

# Sacramental Guidelines

Diocese of Pueblo



## THE ORDER OF CHRISTIAN FUNERALS

*General Norms  
The Rites of the Sacred Journey  
Other Pastoral and Practical Concerns*

2011



Winter 2011

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Following you will find Diocese of Pueblo *Sacramental Guidelines for the Order of Christian Funerals*. I promulgate them to clarify the obligations of our Catholic funeral ministry and to assist you in reflecting on the immense opportunity for evangelization and pastoral care funeral ministry affords us as a people of faith.

These guidelines are the result of recommendations by the Council for Lifelong Catechesis and extensive consultations across the Diocese of Pueblo with priests, deacons and catechetical leaders. They have been reviewed as well by members of the diocesan staff. I offer my heartfelt thanks to all those who participated in the consultations. Their reflection, discernment and insight have made this work practical, helpful and faithful.

At their heart, these guidelines invite us to embrace the full funeral rites of the Church, the sacred journey of the Christian faithful – the deceased and his or her loved ones – from the death bed, through the Vigil, funeral Eucharist and Final Commendation, to committal. Every moment of this sacred journey calls us to deep personal reflection on the paschal mystery of Jesus Christ, both in itself and in our own lives. Every rite that the Church offers us for this sacred journey affirms and proclaims God’s comfort and the pattern of life Jesus taught us.

I pray that we ministers of these sacred rites will enter them with our heart fully alert, our time generously offered and our spirit graciously attentive. I pray that our ministry to our grieving brothers and sisters will call them to see clearly and experience profoundly the fullness of consoling grace and transforming power that is paschal mystery.

Therefore with this letter I add these norms to the *Sacramental Guidelines for the Diocese of Pueblo*.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

Most Reverend Fernando Isern, D.D.  
Bishop of Pueblo

## *General Norms*

### **POLICY<sup>1</sup>**

#### *Purpose of the Funeral Rites:*

1. Christians celebrate the funeral rites to offer worship, praise and thanksgiving to God for the gift of life which has now been returned to God, the author of life and hope of the just (OCF 5).
2. The Church through its funeral rites (OCF 6):
  - commends the dead to God's merciful love
  - pleads for forgiveness of the sins of the deceased
  - intercedes with God on behalf of the deceased because of its confident belief that death is not the end nor does it break the bonds forged in life (OCF 4).
3. The Church also ministers to the sorrowing and consoles them in the funeral rites with the comforting word of God and the sacrament of the Eucharist (OCF 4).
4. At the funeral rites, especially at the celebration of the Eucharistic sacrifice, the Christian community affirms and expresses the union of the Church on earth with the church in heaven in the one great communion of saints (OCF 6).

#### *The Proper Subjects of the Rites:*

5. The Christian faithful departed are to be given ecclesiastical funeral rites according to the norm of law (can. 1176:1).  
*Pastoral Note:* *The Christian faithful have a right to full ecclesiastical funeral rites. Therefore, every effort needs to be made to honor this right and offer the faithful the full rites of the Church in accord with the norm of law.*
6. Catechumens have the right to burial according to the funeral liturgy of the Church, including the funeral Mass (NSC 8-9).

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<sup>1</sup> Beyond Diocese-wide consultation, the following sources are used for the policies in this area indicated in parentheses in the text:

- *Pastoral Care of the Sick: Rites of Anointing and Viaticum*, (New York: Catholic Book Publishing Company, 1983). This resource will be indicated by (PCS) in the text.
- *Order of Christian Funerals*, (New York: Catholic Book Publishing Company, 1989). This resource will be indicated by (OCF) in the text.
- The *Code of Canon Law*, which will be indicated by (Can. number) in the text.
- the *National Statutes for the Catechumenate* (NSC --) issued by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops in 1986; *General Instruction on the Roman Missal*, indicated as GIRM in the text.

7. Funeral rites can be granted to baptized members of some non-Catholic church or ecclesial community (unless it is evidently contrary to their will) provided their own minister is unavailable (can. 1183).  
*Pastoral Note: There may be instances in which the family is Catholic and the deceased is formally a member of another ecclesial communion. In this instance, if the family requests it, Catholic funeral rites may be celebrated for the benefit of the family, particularly if the deceased has participated in Catholic ecclesial life. When in doubt, the Ordinary of the Diocese is to be consulted.*
8. Unless they have given some sign of repentance before their death, the following are to be deprived of ecclesiastical funeral rites (can. 1184):
  - notorious apostates, heretics or schismatics;
  - persons who have chosen cremation for reasons opposed to Christian faith;
  - manifest sinners for whom rites cannot be celebrated without giving scandal.
 When in doubt, the Ordinary of the diocese is to be consulted.
9. If a person is excluded from the funeral rites, any funeral Mass whatsoever is also to be denied (can. 1185).

