



Prot. N. D. 01 / 2014

DECREE

Concerning Eulogies and Words of Remembrance at Funeral Liturgies

Considering that “within the limits of his competence, it pertains to the diocesan bishop in the Church entrusted to him to issue liturgical norms which bind everyone” (*CIC*, canon 838, §4);

Considering that “ecclesiastical funerals, by which the Church seeks spiritual support for the deceased, honors their bodies, and at the same time brings the solace of hope to the living, must be celebrated according to the norm of the liturgical laws” (*CIC*, canon 1176, §2);

Considering that contrary to popular belief, eulogies or words of remembrance are not an official part of Catholic funeral rites, particularly in the context of a funeral liturgy within Mass;

Considering the long-standing practice in the Archdiocese of Ottawa of allowing words of remembrance to be spoken during a funeral liturgy, even within Mass;

By this decree, I establish the following norms as particular law for the Archdiocese of Ottawa regarding the use of words of remembrance at a funeral liturgy within Mass:

Pastoral Policy Concerning Eulogies and Words of Remembrance at Funeral Liturgies

Introduction

The word “eulogy” refers to speech or writing that offers high praise, particularly for one who has died, without reference to God or to faith. In the Christian funeral, we gather not to praise the deceased but to pray for them. For this reason, eulogies are not given.

We strongly urge pastors to encourage the faithful to speak publicly in remembrance of their loved one outside of the *Funeral Liturgy within Mass* either in the funeral home at the *Vigil for the Deceased* or in the parish hall or reception centre following the funeral Mass.

Please note: at *Funeral Liturgies outside of Mass*, words spoken in memory of the deceased are permitted in the Rite before the “Final Commendation.”

Please see the three instructions below for suitable parameters concerning the context, content and place of delivery for words of remembrance spoken at a funeral liturgy outside of Mass or within Mass. The same principles apply to both contexts.

Archdiocesan Policy for “Words of Remembrance” at a Funeral Liturgy within Mass

Exceptionally, due to long-standing practice in the Archdiocese of Ottawa, and in response to the perceived need of many of the faithful for “Words of Remembrance” within the context of the *Funeral Liturgy within Mass*, it is permitted to have “Words of Remembrance” spoken at a *Funeral Liturgy within Mass* with the following three (3) instructions:

1. WHEN AND HOW:

The “Words of Remembrance” are to be given by one person from a prepared one page text. They are delivered at the beginning of the Funeral Liturgy after the reception of the body and the opening procession. With a Funeral Liturgy in the presence of the cremated remains, the “Words of Remembrance” are given before the sign of the cross.

Note: After the Entrance Procession, the celebrant invites the Assembly to be seated. He then invites the person(s) forward for the “Words of Remembrance”. After the “Words of Remembrance”, the celebrant invites the Assembly to stand for the Penitential Rite and “Opening Prayer.”

2. CONTENT AND LENGTH:

The text for the “Words of Remembrance” should be one page in length (taking approximately three or four minutes to read).

A copy of the text of the words of remembrance should be given to the celebrant beforehand for his review.

Note: Pastors should encourage the person preparing “Words of Remembrance” to include mention of the life of faith of the deceased.

3. PLACE:

The “Words of Remembrance” should be read from a place other than the place where the scriptures are proclaimed. The lectern where the announcements are read is an appropriate place.

Note: In parish churches where there is not second lectern, a separate microphone stand could be available to differentiate the “Words of Remembrance” from Sacred Scripture.

Pastoral Alternative to a Eulogy at a Funeral Mass:

Many Catholics do not know that eulogies are not part of a Catholic Funeral Liturgy. Because of the funerals of public figures and frequent attendance at non-Catholic funeral liturgies, many assume that words spoken in memory of the deceased are necessary.

With pastoral discretion, we can offer family members alternatives to “Words of Remembrance” by instead including some personal and pertinent information about the deceased in the homily.

The celebrant may ask family members to provide some information about the deceased that they deem to be relevant and important before the celebration of the funeral.

The celebrant may incorporate an appropriate amount of this information into his homily while respecting the central Christian themes of the mystery of God’s love, and Christ’s victory over death and how these mysteries were present in the life of the deceased and in the lives of those present (cf. *Order of Christian Funerals*, n. 27).

Other Options:


The structure for the celebration of a Christian funeral includes three stations or “parts”: the Vigil Service (often celebrated at the Funeral Home); the Funeral Liturgy at the Church; and the Committal Service at the place of interment.



The Vigil at the Funeral Home: There are specific provisions for family members of friends to speak at the Vigil for the Deceased. After the Concluding Prayer, “a member or friend of the family may speak in remembrance of the deceased (OCF, “Vigil for the Deceased – A,” p.49).

Rite of Committal with Final Commendation at the Graveside: In the "Rite of Committal with Final Commendation," after the Final Blessing, family members or friends may make a gesture of farewell or leave-taking where this is customary or appropriate. Family members or friends may speak in remembrance of the deceased at this time (see OCF, "Rite of Committal with Final Commendation," p. 247).

This law will take effect on February 2, 2014, and it will remain in effect until it is amended or revoked according to the norm of law by me or my successors.

Given at Ottawa, at the Metropolitan Curia, under my sign and seal and the countersign of my Chancellor, this fifth day of January, on the Solemnity of the Epiphany of the Lord, in the year of our Lord, two thousand and fourteen.


+Terrence Prendergast, S.J.
Archbishop of Ottawa



Fr. Christian Riesbeck, CC, E.V.
Chancellor