritual format, changes in liturgical symbols, the inclusion of new material, and an overall pastoral theological thrust.

1. Improved Ritual Format.

The 1969 *Ordo Exsequiarum* contained rites for the vigil and three plans of the funeral rite: Plan I with three stations (home, church, cemetery), Plan II with two stations (cemetery chapel, grave), and Plan III with a single station at the home of the deceased. These three plans, designed to meet the varying customs of the universal Church, were reprinted in their entirety in the *Rite of Funerals*. All this made for a rather cumbersome ritual for use in this country where Plan I prevails.

The OCF has a much more workable format with five parts. Part I, "Funeral Rites," highlights the three principal ritual moments: the Vigil, the Funeral Liturgy, and the Rite of Committal. The Vigil is "the principal rite celebrated by the Christian community in the time following death and before the funeral liturgy" (#54). The Funeral Liturgy is "the central celebration of the Christian community for the deceased" (#128). The Rite of Committal is "the conclusion of the funeral rites, the final act of the community of faith in caring for the body of its deceased member" (#204). Each of these primary rites, and indeed all the rites of the OCF, is introduced by an appropriate scriptural citation, pastoral notes on the structure as well as ministry and participation, and a helpful outline.

Part II, "Funeral Rites for Children," continues the concern of the Council Fathers at Vatican II who decreed that there be a new rite of burial for infants (CSL #82). Part III, "Texts of Sacred Scripture," with very minor changes simply repeats the lectionary contained in the 1969 rite; a handy index of these readings has been added. (Special circumstances, however, do not seem to foreclose the possibility of selecting other appropriate readings from scripture not found in this list). In keeping with the restoration of the Liturgy of the Hours as the prayer of the entire people of God, the Office of the Dead (Part IV) may be used not only at wakes for priests, but also for the vigil service of all the faithful. In the case of an evening funeral liturgy, morning prayer could be celebrated before the procession to the place of committal. And finally, Part V, "Additional Texts," contains a rich collection of prayers and

texts and also reprints the order for Holy Communion outside Mass.

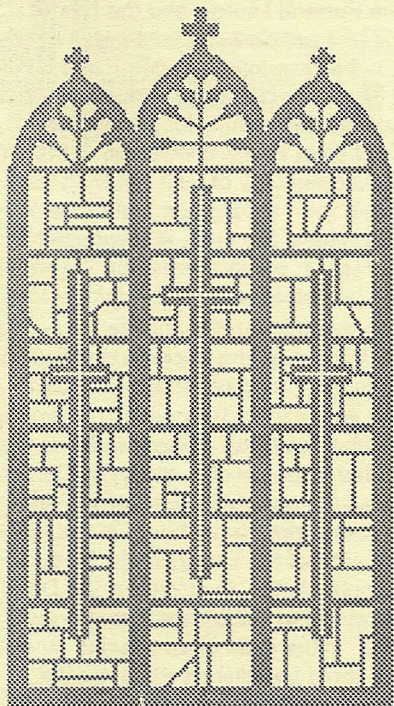
2. Changes in Liturgical Symbols

Some adjustments have been made in the use of the baptismal symbols of the introductory rites to the funeral liturgy. A single formula encompassing the meaning of both holy water and the white pall calls attention to the fact that death for a Christian is the culmination of the mystery of Christ crucified and risen whose life we put on the day of our baptism. As the priest sprinkles the coffin with holy water he says:

In the waters of baptism N. died with Christ and rose with him to new life. May he/she now share with him eternal glory.

The pall may be placed on the coffin by family members, friends, or the priest and is done in silence, presumably in order to let the power of the symbol speak for itself: it is as if the baptismal garment has been extended to cover the entire body of the deceased Christian who has now entered into the fulness of the paschal mystery. The Easter candle is no longer carried in the entrance procession but remains stationary, placed beforehand near the position the coffin will occupy at the end of the procession.