*The Place for Celebrating the Funeral: the Church*

10. The funeral liturgy for any of the faithful departed must be celebrated in his or her own parish church, or in another parish church with permission of the pastor (see can. 1177).
11. Consequently, the Diocese of Pueblo requires that the funeral – the funeral Mass or the funeral liturgy celebrated on the day of interment – be celebrated in a parish church (see The Rites of the Sacred Journey, #31, below).  
*Pastoral Note: Pastors are urged strongly to make every effort to encourage the family to have the funeral liturgy be a celebration of Eucharist, the source and summit of our faith, itself the foretaste and promise of the life to come.*

*The Ministers of the Rites:*

12. Priests, as teachers of faith and ministers of comfort, preside at the funeral rites, especially the Mass (OCF 14).
13. The celebration of the funeral liturgy is especially entrusted to pastors and associate pastors (OCF 14).
  - Though he may delegate this responsibility, the pastor of the deceased Christian holds the responsibility for the funeral rites.
  - If the deceased is not registered as a parishioner, then the pastor of the place nearest where the deceased person resides holds the responsibility for the funeral rites.
  - At the family's request, or in extreme circumstances, a pastor other than the canonical pastor may be engaged to assume responsibility for the funeral rites of the deceased Christian.
14. When no priest is available, deacons, as ministers of the word, of the altar and of charity, preside at funeral rites (OCF 14).  
*Pastoral Note: If a deacon is to preside at the funeral liturgy, it is suggested that the deacon accompany the family through the whole sacred journey of the rites from at least the first pastoral visit through the rite of committal.*

15. When no priest or deacon is available for the vigil and related rites, or the rite of committal, a layperson presides (OCF 14).  
*Pastoral Note: The Diocese of Pueblo strongly encourages the pastor or deacon to make every effort to preside – at a minimum – at the funeral liturgy and the rite of committal.*
16. In all circumstances in the Diocese of Pueblo, the pastor assumes responsibility for the funeral of a deceased Christian and oversees any other pastoral minister's decisions regarding the funeral rites and pastoral care of the family.  
*Pastoral Note: The Diocese of Pueblo leaves it to the pastor's discretion to determine if he will indulge a family's request that a priest other than the pastor preside at the funeral rites. At the same time, the pastor is encouraged to concelebrate with a guest presider at the funeral liturgy in particular, and, if possible, at the vigil and rite of committal.*

*When the Funeral May be Celebrated*

17. Among the Masses for the Dead, the Funeral Mass holds first place. It may be celebrated on any day except for solemnities that are holy days of obligation; Holy Thursday, the Easter Triduum; and the Sundays of Advent, Lent, and Easter, with due regard also for all the other requirements of the norm of law (GIRM 380).
18. More explicitly, funeral Masses are not allowed on the following days: the Sundays of Advent, the Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception (even when not obligatory), Christmas, the Feast of the Holy Family (only when it falls on a Sunday), January 1 (even when not obligatory), Epiphany, the Feast of the Baptism of the Lord (only when it falls on a Sunday), the Sundays of Lent, Holy Thursday, Good Friday, Holy Saturday, Easter Sunday, the Sundays of Easter, Ascension, Pentecost, Holy Trinity, Corpus Christi, Assumption and All Saints (even when not obligatory).

*The Guiding Image: A Sacred Journey*

19. The Diocese of Pueblo encourages all of its ministers at the time of death to consider that the order of Christian Funerals is structured fundamentally as a sacred journey. This sacred journey proceeds ritually as follows:
  - a. **The Time of Death:** At the time of death, the priest ought to pray for the person who has died and ask those attending to do so using some of the prayers suggested at the end of "Commendation of the Dying" (PCS 220, 221) asking God to forgive them and graciously receive them into paradise.
  - b. **The First Pastoral Meeting with the Family:** "Prayers After Death" are provided for the time when the minister first meets with the family following death (OCF 101).
  - c. **Gathering in the Presence of the Body:** This rite may be used when the family first gathers with the body after it has been prepared for burial (OCF 109). It occurs prior to the wake and vigil:
    - either at the funeral home
    - or at the Church.

