

THE FUNERAL RITES

LITURGICAL GUIDANCE & SUGGESTED MUSIC

The Funeral Rites are comprised of a number of different but connected liturgies. The ones we are most familiar with are;

- THE RECEPTION OF THE BODY AT THE CHURCH;
- THE FUNERAL MASS
- THE FINAL COMMENDATION AND FAREWELL.

The Order of Christian Funerals (OCF-the book containing the texts that the priest uses for these liturgies) says the following regarding the music for such liturgies.

“Music is integral to these liturgies.

*It allows the community to express convictions and feelings
that words alone may fail to convey.*

*It has the power to console and uplift the mourners and to strengthen the unity of the assembly in
faith and love.” (OCF 30)*

With this in mind, these then are the criteria to use in selecting such music:

*“Music at funerals should support, console, and uplift the assembly and should help to create in
them a spirit of hope
in Christ’s victory over death
and in the deceased Christian’s share in that victory.” (OCF 31)*

*This means that the hymns we choose should capture something of our Christian belief, so that when we sing
them we are in fact expressing our faith and belief in the risen Christ.*

*“An organist or other instrumentalist,
a cantor, and where possible, a choir
should assist the assembly’s full participation
in singing the songs, responses and acclamations of these rites.” (OCF 32)*

*This is the challenge, as it is at all liturgy; having understood the role and importance of music and then
having personnel in place, how then are people encouraged to participate?*

The priority in choosing the music to be used is of course that of any liturgy;

1. Gospel Acclamation, Memorial Acclamation, Amen, Holy Holy.
 2. The Psalm, Lord have mercy.
 3. Opening hymn, Communion Hymn, Lamb of God,
Recessional Hymn.
- The following is a step by step guide through the liturgies.
 - The music noted is a sample or suggestion, not an exhaustive list of material for these liturgies.

- I have included music suggestions for ‘THE RECEPTION OF THE BODY AT THE CHURCH’. While the practice is not presently widespread, it is good to have some reference should and when it arise.
- These resources follow on the publication in 2007 of ‘Praying for the Dead, Caring for the Living’ – *Celebration of Funerals in the Diocese of Kerry*, produces by the Diocesan Liturgy Committee. This resource is available in your parish.

1. RITE OF RECEPTION OF THE BODY AT THE CHURCH

INTRODUCTORY RITES

- Entrance Procession & Song:

*a suitable hymn known to all, instrumental music
or the responsories from the OCF eg;*

Abide with me
The Lord’s my Shepherd
♪ Into your hands, O Lord (*OCF responsory*)

LITURGY OF THE WORD

- Responsorial Psalm:

See also Psalms from Mass selection

♪ The Lord’s my Shepherd (Ps 22)	Tom Egan
♪ ‘Sé an Thiarna m’Aoire (Ps 22)	Fintan O’Carroll
♪ Like the deer that yearns (Ps 41)	Joseph Walshe
♪ I will walk in the presence(Ps 114/5)	Stephen Dean
♪ I rejoiced when I heard (Ps 121)	Ronan McDonagh

- Prayer of Intercession:

♪ Litany

The Litany has a ‘Lord have Mercy’ response, which when sung enhances the prayer. One of the penitential rite settings from the Mass that people might be familiar with would work well: eg ‘Lord have Mercy’, ‘A Thiarna déan Trócaire’, or the simple chant ‘Kyrie eleison’.

2. THE FUNERAL MASS

The choice of music either vocal or instrumental at any Funeral Mass follows the usual guidelines for any Eucharistic celebration as already outlined.

INTRODUCTORY RITES

- Entrance Procession & Song:

...A suitable hymn that all the assembly can participate in e.g.,...

Abide with me
Lord of all hopefulness
Nearer my God to Thee
The Lord's my Shepherd
The King of Love

- Lord have Mercy:

...if sung, a known setting, so that people may be able to sing.

