



# The Order of Christian Funerals

in the Catholic Parishes and Missions  
of the Diocese of Helena

DIOCESE OF HELENA LITURGICAL COMMISSION  
September 2016

“Offering worship, praise and thanksgiving to God  
for the gift of a life returned to God,  
the author of life and the hope of the just.”

OCF#3



Easter Vigil, Blessed Trinity-Missoula, MT



# “ALL THE FAITHFUL SHOULD BE LED. . .

to that full, conscious and active participation in liturgical celebrations  
which is demanded by the very nature of the liturgy,  
and to which the Christian people ...have a right and obligation  
by reason of their baptism.

**...THE FULL AND ACTIVE PARTICIPATION BY ALL THE PEOPLE  
IS THE AIM TO BE CONSIDERED BEFORE ALL ELSE...”**



“On the first day of each week, which is known as the Day of the Lord or the Lord’s Day, the Church, by apostolic tradition that draws its origin from the very day of the Resurrection of Christ,

celebrates the **PASCHAL MYSTERY**.

Hence, SUNDAY must be considered the primordial feast day.”

Norms on the Liturgical Year #4



SUNDAY is the model and the norm for the Funeral Liturgy!

- ❖ The “Church” gathers;
- ❖ Full, conscious and active participation by all is assumed;
- ❖ The gathered assembly shares in liturgical ministries according to the various gifts and offices in the church.
- ❖ There is a diversity of ministries;
- ❖ Catholic liturgy is “sung liturgy!”





Since liturgical celebration involves the whole person, it requires attentiveness

**TO ALL THAT AFFECTS THE SENSES.**

The readings and prayers, psalms and songs should be proclaimed or sung with understanding, conviction, and reverence.

MUSIC FOR THE ASSEMBLY should be truly expressive of the texts and at the same time simple and easily sung.

**The ritual gestures, processions, and postures should express and foster an attitude of reverence and reflectiveness in those taking part in the funeral rites.**

**The funeral rites should be celebrated in an atmosphere of simple beauty, in a setting that encourages participation.**



**LITURGICAL SIGNS AND SYMBOLS AFFIRMING CHRISTIAN BELIEF AND HOPE IN THE PASCHAL MYSTERY ARE ABUNDANT IN THE CELEBRATION OF THE FUNERAL RITES...**

**Care must be taken that the choice and use of signs and symbols are in accord with the culture of the people.** OCF #21



The death of a Christian is a **CALL** for the  
Catholic Community  
**to gather in faith....**

to proclaim that God has created each person for eternal life. Jesus, the Son of God, by his death and resurrection, has broken the chains of sin and death. The parish community gathers in the face of death to proclaim its trust in God's promise, to support the grieving family and friends and to offer worship, praise and thanksgiving to God for the gift of a life returned to God.

**THIS IS THE SPIRIT** in which this statement of Policy is presented so that all of us in the Catholic Parishes and Missions of the Diocese of Helena can share this common vision and support those who face the loss of a loved one by the light of our shared Catholic faith.

**Based on the 1987 ORDER OF CHRISTIAN FUNERALS**

**"I hereby approve and PROMULGATE  
'THE ORDER OF CHRISTIAN FUNERALS  
IN THE CATHOLIC PARISHES AND MISSIONS  
OF THE DIOCESE OF HELENA AS PARTICULAR LAW  
FOR THE DIOCESE OF HELENA."**



**+George Leo Thomas**  
Bishop of Helena



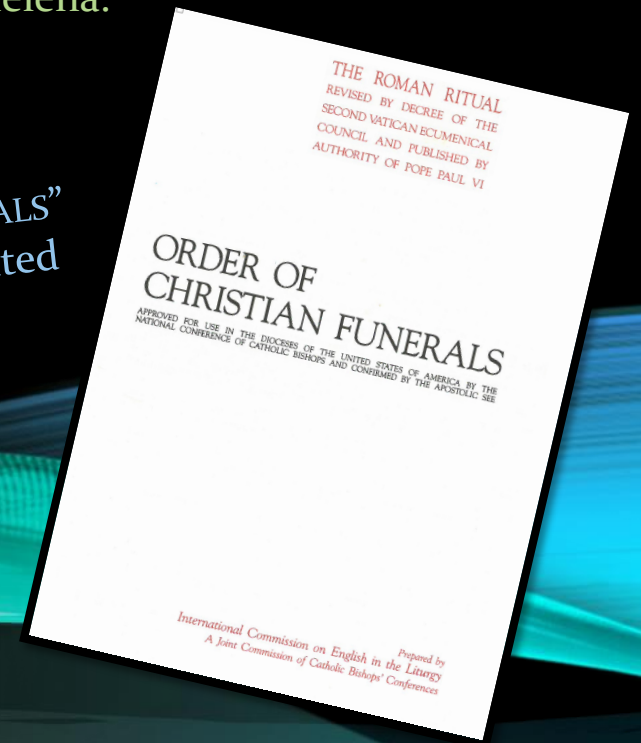
# WHAT IS “PARTICULAR LAW?”