- d. **The Vigil for the Deceased:** This rite, in which the Christian community keeps watch with the family in prayer, is the principal rite celebrated by the Christian community either
  - in the time following death and before the funeral liturgy,
  - or if there is no funeral liturgy, before the rite of committal (OCF 51,54).
- e. **Transfer of the Body to the Church or to the Place of Committal:** This procession is the rite of initial separation of the mourners from the deceased (OCF 120). It may occur either
  - prior to the vigil for the deceased,
  - or after it.
- f. **The Reception at the Church:** In this rite, which takes place at the door of the church, the Christian community acknowledges the deceased as one of its own, one who was welcomed in baptism and who held a place in the assembly (OCF 131). This rite may occur:
  - either at the beginning of the vigil for the deceased
  - or at the beginning of the funeral liturgy.
- g. **The Funeral Liturgy:** Within Mass or outside Mass, this liturgy is the central liturgical celebration of the Christian community for the deceased (OCF 128).
- h. **The Final Commendation and Farewell:** In this rite, the climax of which is the song of farewell, the Christian community entrusts one of their members to the tender and merciful embrace of God (OCF 147, 146). This rite may be celebrated:
  - either at the end of the funeral liturgy
  - or, if there is no funeral liturgy, immediately before the rite of committal.
- i. **The Rite of Committal:** This rite, which is to be celebrated at the actual place of committal whenever possible, is the final act of the community of faith in caring for the body of its deceased member (OCF 204).

*The Basic Structure of the Rites:*

20. The three principal ritual moments in the funerals of Christians are (OCF 50):
  - a. the Vigil and Related Rites and Prayers
  - b. the Funeral Liturgy
  - c. the Rite of Committal

*Pastoral Note:* *The Church accompanies the family of the deceased through the whole sacred journey that is the Order of Christian Funerals. The integrity of this accompaniment and the structure of the rites themselves suggest to pastors the critical importance of their offering the family continuity of ministers and ministry. That is, ideally the same presiding and preaching minister should accompany the family throughout the whole experience of the rites, particularly the vigil, funeral liturgy and the rite of committal.*

21. The Mass, the memorial of Christ's death and resurrection, is the principal celebration of the Christian funeral (OCF 5).

*The Liturgical Elements of the Rites:*

22. The funeral rites should be celebrated (OCF 21):
  - in an atmosphere of simply beauty
  - in a setting that encourages participation.
23. Since liturgical celebration involves the whole person, it requires attentiveness to all that affects the senses (OCF 21).
  - The readings and prayers, psalms and songs should be proclaimed or sung with understanding, conviction and reverence.
  - Music for the assembly should be truly expressive of the texts and at the same time simple and easily sung.
  - The ritual gestures, processions and postures should express and foster an attitude of reverence and reflectiveness.
24. Care must be taken that the choice and use of signs and symbols are in accord with the culture of the people (OCF 21).
25. The undue multiplication or repetition of liturgical signs and symbols should be avoided (OCF 21).

*The Role of the Believing Community:*

26. The responsibility for the ministry of consolation rests with the believing community (OCF 9).
27. The community's principal involvement in the ministry of consolation is expressed in its active participation in the celebration of the funeral rites, particularly (OCF 11):
  - the vigil for the deceased
  - the funeral liturgy
  - the rite of committal.

*Family Participation in Funeral Ministries:*

28. Family members should be encouraged to take an active part in the ministries surrounding the rites (OCF 15).
29. Family members should not be asked to assume any role that their grief or sense of loss may make too burdensome (OCF 15).

*Catechesis:*

30. As part of the pastoral ministry, pastors and other ministers should instruct the parish community (OCF 9)
  - on the Christian meaning of death
  - on the purpose and significance of the Church's liturgical rites for the dead
  - on how the parish community assist families in preparing for funerals.
31. By giving instruction, pastors should lead the community (OCF 9):
  - to a deeper appreciation of its role in the ministry of consolation
  - a fuller understanding of the significance of the death of a fellow Christian.

32. Ministers should explain to the family the meaning and significance of each of the funeral rites, especially
  - the vigil
  - the funeral liturgy
  - the rite of committal (OCF 17).
33. Pastors should instill in other ministers within the funeral rites an appreciation of how much the reverent exercise of their ministries contributes to the celebration of the rites (OCF 15).

