



Funeral Pre-planning

In the Diocese of Ogdensburg

Thank you for taking the initiative to plan your funeral. Doing so is a gift to your family and loved ones, and we at St. James and St. Hubert's want to help you in your preparations. Before getting into the details, I suggest three things. First, please say a prayer before getting into the practical stuff. Let the Holy Spirit guide this process – things always work out better that way. Second, I suggest that you write out a note at the top of your plans that will also be of great assistance to all who are left on "this side of eternity." *The following is my request, but I realize that there will be variables that I don't foresee. Feel free to adjust as necessary.* Hopefully everything will go according to plan, but in case it doesn't your loved ones will have a much easier time deviating from your plans if that note is included. Third, please know that we are here for you. If you have any questions along the way, please give us a call.

Attached you'll find the form that we use to plan funeral Masses here at St. James and St. Hubert's along with the normal hymn selections on the back.

The first priority for planning a Catholic funeral is the Word of God. Here is the link that has all the possible readings for a Catholic funeral Mass <https://www.usccb.org/prayer-and-worship/sacraments-and-sacramentals/bereavement-and-funerals#tab--for-adults> And as you can see from the attached form, you'll need one reading from the Old Testament, one Psalm (Psalm 23 – the Lord is My Shepherd – is most often selected), one reading from the New Testament, and one Gospel passage. Picking all four is ideal. But if you pick out less than that, we can "fill in the blanks" for you. (Note: Since we "know not the day nor the hour," it is possible that your funeral will take place in the Easter season. If that occurs your Old Testament reading will be exchanged for another New Testament reading. Feel free to select that alternative text as well.)

An equally important decision is the casket or the cremation. You may have made up your mind on this subject before now. Both are options, but "the Church clearly prefers and urges that the body of the deceased be present for the funeral rites, since the presence of the human body better expresses the values which the Church affirms in those rites." In other words, if you want to be cremated, please consider having the cremation done after the funeral. If you'd like to learn more, please look at this page: <https://www.usccb.org/prayer-and-worship/sacraments-and-sacramentals/bereavement-and-funerals/cremation-and-funerals> This short video link is also helpful: <https://catholicburialtraditions.org/the-hike-cremation-journey/> For this free link, you will need to create a username and password.

Another preliminary decision is whether you want a funeral Mass or a funeral service. Many people are surprised to know that Catholics can have funerals that aren't part of a Mass. It's true. The norm and expectation is the Holy Mass. However, the Church foresees this possibility for times when a priest is not available or when a large percentage of our family/friends are not Catholic. In the latter case, the prayers that are particular to a Catholic Mass can feel cumbersome and confusing to the unchurched. Of course, there is no prayer greater than the Mass, but the funeral does not necessarily have to be in the context of Mass. It's your choice.

Now here are some short practical points, as you are making plans and filling out the attached form:

- **Readers** You don't need to find readers. If you have Catholic family members/friends who are good readers and who will want to take this part, we'll be happy to have their help. If not, the parish can supply a readers.
- **Universal Prayer requests** Also known as the Intercessions or the Petitions, this is the most adaptable part of the Mass. Is there any specific intention or cause that is close to your heart? For example: Military? Health care workers? Etc? If so, just let us know. We're happy to compose a prayer to add to the Universal Prayer for you. Normally this is done by our Deacon, but it can be done by another upon request.
- **Musicians** We have an assortment of musicians that we contact for you. We're happy to take requests, but of course we don't know who will be available when the day comes.
- **Hymns** We generally have 4 hymns (samples of which are on the back of the form) 3 from the top section and 1 from the Communion Hymns. Like with the readings, if you don't choose all four, we will be happy to make the remaining selections for you. Other hymns may be possible upon request.
- **Placing of the Pall** The white cloth that covers the casket after it is brought into the church and sprinkled with holy water. The pall is a beautiful symbol of the baptism that you received years ago. Normally 2-4 family members/friends assist with its placement. (Of course, this is omitted if cremation must happen before the funeral.)
- **Vestment color** The priest (and/or deacon) will wear vestments that are either Black, White, or Purple. The traditional color was black (emphasizing the mourning). In the past few decades, white became the most common color (emphasizing new life). Finally, purple is a somber color (associated with Advent and Lent) acknowledging the grief, but lighter than the traditional Black.
- **Placing of Christian Symbols** Do you have a particular devotion to a family crucifix or the Word of God? Perhaps you would like a crucifix or a Book of the Gospels placed on your casket after the Pall is laid.
- **Words of Remembrance** (sometimes known as a eulogy) This also is not a requirement. If you request that they be included, it should be limited to one person of approximately 3-5 minutes. Further guidance can be given upon request.
- **Presentation of gifts.** A simple but highly symbolic role presenting the bread and wine to the priest before they are brought to the altar for consecration.
- **Burial** Is the burial following the funeral? Is it going to be St. James or St. Hubert's Cemetery? While this is almost always the case, we need to ask this so that we can inform the cemetery maintenance crews.

I hope this is helpful. Please know of my prayers and those of the parish for you and your family.

In Christ our Hope,
Fr. Jay Seymour