A particular law is a law established by the appropriate authority for a specific territory and binds those for whom the law was issued (usually those living in the territory).

In this case, the document, “THE ORDER OF CHRISTIAN FUNERALS IN THE CATHOLIC PARISHES AND MISSIONS OF THE DIOCESE OF HELENA,” is particular law established by the Bishop of Helena for the Diocese of Helena, and binds all those who celebrate funeral liturgies within the territory of the Diocese of Helena.



The Diocese of Helena norms are based and flow from “THE ORDER OF CHRISTIAN FUNERALS” mandated for use in the Dioceses of the United States on November 2, 1989



# PRINCIPLE ELEMENTS of a Catholic Funeral

## +Ministry and Participation

*Each member of the parish is called to be present and to share in this ministry of compassion. There is always as “diversity of ministries” in Catholic liturgy.*

## +Preparation

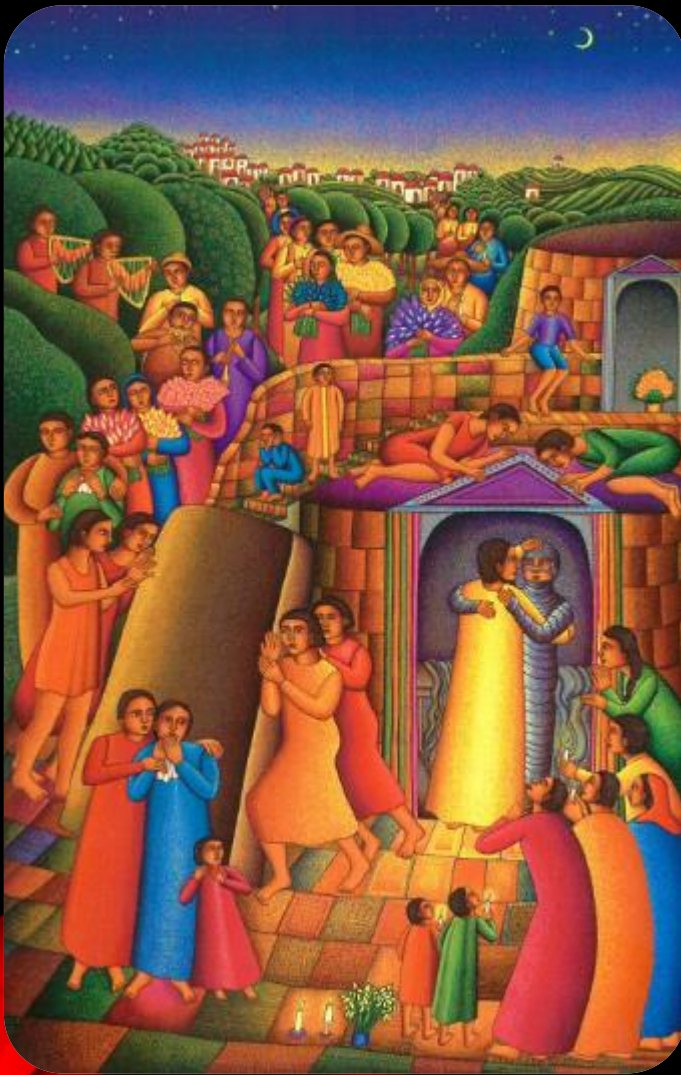
The parishes of the Diocese of Helena strive to involve family and friends in the preparation of the funeral rites in accord with the Order of Christian Funerals and other liturgical documents of the Church.

## +The Body of the Deceased

Since in baptism the body was marked with the seal of the Trinity and became the temple of the Holy Spirit, the bodies of the dead and the places where they rest are honored and respected.