Other symbols may also be placed on the coffin such as the Book of the Gospels or Bible and a cross. Appropriate texts to accompany these actions are found in Part V under



"Placing of Christian Symbols." When to use these additional options - perhaps at funerals of Catholic Christians especially involved in the life of the Church - will be a matter of pastoral discretion and discernment.

The use of incense is a sign of honor to the body of the deceased which served as a temple of the Holy Spirit. The rubrics for optional incensation at the preparation of gifts direct that the gifts and altar, priest and congregation may be incensed; there is no mention of incensation of the body at this time (#144). In the apparent interest of not reduplicating symbols, the incensation of the body is now reserved as a sign of farewell at the final commendation concluding the funeral liturgy.

3. New Material

The inclusion of new material emanating from pastoral experience is at the heart of the adaptation of the funeral rite to the situations obtaining in the English-speaking world.

"Related Rites and Prayers" (Part I) have been introduced for use with the family in the time between death and the funeral liturgy. They are three in number, any or all of which may be used as pastoral circumstances dictate; i.e. when the occasion calls for prayer together. Common to all three are an invitation to prayer, reading from scripture, Lord's prayer, and concluding prayer and blessing. They are secondary rites which do not call for a full public celebration. The first is "Prayers after Death" which may be prayed at the time of the first meeting with the family; if the body is present, a sign of the cross may be made on the forehead of the deceased. The second is the "Gathering in the Presence of the Body," which foresees the first gathering around the body of the deceased such as the first viewing by the family; at this time the body may be sprinkled with holy water. The third rite with the family is the "Transfer of the Body to the Church or to the Place of Committal" which would take place at the time of the closing of the casket. The minister of these services is left unspecified: a priest, deacon, layperson - be this a member of the parish staff or bereavement team, a family member, or the funeral director.

"Funeral Rites of Children" (Part II) are an improved adaptation of the principal rites of Part I for adults (vigil, funeral liturgy, committal). The intended age is

that of infants up to and including young children of early school age. The predominant image of the prayers and readings is that of God "holding" the deceased child in God's arms. The service may also be used for unbaptized children, in which case the prayers and intercessions are very hopeful and compassionate. Unfortunately, there are no special related rites and prayers for the family; these are to be adapted from

Funerals are for God, for the deceased and for the living.

the models presented in Part I.

What may prove to be of the greatest pastoral benefit are the "Additional Texts" (Part V). Of the 47 "Prayers for the Dead" 19 are Latin translations and 28 are originally composed in English. A helpful index lists titles such as these: "Parents," "A married couple," "A deceased non-Christian married to a Catholic," "An elderly person," "One who died accidentally or violently," "One who died by suicide." The 15 prayers for the mourners include hopeful collects for a child who died without baptism and a still born child. Multiple textual options are provided for all the parts of the OCF. There are seven general intercessions and litanies, three of which are for children. The committal prayers include options for the interment of ashes in the case of cremation. The procedure in this instance would be for the cremation to take place *after* the funeral liturgy with the body present. Pastoral ministers will need to read the OCF carefully in order to be familiar with the abundant options available to meet the particular circumstances that arise.

4. Pastoral Theological Thrust

Absolutely essential to understanding the OCF is a thorough assimilation of the pastoral theology presented in the General Introduction.

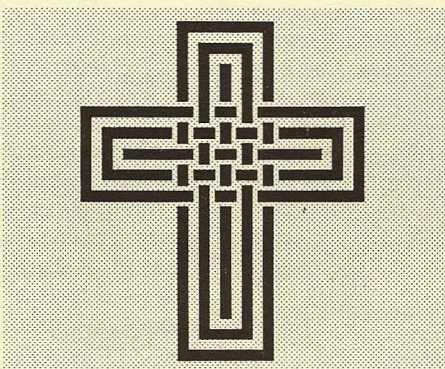
Why funerals? Funerals are the celebration of the paschal mystery of Jesus Christ crucified and risen by the community of the Church on the occasion of the death of a baptized Christian. Funerals are for God, for the deceased, and for the living. Funerals are for God:

an act of worship, praise and thanksgiving for the gift of life now returned to the Author of life (#5). Funerals are for the deceased: the Church on earth joins with the Church in heaven in the communion of saints commending the dead to the mercy of God and interceding for the forgiveness of sins (#6). Funerals are for the living, bringing the hope and consolation of the risen Christ to all who await the final passage to God (#6).

