

Funeral Policy

St. Joseph Parish, North Sydney

Introduction:

We are here to help, thus we will journey with you during this most difficult time. We wish to assist you and your deceased loved one in any way possible, within the policies set out by the Roman Catholic Church, Diocese of Antigonish and St. Joseph Parish. There are a few things you should know, since you are asking the Church for a Christian funeral. Our facilities are free of charge to you and your family. The Church takes seriously the Biblical call to take care of the dead (Tobit 1:16-20/Matt 8:22/Rev. 14:13) and the corporal works of mercy call the living to bury the dead. Since you are seeking our services, we ask you to respect our beliefs on how this should be done. The following policy is in effect for all persons interested in having a funeral in our church. The policy is firm, so we treat everyone equally. Trust that we will offer you and your deceased loved one our best.

Team Ministry:

The Pastor had been entrusted with the souls of the parishioners, so normally the pastor presides at funerals with other priests assisting; but if a special relationship exists between another priest and the deceased then arrangements may be made for another presider.

We offer a team approach to ministry, thus lay persons and the ordained work together to minister to you and the community. Our Pastoral Care team can be a great comfort as our loved ones age, and the **priest should be called well in advance to offer them the sacrament of the sick** (anointing). Upon the death of our loved ones, the following occurs:

1. The funeral homes partner with us to serve you, so they should be contacted after death.
2. Funeral directors will contact the parish priest, after the family has spoken with the funeral director; then the director will request a date and time for the funeral from the pastor.
3. The pastor will then contact the grieving family to meet with them.

The Funeral Liturgies:

1. The priest or deacon will meet the family and offer prayers for the vigil (wake) service.
2. The next morning at 10 am the funeral mass will be offered by the priest at the Parish. In some circumstances a funeral service (liturgy of the Word, without Eucharist) will be led by the pastor, deacon or a lay presider with prior approval of the pastor.
3. After the funeral liturgy, the liturgy continues until our deceased loved one has been buried in sacred ground. Thus, we immediately go to the cemetery for the Rite of Committal or graveside prayers. The only exception is when cremation has been requested after the funeral liturgy, and then we will gather again with the cremated remains as soon as possible to complete the liturgy (1-2 days).
4. Pre-booking of funerals for months down the road is not permitted. When our loved ones die, their dignity requires us to put our lives on hold and take care of the deceased in a prompt dignified manner. The human person is first and foremost spiritual; eternal life is

real and souls require our prayers (spiritual works of mercy). *“In the face of death, the Church confidently proclaims that God has created each person for eternal life” (OCF#1).* We who remain here on earth also need closure to deal with our loss in a timely manner.

5. ***Deceased who live away*** may have their funeral where they currently live, or their family may return the body or cremated remains to St. Joseph’s within a few weeks of death and a funeral in North Sydney is planned. If the funeral takes place elsewhere e.g. West - then the remains may be transferred to North Sydney for burial at a later date. Since the funeral took place somewhere else, we do not offer a second funeral in North Sydney, rather we offer the committal prayers at the cemetery and after the burial we may offer a memorial mass for the deceased. We will also offer a reception in the hall afterwards.
6. Obituaries are to be prepared for public awareness. All family are to be notified regardless of family circumstances. All family members have a right to know the time and location of the funeral and burial.
7. Power of Attorney/Wills – It is becoming necessary that you communicate your desire for a Catholic funeral mass so your wishes are honoured.

Cremation:

1. Our bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit (CCC#2300). *“The long standing practice of burying the body of the deceased in a grave or tomb in memory of Jesus, whose body was placed in a tomb, continues to be encouraged as a sign of Christian faith”* (Diocese of Antigonish). The Church believes the body should ideally be present for the funeral and if cremation is desired, then the body should immediately be taken for cremation afterwards.
2. Caskets may be rented for the funeral, so a family does not have to incur the cost of purchasing one. A funeral mass is still provided for those who request cremation prior to the funeral, so long as they do not have a negative view of the body, hence are only requesting cremation for reasons that are not contrary to the faith.
3. Pictures may be present at the wake or at the entrance of the church. *“Just as no pictures accompany a casket, so no pictures should accompany the urn in the church”* (Diocese of Antigonish).
4. The urn will be placed in the center front of the altar next to the paschal candle, prior to the funeral. The remains may also be treated like the body and welcomed at the entrance of the church. Please discuss your preference.
5. Since Catholics believe in the resurrection of the body (1 Cor. 15:42), the entire cremated remains of the person should be placed in a dignified container, such as an urn and then be buried in sacred ground (CCC#998).
6. Cremated remains should never be separated, divided, or made into jewellery, dishes or anything like this. Scattering remains on the sea, in the air, on the ground and keeping them in homes of relatives does not display appropriate reverence for our belief that we will rise again. *“The Church does not offer a prayer service when those kinds of disposal have been chosen and liturgical rites should not accompany any method of disposal of the ashes which is not in harmony with this Christian tradition”* (Diocese of Antigonish).