©2005 John August Swanson. Take Away the Stone

# LAZARUS, COME OUT!

The Christian Faithful are confronted by the mystery of life and death when they are faced with the body of one who has died. **THE BODY**...recalls the personal story of faith, the loving family bonds, the friendships, and the words and acts of kindness of the deceased person...it is the body whose hands clothed the poor and embraced the sorrowing. OCF 411 Appendix Cremation

**THE BODY** of a deceased Catholic Christian is also the body once washed in baptism, anointed with the oil of salvation, and fed with the Bread of Life and the Chalice of Blessing. The **HUMAN BODY** is in Christ a temple of the Holy Spirit and is destined for future glory at the resurrection of the dead. OCF 411 Appendix Cremation

*“Unbind him,  
let him go free.”*

# The Principle Rites of a Catholic Funeral Liturgy

*The rites of the Catholic Funeral Liturgy  
can best be described as a journey  
toward entering into a new relationship with the deceased.*



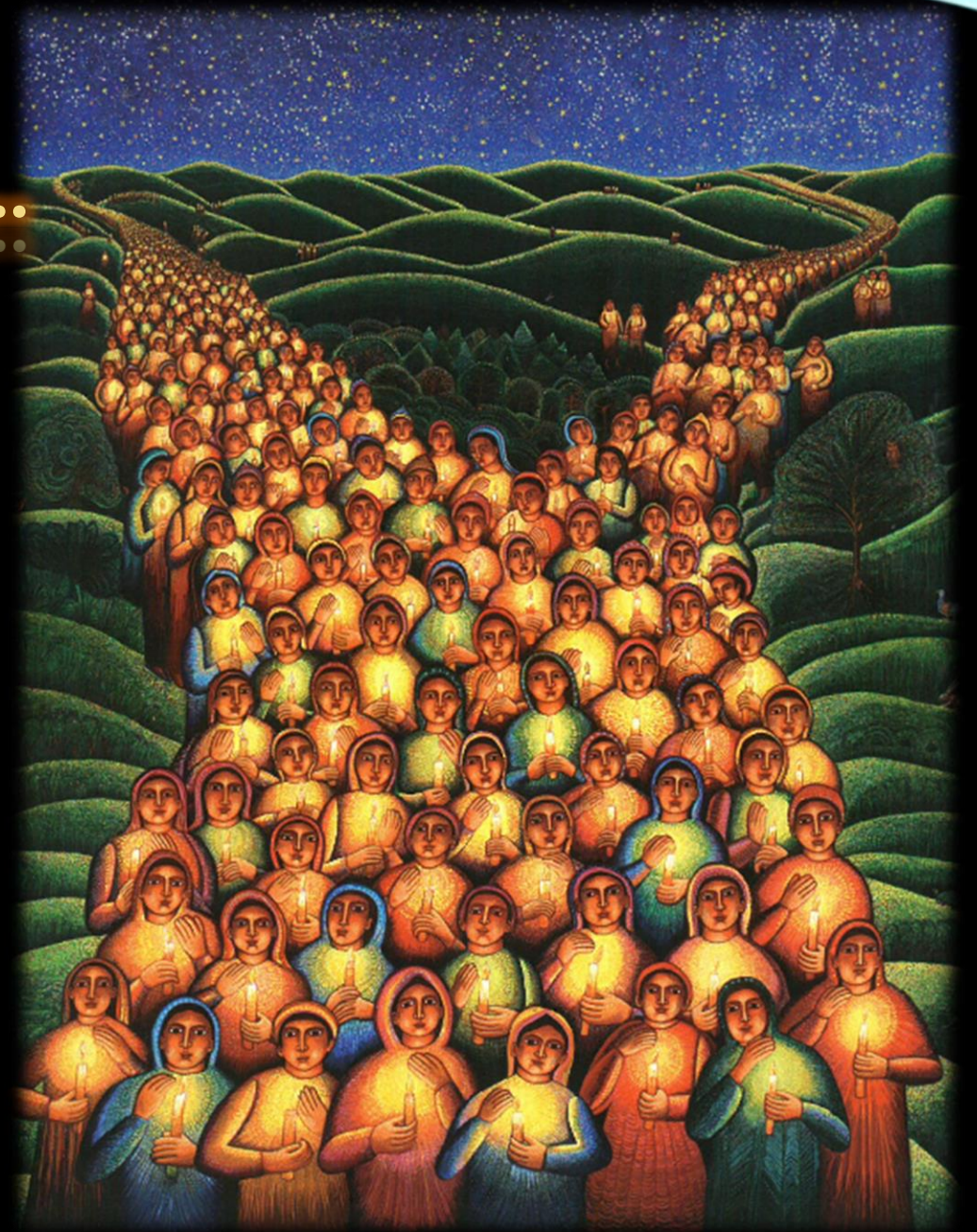
**The crucial moments of that outward  
and inward journey may be marked  
by prayer and the  
proclamation of faith.**