"Ministry and Participation" is the terminology which replaces the earlier "Offices and Ministries toward the Dead" and captures the widened concept of ministry envisioned by the OCF. All the members of the Body of Christ, ordained and non-ordained, are called to a ministry of consolation to those who have sustained the loss of a loved one. This ministry of consolation, rooted in the saving death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, involves a responsibility to care for the dying, to pray for the dead, and to comfort those who mourn (#8). "The responsibility for the ministry of consolation rests with the believing community, which heeds the words and example of the Lord Jesus: 'Blessed are those who mourn; they shall be consoled' (Mt 5:3)" (#9). In addition to words of consolation and acts of kindness by individual members, the community's principal involvement in the ministry of consolation is expressed by its active participation in the celebration of the funeral rites. Special attention should be given to scheduling the rites at times when as many of the community as possible can participate (#11). By way of commentary, this may call for a re-assessment of the time of the funeral liturgy or Mass. Two options would be these: the funeral Mass could be celebrated in the evening with the committal the following morning; or again a funeral Mass could take the place of a Mass regularly scheduled for the mid morning when a congregation is already assured.

The priest serves as a minister of reconciliation and should be particularly sensitive to any possible needs for reconciliation on the part of the family or others, which may find expression in the sacrament of penance before the funeral liturgy or later (#13). The priest also presides at the funeral rites, especially the Mass. When no priest is available, deacons may preside at the funeral liturgy outside of Mass. When no priest or

deacon is available for the vigil and related rites or the rite of committal, a layperson presides (#14). In view of the six possible times for ritual prayer, we may expect greater lay involvement and ministry in leading prayers for the dead. Moreover, the OCF presumes a full complement of lay ministers in the celebration of the funeral rites: readers, musicians, ushers, pallbearers, special ministers of the eucharist (#15). Funerals are important moments when ritual and pastoral care come together, both in planning the funeral rites with the family and in attending to the unavoidable grief work in the difficult days following the loss of a family member. More and more parishes now provide a bereavement ministry to meet these needs.



In addition to the liturgical symbols and prayers treated above, the General Introduction highlights all the liturgical elements: the Word of God, music, silence, and ritual gestures and movement.

Word of God. "The readings proclaim to the assembly the paschal mystery, teach remembrance of the dead, convey the hope of being gathered together again in God's kingdom, and encourage the witness of Christian life" (#22). The Psalms, "rich in imagery, feeling, and symbolism" (#25), have a special place in the funeral rites; one can only think of the powerful lament psalms with their graphic depiction of the human situation in need of divine deliverance. The homily is not a eulogy, but a proclamation of the mystery of God's love and the mystery of Jesus victorious death and resurrection present in the life and death of the deceased and in the lives of the grieving assembly (#27).

Music. The introductory notes boldly affirm: "Music is integral to the funeral rites. It allows the community to express convictions and feelings that words alone

may fail to convey" (#30). Music should be provided for the vigil and funeral liturgy and is encouraged for processions and the rite of committal. In addition to the usual parts of the Mass which call for singing, of great importance is the song of farewell which is seen as the climax of the rite of final commendation.

Silence. Sacred silence is being recovered more and more as an important liturgical element. The proper use of intervals of silence and pauses allows for people to interiorize what is happening, to let the meaning of God's Word penetrate, and to gather minds and hearts together at times such as the final commendation and farewell.