LITURGY OF THE WORD

- Responsorial Psalm:

...also see selection from 'The Reception of the Body':

♪ My soul is longing (Ps 131)	Lucien Deiss
Preserve me God (Ps 15)	Daniel McNulty
My soul is thirsting (Ps 62)	Howard Hughes
♪ The Lord is my light (Ps 26)	Paul Inwood
♪ The Lord is compassion (Ps 102)	Fintan O'Carroll
Be not afraid (Isaiah & Luke)	Bob Dufford
♪ The Lord will heal..(Ps 34)	Liam Lawton

... A Psalm is a specific text from scripture. Its purpose is as a simple sung response to the preceding reading. The simpler the response the more it allows people to respond without difficulty. Be aware that just because a piece may have a repeated refrain, this does not make it a psalm, eg., The Clouds Veil.

Some other scripture texts have also come to be used as they fulfil the same criteria, e.g., (Be not afraid, Magnificat)

- Gospel Acclamation:

Alleluia - a powerful reminder of the resurrection which is the source of our hope. Again, a familiar setting allows all to sing. Be aware of texts for Lenten season.

LITURGY OF THE EUCHARIST

- Presentation of Gifts (Offertory):

...Instrumental music is most suitable at this point and should continue until after the gifts have been incensed.

- Eucharistic Acclamations:

Holy Holy / Memorial Acclamation / Amen

... again, commonly used settings allow people to sing these key acclamations.

- The Lord's Prayer:

*...is the one prayer that unites all Christians. It should only be sung when all can do so. It is **never a solo piece** at any liturgy.*

- Communion Hymn

...Communion hymns ideally reflect the action taking place; i.e. the common procession made up of individual people to receive the Body of Christ, that they may individually be nourished and thus strengthen the bond of community.

Eat this bread	Taizé
I am the bread of life	S. Toolan
I will be the vine	L. Lawton
Let us be bread blest by the Lord	T. Porter
One bread that is broken	F. King
Take and Eat	M. Joncas

3. FINAL COMMENDATION AND FAREWELL

- Song of Farewell:

♪ Receive his/her soul and present it to God the most high

...This may be sung, and done so after the coffin has been sprinkled and incensed.

- Procession to the Place of Committal

(as the coffin leaves the church)

♪ The Lord will guard your journey *from OCF*

♪ May the choirs of Angels Ernest Sands (Canaimís)

Traditionally, a hymn to Mary is often sung

.....*Some General Notes*

- It is important that the singing at a funeral liturgy as in any liturgy - while it may be provided or led by a soloist or choir – is encouraging of, and participated in by all. Singing in the liturgy - thought it may be led by an individual or choir - like the liturgy itself, is the activity of all that are gathered. Most important are the Gospel & Eucharistic Acclamations, and the Psalm Response. Every effort must be made in parishes to ensure this.
- Secular music does not have a place in the liturgy. As a person’s favourite piece of music, it might fit more with the atmosphere of the wake, the home, or the graveyard.
- Instrumental music, especially much from our Irish tradition – sensitively chosen – is most suitable.
- Classical Repertoire (e.g., Ave Maria, Panis Angelicus), while beautiful, does not find a natural home in the liturgy. It could however be used maybe as a reflective piece.

Resources.....

The Order of Christian Funerals (OCF)

Veritas Publications ©1992
Available from local clergy

Praying for the Dead, Caring for the Living

Celebration of Funerals in the Diocese of Kerry

Canaimís

Hymnal for the Diocese of Kerry

The Veritas Hymnal

Hymn Book
Veritas Publications ©1973 / 2007

Alleluia Amen

Veritas Publications ©1978

*Music for The Reception of the Body at the Church

National Advisory Committee on Church Music
Veritas Publishers © 1998

In Caelo

Hymn book
Veritas Publications ©1999

Laudate

Hymnal
Decani Music ©1999 / 2002

*The Last Journey

Book & CD
GIA Publications USA

*Songs of Farewell

CD
Dublin Diocesan Resource Centre

** denotes specific funeral collections
All others are general collections*

*Most resources are available from
Veritas shops nationwide.*

♪ recorded on teaching CD