# The LIGHT of Diversity...

## NATIVE AND OTHER CULTURAL CUSTOMS in the Diocese of Helena

- ❖ Native customs surrounding the experience of death are rich and varied. Death is faced with a spirit of trust, faith and hope ...rooted in the rich tradition of native culture.
- ❖ The cultural diversity of people in the Diocese of Helena continues to grow and expand.
- ❖ Sensitivity to the various cultural traditions is a pastoral necessity.





# The VIGIL FOR THE DECEASED

“ON THIS MOST SACRED NIGHT,  
in which Our Lord Jesus  
Christ passed over from  
death to life, the Church calls  
upon her sons and daughters  
to come together to watch  
and pray....  
...then we shall have the sure  
hope of sharing his triumph  
over death...”

Roman Missal Blessing of the New Fire at the Easter Vigil #9



“AT THE VIGIL THE CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY KEEPS WATCH with the family  
in prayer to the God of mercy and finds strength in Christ's  
presence.

IT IS THE FIRST OCCASION AMONG THE FUNERAL RITES  
FOR THE SOLEMN PROCLAMATION OF THE WORD OF GOD.

In this time of loss the family and community turn to God's word as  
the source of faith and hope, as light and life in the face of darkness  
and death. Consoled by the redeeming word of God and by the  
abiding presence of Christ and his Spirit, the assembly at the vigil  
calls upon the Father of mercy to receive the deceased into the  
kingdom of light and peace.” OCF #56

**The VIGIL FOR THE DECEASED is integral  
to the funeral rites of the Catholic Church.**



# Telling the Story by the LIGHT OF CHRIST

**"The proclamation of the Word of God  
is the high point and central focus of the vigil."**

OCF #59

Staying "awake" to remember and tell the story.  
Reminiscent of the Easter Vigil~ *"in the holy night."*

**Presence of the Body + Cremated remains of the Body**

**Liturgical Principles: "Full, conscious and active PARTICIPATION."**

*Diversity of Ministries, Music, Environment. Worship Aid*

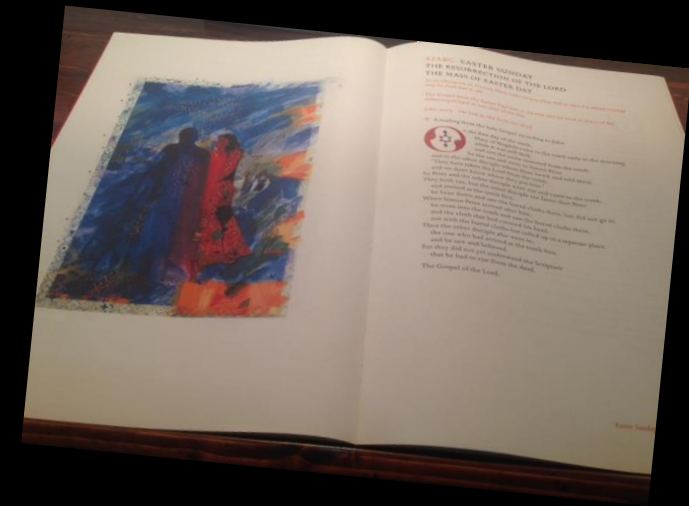
Place of the Vigil Liturgy...Church, Mortuary, Home