## *The Rites of the Sacred Journey*

### *POLICY*

#### *The Time of Death:*

1. At the time of death, the priest ought to pray for the person who has died and ask those attending to do so using some of the prayers suggested at the end of “Commendation of the Dying” (PCS 220, 221) asking God to forgive the deceased person and graciously receive him/her into paradise.
2. Please see *Sacramental Guidelines: Anointing of the Sick and Viaticum* for further reflection on pastoral care at the time of death.

#### *The First Pastoral Meeting with the Family:*

3. The presence of the minister and the calming effect of familiar prayers can comfort the mourners as they begin to face their loss (OCF 101).
4. The initial pastoral visit can be important because (OCF 103):
  - it is the first tangible expression of the community’s support of the mourners
  - the minister can learn a great deal on this occasion about the needs of the family and about the life of the deceased
  - the minister may be able to form some preliminary judgments to help the family in planning the funeral rites.

*Pastoral Note 1: It is especially helpful if the minister preaching the vigil for the deceased and the funeral liturgy participates in this first pastoral visit and assists the family with planning.*

*Pastoral Note 2: The delegation of someone other than presiding/preaching minister to this meeting – including members of bereavement committees – risks squandering THE major opportunity for the preacher:*

- *to solidify an accompanying relationship with the family in their grief*
  - *to offer the family the Church’s and the parish’s comfort*
  - *to gain deeper insight into the life of the deceased and the family that will inform the preaching (see #6 and #7 below).*
5. Whenever possible, ministers should involve the family in planning the funeral rites:
    - the choice of texts and rites provided in the ritual
    - the selection of music for the rites
    - the designation of liturgical ministers.
  6. In planning and carrying out the funeral rites the pastor and all other ministers should keep in mind
    - the life of the deceased
    - the circumstances of death (OCF 16).

7. Pastors and other ministers should also take into consideration the spiritual and psychological needs of the family and friends of the deceased (OCF 16):
  - to express grief and their sense of loss
  - to accept the reality of death
  - to comfort one another.
8. Ministers should be aware that the experience of death can bring about in the mourners possible need for reconciliation, which may even find expression in the sacrament of penance either before the funeral liturgy or at a later time (OCF 53).

*Gathering in the Presence of the Body:*

9. This rite may be used when the family first gathers with the body after it has been prepared for burial (OCF 109). It occurs prior to the wake and vigil:
  - either at the funeral home
  - or at the Church.
10. In this brief rite the faith community seeks (OCF 110):
  - to be with the mourners in their need
  - to provide an atmosphere of sensitive concern and confident faith
  - to show reverence for the body of the deceased as a temple of the life-giving Spirit
  - to ask, in the Holy Spirit, for the eternal life promised to the faithful.
11. In these moments, the family confronts in the most immediate way the fact of their loss and the mystery of death (OCF 109). The ministers should (OCF 111):
  - try to be as attentive as possible to the particular needs of the mourners
  - begin the rite at an opportune moment and, insofar as possible, in an atmosphere of calm and recollection
  - be mindful of the especially helpful power of silence during these moments.

*The Vigil for the Deceased:*

12. This rite is the principal rite celebrated by the Christian community (OCF 51, 54):
  - either in the time following death and before the funeral liturgy
  - or, if there is no funeral liturgy, before the rite of committal.
13. The vigil may take the form of (OCF 54):
  - either a liturgy of the word
  - or some part of the office for the dead.
14. The purpose of the vigil is for the Christian community (OCF 56):
  - to keep watch with the family in prayer to the God of mercy
  - to find strength in the presence of Christ.
15. The content of the vigil as a Liturgy of the Word is to (OCF 60):
  - tell of God's designs for a world in which suffering and death will relinquish their hold on all whom God has called his own
  - proclaim the paschal mystery
  - teach remembrance of the dead
  - convey the hope of being gathered together in God's kingdom
  - encourage the witness of a Christian life.