Ritual gestures and movement. Foremost among these would be the processions which bind together the three stations at the (funeral) home, the church, and the tomb. This ancient model of the Roman liturgy continues in the processions of the funeral cortege. The funeral rites are an exodus or journey in which the Church accompanies the dead person from his/her earthly abode to the heavenly Jerusalem. The station in the church is halfway between earth and heaven. The earthly community thus accompanies the deceased as far as it can go before entrusting them to the communion of saints and angels in heaven. In the words of the antiphon for the procession to the place of committal:

May the angels lead you into paradise; may the martyrs come to welcome you and take you to the holy city, the new and eternal Jerusalem. (#176)

In this way the funeral rites mirror the journey of a Christian through life accompanied by the communion of saints en route to our heavenly home.

Bibliography

- Krisak, Anthony F., *The Order of Christian Funerals. A Liturgical Commentary.* Washington, D.C.: Federation of Diocesan Liturgical Commissions, 1988.
- Marchal, Michael, *Parish Funerals.* Chicago: Liturgy Training Publications, 1987.
- Melloh, John, *Order of Christian Funerals. A Commentary.* Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 1989.

Charles W. Gusmer
Immaculate Conception Seminary
Seton Hall University
South Orange, New Jersey

"The Time nor the Hour" - Living with the Rite of Acceptance

One of my earliest childhood memories centers around my god-mother - Aunt Mae. Mae was a fine woman, with a generous spirit, an ample smile and a heart the size of Texas. There was only one thing which always confused me about Aunt Mae. Anytime she visited our home, she always did so after 9 pm in the evening. This was always a problem for me since usually I was already in bed. She always arrived unannounced, unexpected. With Aunt Mae you truly never knew "the time nor the hour".

I don't wish to give the impression that Aunt Mae was not welcome, it was always that she walked in at the wrong time. As a family we were never able to give her the time, hospitality, listening ear, nor the cup of coffee she rightly deserved. How often I thought "if only she would tell us she was coming we could prepare ourselves".

How well that recollection spoke to me as I began to work through the process of the RCIA. How important it is for the community to properly welcome those who are to be accepted into that worshipping group of believers. It is their debut, as it were. It is the first time the family is meeting the "engaged". For a period of time the "Inquirers" as they are known have been flirting with the Church. It is during their pre-evangelization or inquiry period that they have reflected on the stories of their lives. They begin to see how "their story" connects into "Big Stories". What's the "good news", "bad news" of their lives? In his book *A Place for You*, Paul Tournier writes that "the task of mature living consists in two things:

1. Finding a "Safe Place" for yourself.
2. Leaving that safe place in a new venture.

Of course that means that one is never safe for long but always between places". The purpose of the Rite of acceptance is to ritualize that passage in a meaningful way. A way that tells everyone, "I'm on the way of making a very important commitment in my life." It is the first step. "Assembling publicly for the first time, the candidates who have completed the period of the precatechumenate declare their intention to the Church and the Church in turn, carrying out its apostolic mission, accepts them as persons who intend to become its members" (RCIA #41).

This step shows forth the the real difference between how we used to initiate new members and how they are invited through the RCIA to full membership in the Church. God showers his grace on the candidates, since the celebration manifests their desire publicly and marks their reception and first consecration by the Church".

It is for this reason, the Church herself welcomes the catechumens. "What is your name?" "What do you ask of God's Church?" "What does faith offer you?" This dialogue may conclude with the giving of the Book of the Gospels. Option Prayer three sums up the catechumens challenge. "If, then, you wish to become his disciple and members of his Church, you must be guided to the fullness of the truth that he has revealed to us. You must learn to make the mind of Christ Jesus your own. You must strive to pattern your life on the teachings of the Gospel and so to love the Lord your God and your neighbor. For this was Christ's command and he was its perfect example". (370:2) Immediately the celebrant turns to the sponsors of those to become catechumens and asks of their readiness to

help these candidates find and follow Christ. The passage - journey spoken of earlier is so more valuable when made with a fellow-journeyer.