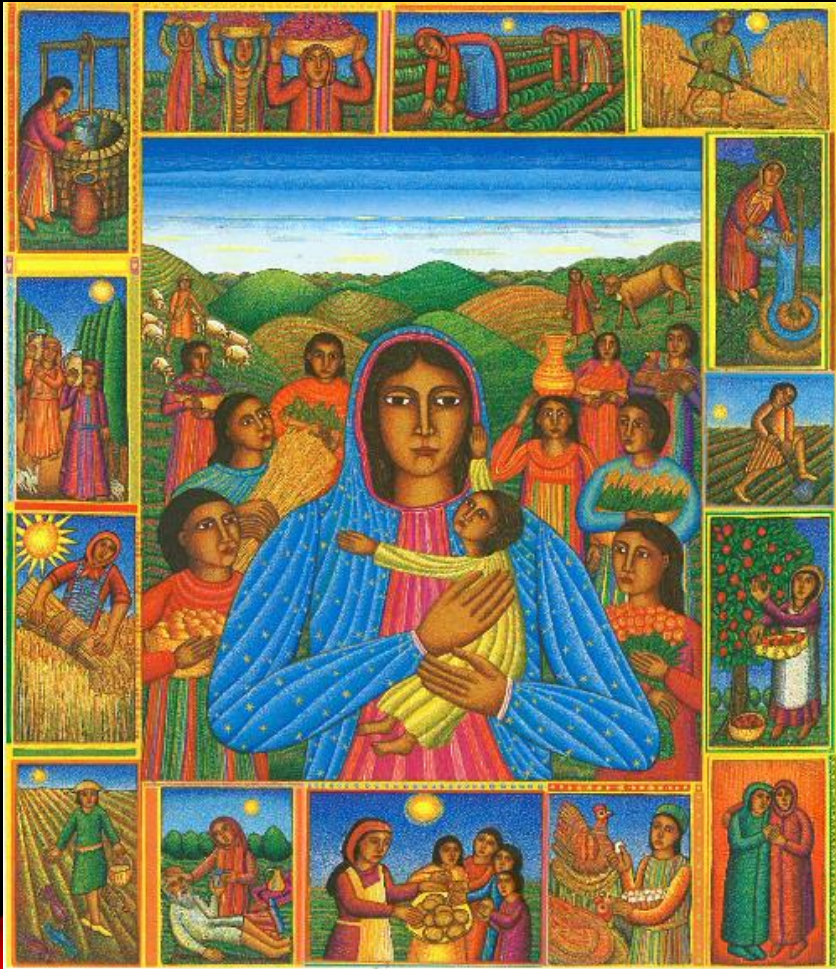
"How" could the Vigil be experienced?

Sharing of memories ~ Telling the story in the context of prayer and faith.

***Great care is taken...***

***ALGAF CALG IS [AKGIR]...***





©2010 John August Swanson. Mary, Madonna of the Harvest

# THE ROSARY

THE ROSARY DOES NOT REPLACE THE VIGIL SERVICE.

However, the rosary is a prayer with deep roots in Catholic tradition and spirituality and as such it holds an important place in the faith and prayer life of many Catholics.

It is an appropriate prayer at the time of death, but it is **a prayer in its own right.**

Therefore, for those families who may wish to gather to pray the rosary, a special time should be set aside, *distinct from the time of the Vigil for the Deceased* so that family and friends may gather for this prayer.



# The Funeral Liturgy

“At the funeral liturgy the COMMUNITY GATHERS with the family and friends of the deceased to give praise and thanks to God for Christ's victory over sin and death, to commend the deceased to God's tender mercy and compassion, and to seek strength in the proclamation of the PASCHAL MYSTERY. Through the Holy Spirit the community is joined together in faith as one Body in Christ to reaffirm in sign and symbol, word and gesture that each believer through baptism shares in Christ's death and resurrection and can look to the day when all the elect will be raised up and united in the kingdom of light and peace.” OCF 20

THE “PLACE” FOR THE FUNERAL MASS.

THE ENVIRONMENT FOR WORSHIP:

*A place of beauty bearing the weight of mystery.  
A sense of welcome and hospitality extended to all.*

BAPTISMAL IMAGERY

*In the waters of Baptism...*

CLOTHING WITH THE WHITE “PALL”

*The garment of Ministry*

PLACING OF CHRISTIAN SYMBOLS

*The Gospel of Christ + The Sign of the Cross*

NATIONAL FLAGS AND OTHER INSIGNIA

*Flags and other insignia are important symbols but cannot replace  
the dignity of being clothed in Christ at baptism...*



# **“The responsibility for the ministry of consolation rests with the believing community....”**

Each Christian shares in this ministry according to the various gifts and offices in the Church.”

“The community’s principal involvement in the ministry of consolation is expressed in its active participation in the celebration of the funeral rites...”