16. Through this rite the minister helps the mourners (OCF 52):
- to express their sorrow
  - to find strength and consolation through faith in Christ and his resurrection to eternal life
  - find comfort in the Christian community's support.
17. Though the vigil may be celebrated in the home of the deceased or some other suitable place, it is ordinarily celebrated (OCF 55):
- in the funeral home parlor or chapel of rest
  - in the church.
- Pastoral Note: If the vigil is held in the church, it should be celebrated at a time well before the funeral liturgy so that the funeral liturgy will not be lengthy and the liturgy of the word repetitious (OCF 55).*
18. The structure of the vigil:
- The introductory rites (OCF 58):
    - gather the faithful together to form a community
    - prepare the faithful to listen to the word of God
    - begin with an opening song that should be a profound expression of belief in eternal life and resurrection of the dead, as well as a prayer of intercession for the dead.
  - The Liturgy of the Word (OCF 59):
    - serves as the high point and focus of the vigil
    - includes a responsorial psalm that ought to be sung whenever possible
    - includes a homily aimed at helping the mourners find strength and hope in God's saving word (OCF 61).
19. Within the Vigil:
- Members of the local parish community should be encouraged to participate as a sign of support and concern (OCF 64).
  - The full participation of all present is to be encouraged, and should be grounded in the family's having participated in planning the vigil (OCF 65).
  - Ministers other than the presider should participate in the vigil: readers, cantor, acolyte (OCF 66).
  - Ministers at the vigil should vest according to local custom (OCF 66).
  - If the time between death and the funeral liturgy is prolonged, the vigil (OCF 67):
    - may be celebrated more than once
    - should be adapted to each occasion.
  - Music is integral to the vigil (OCF 68):
    - It can touch mourners deeply.
    - It can enliven the faith of the community.
    - Instrumentalist and cantor ought to assist.
    - Preference for singing ought to be given to the opening song and responsorial psalm.

*Transfer of the Body to the Church or to the Place of Committal:*

20. This procession is the rite of initial separation of the mourners from the deceased (OCF 120). It may occur:
  - either prior to the vigil for the deceased
  - or after it.
21. Reverent celebration of this rite can help reassure the mourners and create an atmosphere of calm preparation before the procession (OCF 120):
  - The transfer of the body may be an occasion of great emotion for the mourners.
  - The minister and other members of the community should make every effort to be present and support them.

*The Reception of the Body at the Church:*

22. The rite of the reception of the body at church has great significance (OCF 131):
  - The church is the place where
    - the community of faith assembles for worship
    - the Christian life is begotten in baptism and nourished in Eucharist
    - the community gathers to commend one of its deceased members to the Father.
  - The church is a symbol of both:
    - the faith community
    - the heavenly liturgy that the celebration of the liturgy anticipates.
23. In this rite, which takes place at the door of the church, the Christian community acknowledges the deceased as one of its own, one who was welcomed in baptism and who held a place in the assembly (OCF 131).
24. This rite may occur:
  - either at the beginning of the vigil for the deceased if it is held in the church
  - or at the beginning of the funeral liturgy in the church.
25. Any national flags or insignia of association are removed from the casket of the deceased at the entrance to the church (OCF 132).
26. In this rite the presider sprinkles the casket of the deceased with holy water in remembrance of the deceased person's initiation and first acceptance into the community of faith (OCF 133).

*Pastoral Note: In an effort to celebrate the funeral rites with noble simplicity and not multiply symbols, this is the ideal and best occasion during the Order of Christian Funerals for sprinkling the casket with holy water.*

27. According to the custom of the place, a funeral pall, reminder of the white garment given at baptism and signifying life in Christ, may be placed on the coffin by (OCF 133):
  - family members
  - friends
  - the minister.

*Pastoral Note: The placement of the pall by the funeral director is the least preferable option in this rite.*

28. The procession down into the church which follows (OCF 135):
- should be accompanied by the singing of an entrance song
  - the entrance song ought to be:
    - a profound expression of belief in eternal life
    - a profound expression of belief in resurrection from the dead
    - a prayer of intercession for the deceased.

*The Funeral Liturgy:*

29. Within Mass or outside Mass, this liturgy is the central liturgical celebration of the Christian community for the deceased (OCF 128).
- The funeral liturgy should be scheduled at such a time as to allow the participation of as many as possible (OCF 150).
  - The full and active participation of the assembly (OCF 150):
    - affirms the value of praying for the dead
    - gives strength and support to the bereaved
    - is a sure sign of faith and hope in the paschal mystery.
  - Ministers should involve the family in the planning for the funeral liturgy (OCF 152).
  - An instrumentalist, a cantor and, whenever possible, a choir should be present to assist the assembly's sung participation during a funeral liturgy (OCF 153).
30. The priest, preferably the pastor, is the presiding minister at the funeral liturgy (OCF 151).
- Except for Mass, a deacon may conduct the funeral liturgy.
  - If extreme pastoral need requires, laypersons may preside at the funeral liturgy outside Mass.