What follows, is what I consider to be one of the most beautiful ritual actions of the entire rite. The cross of Christ is our life. With this in mind the celebrant says 'To admit you as catechumens I now mark you with the sign of Christ's cross and call upon your catechists and sponsors to do the same'. (#84) Then he sums up the entire rite of acceptance as he says "The whole community welcomes you with love and stands ready to help you." What follows is an invitation to transformation. With their whole body and soul the catechumen is invited to share the mystery of the cross of Christ.

Receive the cross on your forehead.

Receive the sign of the cross on your ears.

Receive the sign of the cross on your eyes.

Receive the sign of the cross on your lips.

Receive the sign of the cross on your heart.

Receive the sign of the cross on your shoulders.

Receive the sign of the cross on your hands.

Receive the sign of the cross on your feet.

Finally blessing of the entire person takes place in the name of Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

Those who have experienced this rite of acceptance have expressed how deeply moved they were to have their bodylines blessed. It is truly in the use of our bodies through our senses that we extend and complete the Body of the Lord. The rite of acceptance tells the catechumen in no uncertain terms that we - the Christian community were waiting for them. We prepared ourselves for their arrival and are glad they are with us. As the concluding prayer of this acceptance rite states: "Your servants have received the sign of the cross: make them living proof of its saving power and help them to persevere in the footsteps of Christ" (#87).

Having questioned, blessed and welcomed the new catechumens, the celebrant then says "come into the Church, to share with us at the table of God's Word."

How I wish Aunt Mae were alive to witness the Rite of Acceptance. Maybe she would realize how important it is to be not only welcomed but the one who does the welcoming. May we always be ready to receive new members.

Rev. Michael A. Merlucci

Archdiocesan Director of the RCIA

Staff

Editor: Carol Willis

Editorial Board:

Joan Conroy, Msgr. Richard Groncki, Rev. Charles Gusmer, Dr. Zeni Fox, Katherine Kuzma, Sr. Judy Mertz SC, Sr. Marlene Milasus OSB, Rev. Charles Miller, Sr. Gerardine Mueller OP, William Shlala

Contributors:

Rev. Charles Gusmer, Rev. Michael Merlucci, Msgr. Ronald Amandolare and the staff of the Worship Office

Subscription Information

One year subscription to *Word on Worship*, 6 issues, \$5.00.
Special Bulk rate, five or more issues to the same address,
\$4.50 per year per subscription. Foreign subscription, \$6.50

THE LAZARUS MINISTRY: A PASTORAL APPROACH

Ministry is usually effective when it arises out of a need. Such is the case of the Lazarus Ministry established at St. Paul's Parish in Clifton, New Jersey about 6 years ago.

As I begin to share how this ministry operates, I am well aware that there probably are a number of parishes who have some type of ministry for the bereaved. Nevertheless, we learn from one another's experiences.

Some background about our parish and how this ministry came to be might be helpful. St. Paul's is a large urban parish in the older section of Clifton. The parish is seventy-five years in existence and has a lot of senior parishioners.

As you would expect, there are a lot of funerals each year—close to one hundred. It takes real sensitivity to be fully attentive to the needs of each family suffering a loss when you are dealing with so many. There is always the fear of being perfunctory and insensitive to the grieving family. I believe the Lazarus Ministry helps allay that fear.

It was at one of our staff evaluation and planning sessions that this concept came to mind. Sister Anne Mercier, O.S.M., Pastoral Associate for the sick and bereaved, initiated the discussion and volunteered with other staff members to do some research on the topic of bereavement. After much hard work and prayer, our present "Lazarus Ministry" concept was proposed and accepted by all.

