



*The Roman Catholic
Funeral*



The Catholic Funeral Mass

The Funeral Mass contains more ritual, is almost entirely conducted by the priest, and is held in the church building. The body will normally be present during this service. The Funeral Mass is a complete worship service and contains the Reception of the Body, the liturgies of the Word and the Eucharist, and the Final Commendation and Farewell. Some parishes now allow family members to give brief remembrances and eulogies following communion and before the last rites are offered.

A Priest must preside over a mass.

Memorial Mass

There are a few major differences between a memorial mass and a funeral mass. A Priest must preside over a mass. In a memorial mass, the body of the deceased is not present. In some cases where the person is cremated, the remains may be there. The readings and prayers will differ somewhat based on whether the body is present. The funeral mass includes an anointing of the body with holy water or prayers. This is omitted at the memorial mass since the body is not available.

A funeral mass is scheduled soon after the death in order to facilitate the burial, which happens right after. A memorial mass can be scheduled any time and often may be part of a regular weekly mass.



Memorial Service

A Memorial Service does not include a Mass. The body is not present in a casket at a memorial service. However, an urn with the loved one's ashes may be present at a memorial service. A memorial service is a commemorative event without the body present. It provides a designated time and space for loved ones to grieve and support each other. The service can be held weeks or months after the death, allowing loved ones more time to plan and more flexibility with date and location. A Priest or Deacon may preside, if desired.

Funeral Service without a mass

If you don't have the full Mass, you can still have a less formal service that includes the traditional funeral prayers (also known as the funeral liturgy). Catholic funeral songs might also get played during an informal service. A Priest or Deacon may preside, if desired.



The Funeral Vigil (Calling Hours/Wake)

This is generally held at the Funeral Home before the funeral. Some people choose to have this at the church, in an agreed location within the church. Some people choose to have the Calling hours followed by the Funeral Service at the Funeral Home.

Catholic Rite of Committal (Graveside services)

A Catholic Rite of Committal is typically performed at the graveside, before and during when the deceased is laid to rest. Either a priest or a deacon presides over the ceremony, leading the community in prayers. This often includes a prayer to bless the place of burial if it has not already been previously sanctified. The Rite of Committal signifies the end of a Catholic funeral. You may choose to forgo the funeral service and/or mass and have only the Graveside service.

A Priest or Deacon can preside.

Priest Role: Only a Priest can administer Last Rites. Only a Priest can preside over a Funeral or Memorial Mass.

Deacon Role: A Deacon can preside over a Memorial Service, Prayer Service, Funeral Vigil, and/or Catholic Rite of Committal (Graveside service). A Deacon can assist a Priest with a Mass.