*Pastoral Note 1: It is highly advisable that the minister preaching the funeral Mass would have been engaged in planning with the family and at the vigil (See #3 - #8 above).*

*Pastoral Note 2: If a deacon is preaching the funeral, even if it is a Mass, it is highly advisable that he would have been engaged in planning with the family, presiding and/or preaching at the vigil, and presiding over the rite of committal.*

31. Because of
- the significance of this liturgy in the funeral rites
  - the impact of the church building on this kind of occasion in life (see above, # 22)
  - and the rights of the deceased

the Diocese of Pueblo requires that the funeral liturgy, within Mass or outside it, be celebrated in the parish church (see General Norms, #10 above).

32. A brief homily based on the readings should always be given at the funeral liturgy, but never any kind of eulogy (OCF 141). The homily's purpose is as follows:
- to express God's compassionate love
  - to proclaim the paschal mystery of the Lord
  - to offer consolation and strength in the face of death
  - to nourish hope in the face of death.
- Pastoral Note:* While the homily ought never be a eulogy, at the same time sound pastoral homiletics principles suggest that the life of the deceased and his/her unique expression of a faithful Christian life can offer the assembly a provocative and consoling prism through which they might consider the Christian life in general and be inspired in their own Christian life.
33. Members of the family or friends of the deceased should bring the gifts to the altar. Instrumental music may accompany this procession (OCF 144).
34. Incensation of the body during the Preparation of the Gifts is best avoided for the following reasons:
- incensation of the body, symbolic of the assembly's prayers rising to heaven and the offering of the body of the deceased as a gift returned to God, is most aptly done as the assembly sings the song of farewell (see below #39).
  - unless holy water has not yet been used, incensation of the body properly accompanies the song of farewell, which is the climax of the final commendation and farewell
  - the Final Farewell is the culmination of the funeral liturgy
  - in order to intensify the symbols within the rite
  - so as to avoid multiplication of symbols in the rite.
35. Eucharistic Prayer II and Eucharistic Prayer III are especially appropriate for use at the funeral Mass because they provide special texts of intercession for the dead (OCF 144).
36. Since music gives greater solemnity to a ritual action, the singing of the people's parts of the eucharistic prayer should be encouraged (OCF 144).

*The Final Commendation and Farewell:*

37. In this rite, the climax of which is the song of farewell, the Christian community entrusts one of their members to the tender and merciful embrace of God (OCF 147, 146).
38. The final commendation (OCF 146):
- is a final farewell by the members of the community
  - is an act of respect for one of the community members
  - is an entrusting of the deceased to the tender and merciful embrace of God
  - acknowledges the reality of separation
  - affirms that the community and the deceased, baptized into one body, share the same destiny: resurrection on the last day.

39. The rite flows as follows (OCF 147):
- It begins with the minister's opening words.
  - Silence follows, which allows the bereaved and all present to relate their own feelings of loss and grief to the mystery of Christian hope in God's abundant mercy and his promise of eternal life.
  - The song of farewell is the climax of the rite:
    - it should affirm hope and trust in the paschal mystery
    - it should be sung to a melody which allows all to participate
    - it may take the form of a responsory or a hymn.
  - Incensation of the body, or sprinkling if that has not yet been done anywhere within the previous rites, may take place either:
    - within the song of farewell
    - or before the song of farewell.
- Pastoral Note: Incensation of the body, symbolic of the assembly's prayers rising to heaven and the offering of the body of the deceased as a gift returned to God, is most aptly done as the assembly sings the song of farewell (see #34 above).*
40. The prayer of commendation concludes the rite (OCF 147). In this prayer, the community:
- calls upon God's mercy
  - commends the deceased into God's hands
  - affirms its belief that those who have died in Christ will share in Christ's victory over death.
41. This rite may be celebrated either (OCF 154):
- at the end of the funeral liturgy,
  - or, if there is no funeral liturgy, immediately before the rite of committal.

*The Rite of Committal:*

42. This rite, which is to be celebrated at the actual place of committal whenever possible (an open grave or mausoleum, preferably never a funeral chapel) is the final act of the community of faith in caring for the body of its deceased member (OCF 204).
43. The rite of committal (OCF 213):
- is a stark and powerful expression marking the separation in this life of the mourners from the deceased
  - offers the community the opportunity to assist the family as they complete their care for the deceased and lay the body to rest.
44. The rite that commits the body to its final resting place (OCF 207) expresses:
- the hope that, with all those who have gone before marked with the sign of faith, the deceased awaits the glory of the resurrection
  - the communion that exists between the Church on earth and the Church in heaven.