OCF 29, 9

**A sense of Hospitality...**

The assembly’s participation can be assisted by the preparation of booklets that contain an outline of the rite(s), the texts and songs belonging to the people, and directions for postures, gesture and movement.” OCF 30

**IT IS IMPORTANT THAT A WORSHIP AID OR HYMNAL BE PROVIDED FOR EACH OF THE RITES OF THE FUNERAL LITURGY.**





©2007 John August Swanson, PROCESSION

# Ministries of the Funeral Liturgy

## A DIVERSITY OF MINISTERS

- ❖ THE PARISHIONERS / ASSEMBLY
- ❖ Family members encouraged to take an active part but must not be burdensome to them;
- ❖ Those who serve are aware of the significance;
- ❖ Ordinarily liturgical ministers are Catholic, active in their own local parish and well prepared as ministers of the liturgy.

### Liturgical Music Leadership

- ❖ Instrumentalists
  - ❖ Cantor
  - ❖ Choir
- 
- ❖ Ministers of Hospitality
  - ❖ Funeral Directors and Mortuary staff
  - ❖ Servers / Incense “thurifer”
  - ❖ Readers of the Word
  - ❖ Bearers of the gifts of bread and wine
  - ❖ Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion



# AT A CATHOLIC MASS WHO MAY RECEIVE HOLY COMMUNION?

WE BELIEVE THAT THE RISEN CHRIST IS REALLY PRESENT IN THE BREAD AND WINE OF COMMUNION, so to receive Holy Communion is to eat and drink the Body and Blood of the Risen Christ.



It also expresses a deliberate union (communion) with the Catholic Church.

**Active members of the Catholic Church**, that is, those who participate *regularly* in Sunday Mass, in their home parish, receive communion—the Bread of Life and the Cup of Eternal Salvation.

**Baptized fellow Christians:** Catholics believe that the celebration of the Eucharist (Mass) is a sign of the reality of the oneness of faith, life and worship. Members of Christian Churches with whom the Catholic Church is not fully united, *ordinarily* do not receive communion at a Catholic Mass (as Catholics do not receive communion in other Christian Churches). Eucharistic sharing in exceptional circumstances requires permission of the priest.

**For persons of other faiths:** Those of faith traditions other than the Christian faith, do not receive Communion. With them we pray for the peace and unity of the human family.

“You say, ‘Amen.’ Be who you say you are.”

Saint Augustine



# The Rite of Committal ~ Burial

...the conclusion of the Funeral Rites, is the final act of the Community of Faith in caring for the body of its deceased member... OCF 25 The Community shows its concern...

A DIVERSITY OF MINISTRIES IS REQUIRED.  
THE SONG OF THE ASSEMBLY CONTINUES...

The act of committal is a stark and powerful expression of “separation.”

When carried out

IN THE MIDST OF THE COMMUNITY OF FAITH,  
the committal helps the mourners to face  
the end of one relationship with the deceased  
and to begin a new one based on  
prayerful remembrance, gratitude,  
and the hope of resurrection and reunion. OCF 26



The deceased passes with the farewell prayers of the COMMUNITY OF BELIEVERS into the welcoming community of those who need faith no longer but see God face to face.