It certainly looked good on paper. We wouldn't know its effectiveness until we had volunteers for this ministry and began ministering to the bereaved as outlined in our programs. "Where did the volunteers come from?" and "Were they prepared for this sensitive ministry?" are questions frequently asked when people inquire about this ministry.

Our first group of volunteers came from persons who had suffered a loss during the previous years. These were persons known to staff, people of faith who were willing to learn more about the entire bereavement process. These were invited to a number of sessions that dealt with the death, dying and bereavement process. After these sessions, some were approached and asked if they would be interested in this ministry with

the promise of additional help and support. Basically, it was trial and error; that is, some things were more effective than others. A lot of factors had to be looked at before determining the best way of ministering to the family of the deceased, such as type of illness, how long the person was sick, the age and relationships to the bereaved, i.e., mother/father, daughter/son, spouse, other survivors, etc.

As time went on and learning took place and comfort extended to the bereaved, a rather simple process emerged that "triggers off", if you will, the ministry. This is due in large measure to the organizational skills of Jack Phalon, a parishioner who volunteered to prepare guidelines for the Lazarus Ministry. His assistance throughout the process was invaluable.

As soon as the parish is notified of a death, the secretary immediately contacts a specified member of the Lazarus Ministry.

This person is given the basic information received from the funeral home. Through a series of phone calls, people are made aware of the death and assume certain responsibilities. Some go immediately to the home, bring some cakes, offer condolences and volunteer to be of whatever help is needed, e.g., baby sitting, rides to and from airports, train or bus stations. Others will go to the vigil service and sit down with the family to help them plan the liturgy. Still others will actually come to the funeral liturgy. This has been helpful especially in the cases of very small families.

As you can see, none of the above requires a special degree—just presence and sensitivity. The volunteers meet monthly with Sister Anne for prayer, sharing experiences and study. Naturally, you have a rather large group to draw from even if you limit your volunteers to those suffering a loss in the parish. You

have a mix of ages, backgrounds, skills, male and female. It is very touching to see people who have experienced a tragedy, like the loss of a child, come forth and offer to comfort another parent in a similar situation.

The name Lazarus was chosen because he was a close friend of Jesus, whose death affected Him deeply. The gospel account in John brings out the human emotions of Jesus: "He loved Martha and her sister, Mary and Lazarus." Still later, "Jesus said in great distress, with a sigh that came straight from the heart..." and again Jesus wept and the Jews said, "See how much he loved him." This gospel story taught us

the importance of prayer in the person of Mary and service in the person of Martha.

Our ministry has expanded over the years. Some of our volunteers visit the family during the following months. Often

issues don't arise till that time and a loving, supportive presence is important.

Most people don't have to be

motivated to feel compassion, to hurt for the bereaved. However, if anyone should need motivation, John's account of the resurrection of Lazarus, Chapter 11, should do the trick! Jesus himself taught us how to comfort the bereaved—he went to them, he was present to them, he wept with them, he was inconvenienced to say the least, going towards Jerusalem where he knew he was not welcomed.

The Lazarus Ministry is not easy. No one really likes being with people who are upset, crying, angry, confused and hurt. Words don't come easily and your own emotions get drained. However, from the beautiful notes received from relatives and friends of the bereaved from all over the country, it is clear that God's work is being done.

*Rev. Msgr. Ronald Amandolare
Pastor, St. Paul's Church
Clifton, New Jersey
Chairman, Liturgical Commission
Diocese of Paterson*



Word on Worship

Newsletter

In This Issue:

- **A New Funeral Rite**
- **The Time nor the Hour**
Living with the Rite of Acceptance
- **Lazarus Ministry**

Future Issues

- **Liturgy & Social Justice**
- **Mystagogia**
- **Children's Catechumenate**
- **Music Reviews**
- **The Communion Procession**
- **Causes & Collections**



Worship Office
100 Linden Avenue
Irvington, NJ 07111

NON-PROFIT ORG.
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
PERMIT NO. 5406
Newark, NJ