45. The structure of the rite (OCF 207):
- It begins with the invitation and a Scripture verse.
  - Then follows the prayer over the place of committal offered in a variety of alternatives to meet the situation at hand.
  - Then follows the words of committal (OCF 208).
  - The act of committal, which proclaims that the grave, once a sign of futility and despair, has been transformed by means of Christ's own death and resurrection into a sign of hope and promise, takes place (OCF 209):
    - during the words of committal
    - immediately after the words of committal
    - at the end of the rite.

*Pastoral Note 1: The rite is structured and worded such that the lowering of the casket complements the intentionality of and symbolically actualizes the proclamation of the words of committal. Following the sacramental principles, it is always preferred that the act of committal (the casket lowering) occur during the words of committal.*

*Pastoral Note 2: With some advance warning, funeral directors and cemetery staff are typically happy to accommodate the lowering of the casket into the grave during the rite.*

- Intercessions, the Lord's Prayer, a prayer over the people conclude the rite.
  - A gesture of final leave taking, such as the placing of flowers on the casket or soil in the grave, may be made at the end of the rite.
46. In pastoral need, the rite may be adapted to be longer, which might include readings and the final commendation (OCF 212).
47. A song that affirms hope in God's mercy and in the resurrection of the dead is desirable at the conclusion of the rite.
48. If the rite includes the final commendation, the song of farewell should be sung (OCF 214).
49. The rite may be repeated in the case of extended delay between the day of the funeral and the actual interment of the body, for example, waiting until winter ends (OCF 212).
50. The minister should vest in accord with local custom (OCF 204).

## *Other Pastoral and Practical Concerns*

### **POLICY**

#### *General Observations:*

1. The policies articulated above are to be implemented as fully as possible so the family of the deceased experiences the fullness of the Church's tender care in the time of their bereavement.
2. At the time of a death in the parish, the pastor's calendar, parish group commitments, space reservations and event scheduling requires flexible reconsideration to accommodate with maximum convenience the mourning family's need.

#### *The Funeral Home and the Church:*

3. The general orientation of the Church at the time of death is toward the comfort and conversion of the mourners now, and faith and hope in the future resurrection. The general orientation of the funeral director's service is toward the family's satisfaction now and honoring the deceased person's past.
4. Positive relationships with local funeral directors should be cultivated so the parish church can provide more insightful and more effective service to grieving families.

*Pastoral Note 1: The funeral director is anxious to serve the family and the parish church because a spirit of cooperation and collaborative service between the funeral home and parish contributes to a more peaceful and gracious experience for the mourning family.*

*Pastoral Note 2: Good relationships can make a significant difference for the minister because very often funeral directors know cause of death, death circumstances and family background information otherwise unavailable to the minister.*

5. The pastor should provide local funeral homes with clear, written information that articulates parish expectations surrounding the funeral. This information might include:
  - Clear elucidation of the Catholic funeral rites' purpose
  - Contact phone numbers
  - Who to contact in the pastor's or parish life administrator's absence
  - Preferences regarding who meets with the family first
  - Church and funeral home wake preferences
  - Vigil time and location preferences
  - Funeral day and time preferences
  - Flower placement preferences
  - Funeral liturgy seating preferences
  - Travel to and from cemetery preferences
  - Casket lowering preferences
  - Luncheon policies
  - Clear delineation about who is responsible for what in the rites:
    - Body transfer prayers
    - Pall placement preferences
    - Holy water
    - Flower placement
    - Minister selection communications
    - Cemetery ritual books
    - Casket lowering

*Pastoral Note: If a cluster of parishes in a given municipality or a Deanery is able to agree on these matters, that would be most helpful.*
6. Conducting the first pastoral visit with the family on the premises of the funeral home can contribute significantly to consolation for the family and to a smoother and richer funeral planning experience for the family and the parish minister.

*The Funeral Rites as Liturgy:*

7. The funeral rites should be celebrated (OCF 21):
  - in an atmosphere of simple beauty
  - in a setting that encourages participation.
8. The undue multiplication or repetition of liturgical signs and symbols should be avoided. That is to say, throughout the funeral rites it is preferable:
  - that the body be blessed with holy water once, and that occur in the rite of reception at the door of the church before the pall is placed
  - that the body be incensed once, and that occur in the rite of commendation at the end of the funeral liturgy
  - that the grave be blessed once, and that occur during the rite of committal.
9. Sacred music is to be used for the vigil, the funeral liturgy and the rite of committal. Secular or popular music may be used only before the beginning of the funeral rites or after their completion.