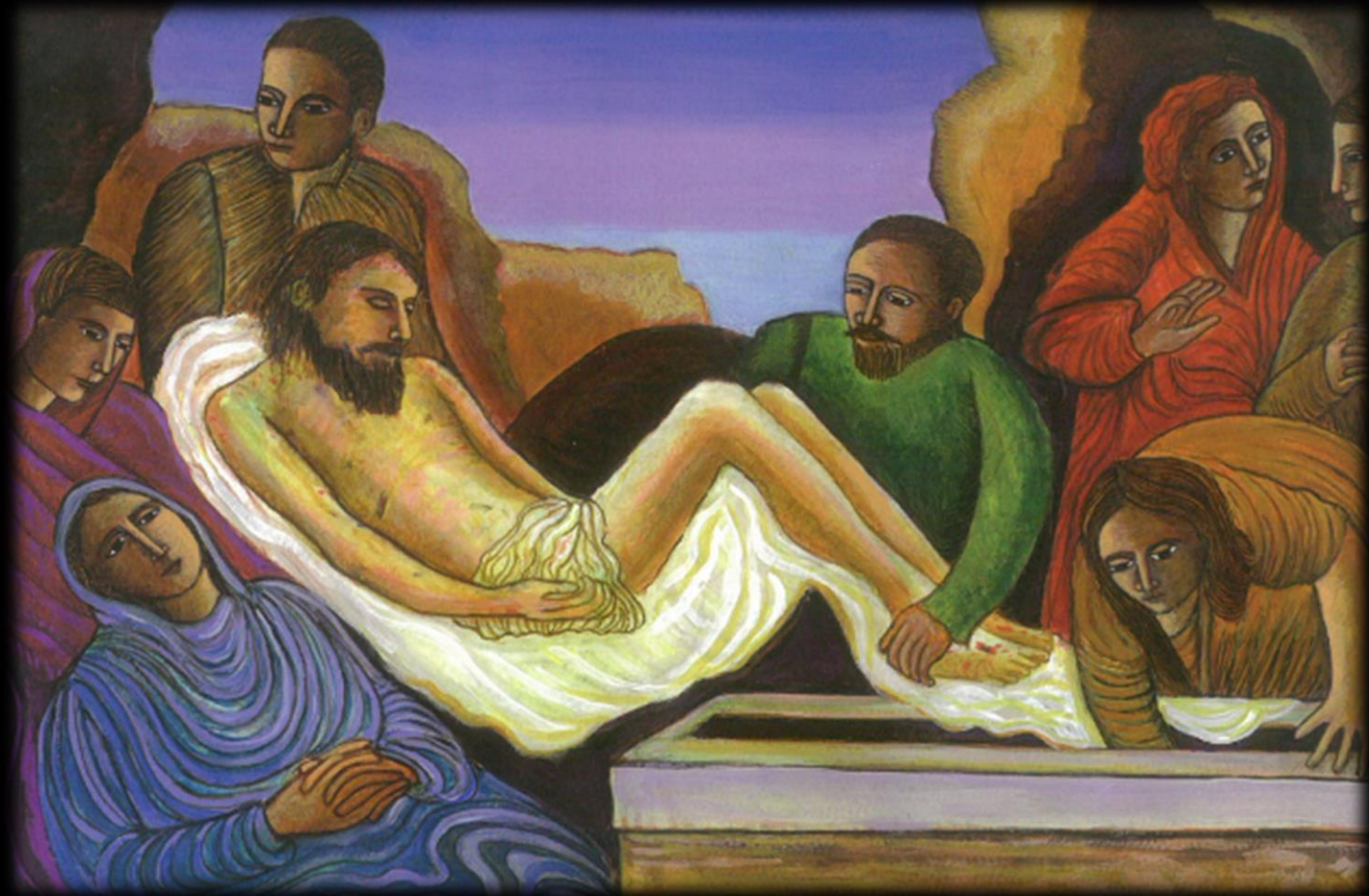
*We commit the body of our loved one to the earth,  
for we are dust and unto dust we shall return.*

OCF 219 A

...the actual burial or lowering of the casket should occur during the committal rites for parishes of the Diocese of Helena.

Good pastoral care is necessary to prepare the family and the assembly for burial in this fashion.

Burial is  
stark and  
powerful.  
It is also  
healing  
and helps  
the grieving  
process.



©2011 John August Swanson. BURIAL

Having come to bury a loved one, it seems most unfitting to leave the cemetery with the casket (or cremated remains of the body) remaining on the surface of the grave.

### MILITARY AND OTHER HONORS AT THE RITE OF COMMITTAL:

Always in the context of the Catholic Funeral Liturgy.  
The primary “honor” is always the deceased participation in the Paschal Mystery of Christ’s life, death and resurrection.



# Cremation

*“Grant your servant a place of rest and peace where the world of dust and ashes has no dominion...”*

OCF 406.3

## CHOOSING “CREMATION”

- ❖ FOR CATHOLICS, WHEN CREMATION IS DESIRED, THE CHURCH STRONGLY PREFERS THAT IT OCCUR *FOLLOWING* THE FUNERAL MASS.
- ❖ When cremation occurs before the Funeral Rites the faith community with priest, deacon or pastoral minister should gather with the family for the Service of GATHERING IN THE PRESENCE OF THE BODY.
- ❖ When Cremation takes place immediately after death, even without the Service of “Gathering in the Presence of the Body,” IT MUST NEVER MEAN A LOSS OF RITUAL OR A LOSS OF THE FULL FUNERAL RITES OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH.
- ❖ *The cremated remains of the Body are treated with the same respect given to the body.*
- ❖ It is appropriate that the cremated remains of the body be present for the full course of the Funeral Rites.