Music:

1. At funerals we celebrate Jesus Christ and how your loved one gave praise and glory to God in the way they lived their life. Music must reflect God's glory, not secular favourites.
2. Thus only sacred spiritual music is appropriate at the funeral liturgy. The musical focus is on God and eternity during the funeral liturgy. *"The texts of songs must be approved for use in the Catholic liturgy. Non-liturgical songs do not have a place in the funeral liturgy"* (Diocese of Antigonish). The text, as well as the melody must be spiritually sacred in nature.
3. Instruments such as bagpipes; violins etc. may be used if they play sacred liturgical hymns e.g. Amazing grace etc. Only after the liturgy is over may jigs, reels etc. be played.
4. The funeral Choir is made up of members from all other choirs, thus if you are requesting a soloist or special request, then this person will not replace the music ministry, but they are invited to join our funeral choir. They may do a post-communion meditation.
5. Where can my loved one's favorite song be played? Their favourite song, may be played at the wake, graveside, or reception in the hall. Since the wake and graveside prayers are a part of the funeral liturgy, you are still honouring their request, while also respecting our beliefs.

Cemeteries:

1. Burials can take place from May 1st to the first heavy snowfall in our cemetery.
2. One-time plot fees include perpetual care of the plot forever. \$625 for one plot, discounted if pre-purchase two or more plots: two plots are \$1000. and three plots are \$1375.
3. There is also a fee for the opening or digging and closing of the graves. Traditional burial (full body with casket) is \$800. or cremation with urn is \$500.
4. Spouses, who wish to be buried side by side, should contact their local parish cemetery representative to see if this is possible.
5. Please respect our cemetery policy in regards to the placement of flowers, lights etc. You cannot impede or affect the mowing and maintenance.
6. Cremated remains may also be buried in the same plot of another deceased loved one. Two cremated persons may be buried on top of a full body in a plot, for a total of three persons per plot.
7. We encourage you to visit and pray for your loved ones regularly.

Christian Hospitality:

1. We welcome everyone to our faith communities.
2. Whether you are familiar with the Catholic approach to death or not, you will be met with love, respect and the hospitality of Christ.
3. If you are not Catholic, or do not share our church's belief in the real presence of Christ in the Eucharist, or if you will not be receiving Holy Communion for a variety of reasons, you are still warmly welcome in our church. Perhaps you would be more comfortable remaining seated and praying for the deceased, while others receive communion, but you are also welcome to come forward and signal you wish to receive a blessing instead of Holy Communion. You would do this by approaching the priest, or minister of communion with one arm placed over your heart.
4. We seek to honour your beliefs and do not wish to impose ours on you. We know you will extend that same respect back to us, as we deeply believe in the holy presence of the Eucharist, which is Christ sacramentally present.

Eulogies:

1. The priest will meet with the family to learn about your deceased loved one and will also gather more information about them from the community. The priest will then prepare a homily that gives praise to God, by drawing out qualities of your loved one that reflects the goodness of our Creator. All that is good in your deceased loved one, comes to us from God. The homily will look back and draw out your loved one's gifts, but also look forward to eternal life. Funeral eulogies only look back & are to be avoided (CCC#1688).
2. If you would still like some Words of Remembrance, they may take place at either one of the wake services, graveside or hall reception, or before/after the funeral liturgy.

Donations:

1. God's grace is priceless, so everything we do at church is free. A donation is recommended to the priest and may also be given to the funeral catering committee, and funeral choir. Luncheon receptions are provided by the generosity of the community. St. Joseph Funeral Committee will host your reception following the funeral if requested. God's grace is free, but your donations to keep everything going are sincerely appreciated.
2. Memorial masses may be offered in memory of our deceased loved ones after the funeral mass is complete. The mass is free because God's grace is freely given, however there is a suggested donation of \$10 for memorial masses, as they will be printed in our bulletin and on line. Mass cards are available at the wake or parish office during office hours.

Bereavement Team:

After the funeral, a letter of care and support will follow to the contact person for the family and an invitation to attend the All Souls day mass on November 2nd. At this mass we will pray for and light a candle in your deceased loved one's honour. The Church never forgets our deceased loved ones. They may be gone from earth, but the human person lives forever.

"May the souls of the faithful departed through the mercy of God rest in peace."

Peace be with you, Fr. Douglas MacDonald
Pastor, St. Joseph Parish, North Sydney.

Sources:

The Holy Bible

Catechism of the Catholic Church – Pope John Paul II, Vatican City, 1997.

The Order of Christian Funerals – Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops, Ottawa, 1981.

Diocese of Antigonish Funeral Policy – Bishop Brian Dunn, 2011.