10. For the funeral liturgy, any national flags or insignia of association are removed from the casket of the deceased at the entrance to the church (OCF 132), where the casket is clothed in the white pall, symbol of baptism and life in Christ.

*The Minister of the Rites (See General Norms, #s 12-16):*

11. The Church accompanies the family of the deceased through the whole sacred journey that is the Order of Christian Funerals. The integrity of this accompaniment and the structure of the rites suggest to pastors the critical importance of their offering the family continuity of ministers and ministry. That is, ideally the same presiding and preaching minister should accompany the family throughout the whole experience of the rites, particularly the vigil, the funeral liturgy and the rite of committal.
12. The Diocese of Pueblo leaves it to the pastor's discretion to determine if he will indulge a family's request that a priest other than the pastor preside at the funeral rites. At the same time, the pastor is encouraged to concelebrate with a guest presider at the funeral liturgy in particular and, if possible, at the vigil and final commendation.
13. If a deacon is to preside at the funeral liturgy, it is suggested that the deacon accompany the family through the whole sacred journey of the rites from at least the first pastoral visit through the rite of committal.

*The Body:*

14. The Church earnestly recommends that the pious custom of burying the bodies of the dead be observed; it does not, however, forbid cremation unless it has been chosen for reasons contrary to Christian teaching (Can. 1176:3).
15. It is recommended that the body be cremated after the funeral liturgy and before the rite of committal. This choice suggests pastoral judgment as to the proper place for the final commendation.
16. The liturgical options for cremated remains are the same as for the body with the following exceptions:
  - Cremated remains are not required to be present at the funeral liturgy.
  - The pall is not placed on the urn of cremated remains because there is no body to clothe.
17. Cremated remains must be either:
  - buried in a grave
  - interred in a vault
  - buried at sea.
18. Cremated remains may never be:
  - split for multiple disposition
  - scattered on land or sea.

*The Vigil and the Rosary:*

19. Because the vigil for the deceased is the principal rite celebrated by the Christian community (OCF 51, 54):
  - either in the time following death and before the funeral liturgy
  - or, if there is no funeral liturgy, in the time following death and before the rite of committal,the vigil should be celebrated at the death of every Christian.
20. The Rosary may be prayed publicly during the course of the funeral time, but never in place of the vigil for the deceased.
  - The Rosary may be prayed after the vigil for the deceased, with a suitable time separation in place between the vigil and the Rosary to make clear the separateness of the liturgy of the Church from the devotion.
  - The Rosary may be prayed in the church before the commencement of the funeral liturgy.
  - A member of the family or their delegate may lead the Rosary. A parish minister is never obliged.

*Eulogies:*

21. A brief homily based on the readings should always be given at the funeral liturgy, but never any kind of eulogy (OCF 141). The homily's purpose is as follows:
  - to express God's compassionate love
  - to proclaim the paschal mystery of the Lord
  - to offer consolation and strength in the face of death
  - to nourish hope in the face of death.
22. Eulogies by families and friends may be offered
  - either at the vigil for the deceased
  - or outside the funeral liturgy
    - either before its commencement (prior to the Opening Prayer)
    - or after its conclusion (after the Closing Prayer).
23. Because the funeral liturgy ought not be lengthy or repetitious (OCF 55) it is recommended that the pastor establish and offer guidelines for keeping eulogies spare in number and of reasonable length. The Diocese of Pueblo recommends that the guidelines be as follows:
  - that the eulogizing be a limited reflection, concentrating on the human qualities of the deceased
  - that all eulogizing be limited to no more than 7 to 10 minutes.

*Other Liturgical Notes:*

24. If the body of the deceased is formally received in the rite of reception before the vigil, then it is not received again at the funeral liturgy. Instead the ordinary procession typical of Sunday Mass is observed.
25. Caskets for non-ordained persons enter the church foot first. Caskets for bishops, priests and deacons enter the church head first.
26. Except in the case of physical disability, the family should enter the church following the casket, and not be seated beforehand.
27. At the vigil and funeral liturgy, flowers, mementos and symbols aside from the crucifix and bible may be displayed, but with restraint and in such a manner as not to compromise the simplicity and prayerfulness of the liturgy.