

Guidelines for the Public Celebration of the Order of Christian Funerals in the Diocese of Sacramento

"I am the Resurrection and the Life, says the Lord. Whoever believes in me, even though he dies, will live, and everyone who lives and believes in me will not die forever."

– John 11:25-26

The resumption of the public celebration of the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass has necessitated the need to publish a set of guidelines for the celebration of the Order of Christian Funerals. The pandemic that our local church and the whole world is experiencing has unfortunately not made it any easier for families who have lost a loved one. Thus, these guidelines are intended to provide priests, funeral homes, and the grieving family direction in the celebration of the rites for the dead. These guidelines follow the same or similar principles established in the Guidelines for the Resumption of the Public Celebration of the Mass (26 May 2020) and the current diocesan guidelines for the celebration of Christian Funerals

A. General Principles

1. The General Principles published in the Guidelines for the Resumption of Public Masses APPLY TO ALL THE RITES in the Order of Christian Funerals.
2. Priests and Funeral Directors/Staff must ensure that proper instructions are given to the family of the deceased.
3. Immediate family is to be understood as: 1. Surviving spouse, children (and their spouses), siblings, and those who lived in the private residence of the deceased. If a member of the immediate family has a child under the age of 3 that child may sit with his or her parent.
4. If possible, the parish and the funeral homes offer the families and friends of the deceased an opportunity to participate via livestream.
5. Parishes and funeral homes must plan for a system in place to facilitate contact tracing in case there is an instance of an infection of COVID-19, and be prepared to inform the diocese, local health authorities, and those who were present at the service.
6. The family of the deceased has the option to plan for a later date the funeral liturgy or a memorial Mass when there are less restrictions regarding the gathering of people.

B. Preparation and Considerations Regarding the Facilities

NB: Please review the guidelines of May 26th for the resumption of public Masses and adhere to those specifications.

1. Capacity/Attendees/Configuration of the Facilities
 - a. Current guidelines allow for 100 people (including clergy and funeral home personnel) or 25% of capacity, **whichever is less.**
 - b. The facilities must be configured in a manner that complies with the physical distancing standards and safety restrictions, i.e. at least six feet. Members of the same household or immediate family members may sit together but maintain distance from other families and individuals.
 - c. The church or funeral home must ensure the proper sanitation of the entire facility in between liturgies.
 - d. Clearly marked signs must be placed throughout the facility and limit the areas where people are allowed to congregate.
 - e. Receptions after funeral services in the church or funeral homes are to be avoided.
 - f. Sanitizing materials are to be made available and used as often as possible.
2. Use of Worship Aids/Distribution of Prayer Cards and other Materials
 - a. Eliminate or minimize items or materials that can be deemed as means of transmission to infect others.
 - b. Programs and prayer cards are to be disposed of in the appropriate manner and not collected or reused.

C. Preparing for the Liturgy

1. Making arrangements with the family
 - a. Priests, deacons, and funeral directors are to instruct families regarding the guidelines for the celebration of the Order of Christian Funerals. Be mindful of the delicate situation of the family. Coordinate accordingly with the funeral homes to ensure that guidelines are followed. Have a compassionate discussion with the family that helps them make the best decision as to when to have a funeral.
 - b. Schedule the liturgies that allow for enough time to sanitize the facility in between services.
2. The funeral liturgies are not to be unnecessarily prolonged. Plan the liturgy to what is prescribed in the rite.
3. Limit the number of ministers to serve at the mass, e.g. one lector- one reading.

4. If there is to be a eulogy, only one person is to deliver it (strictly no more than 3-5 minutes, in accord with current diocesan funeral guidelines); Video presentations are to be discouraged/eliminated or scheduled outside of the liturgy itself.

D. Celebrating the Order of Christian Funeral

1. During the Funeral Vigil
 - a. If Holy Water is used to bless the body or casket, it must be done carefully so as not to unnecessarily sprinkling others with it and should be done solely by the presider.
 - b. Words of remembrance are to be limited to two (to allow for a eulogy and some other expression of condolences/remembrance) or eliminated entirely.
 - c. The rosary, which is not part of the Funeral vigil, may be eliminated and encouraged to be prayed by the family in their homes.
2. Funeral Mass
 - a. Follow the provided instructions in the Guidelines for the Resumption of the Public Celebration of the Mass (26 May 2020); the principles and instructions apply.
 - b. Priests are to adhere with the what is basic and essential to the liturgy.
 - c. At the Reception of the Body:
 - The sprinkling of Holy Water must be done carefully by the presider.
 - The placing of the pall and the procession of the body must be limited to the presider, assisting minister, and the funeral director(s).
 - d. If there is to be a eulogy, only one person is to deliver it (strictly no more than 3-5 minutes) in accord with current diocesan funeral guidelines.
 - e. At the Final Commendation
 - If the Holy Water is to be used again, the same instruction applies and must be done solely by the presider. The sprinkling can be omitted.
 - The recessional is to be limited to the presider, assisting minister, and funeral director(s).
 - Physical distancing is to be observed as attendees leave the church.
3. Committal
 - a. The area for the committal should be set up in to allow for any necessary seating for the immediate family. All others should be situated 20-25 feet from the casket, family and clergy.
 - b. In blessing the place of committal, the use of Holy Water must be done carefully by the presider only.
 - c. Priests, deacons, and funeral directors are to comply with the physical distancing requirements.
 - d. The number of attendees is to stay within the limits has been established.
 - e. Any post committal gestures e.g. placing a flower or handful of dirt in the grave, if requested by the family, should be determined in consultation with the presider

of the funeral liturgy. If these are approved, they should be carried out in way to eliminate any possible points of transmission and direct personal contact. This moment should take place after committal has taken place and the presiding minister has been given a chance to leave.

4. Funeral Liturgy Outside the Mass and Other
 - a. The presider (priest/deacon) is to celebrate the rite in accord with all the principles and instruction provided in these guidelines.