# Burial of the Cremated Remains of the Body

- ❖ For Catholics, the cremated remains of the body are buried or entombed and NOT SCATTERED, DIVIDED OR MIXED WITH OTHER CREMAINS.
- ❖ BURIAL OR ENTOMBMENT SHOULD NOT BE DELAYED.
- ❖ The cremated remains of the body are not kept in the home, since this is not the “*reverent disposition that the Church requires.*”

*“Confirm us in our hope  
that your servant will be created anew...”*

OCF 406.3



# Music for the Funeral Rites

MUSIC FOR THE FUNERAL RITES

*“A cry from deep within our being, music is a way for God to lead us to the realm of higher things.*

*As Saint Augustine says, ‘Singing is for the one who loves.’*

*Music is therefore a sign of God’s love for us and of our love for God...”*

Sing to the Lord: Music in Divine Worship #1-2



- ❖ **Music is integral to the Funeral Rites;**
- ❖ **The texts of the songs chosen should express the Paschal Mystery of the Lord and be related to the Scripture chosen;**
- ❖ **THE ASSEMBLY IS THE PRIMARY “MUSIC MINISTER!”**
- ❖ **Only music which is appropriate for the liturgy is used during the funeral rites;**
- ❖ **The “ministers” of Music for the Funeral Liturgies...it is the norm that parish music ministers of music provide the liturgical music leadership for the Funeral Rites.**

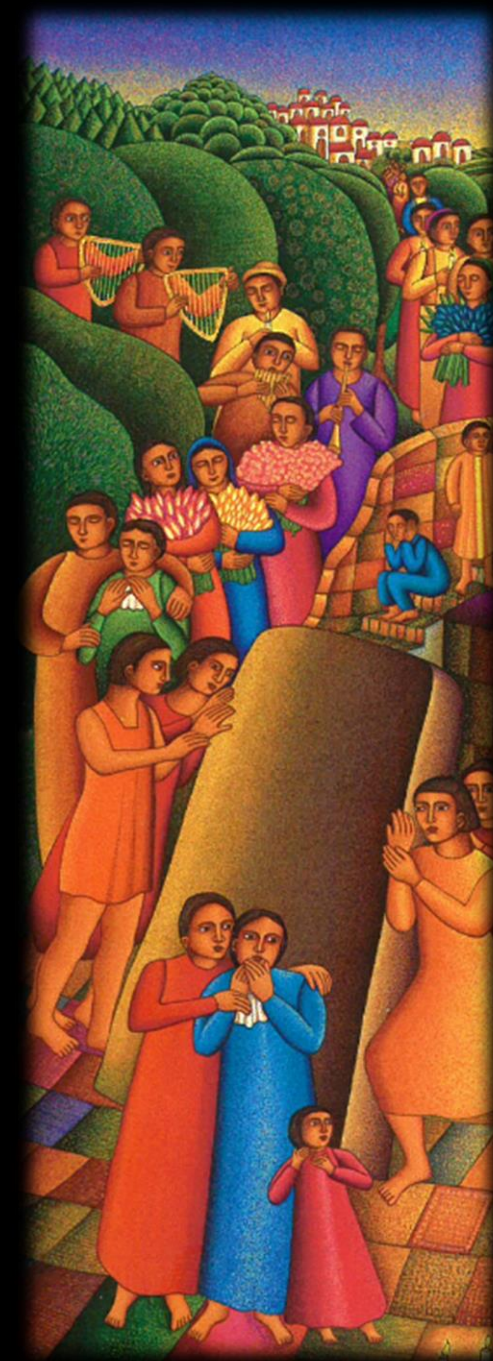


# Proper “terms” for the Funeral Rites of the Catholic Church:

- ❖ VIGIL FOR THE DECEASED or VIGIL FOR (*name of deceased*);
- ❖ FUNERAL MASS FOR (*name of deceased*);
- ❖ When there is no Mass celebrated: FUNERAL LITURGY FOR (*name of deceased*);
- ❖ When services occur sometime after death or after burial the following term is used: A MASS FOR (*name of the deceased*) WILL BE CELEBRATED...  
(*In such cases the term “Funeral Mass” or “Funeral Liturgy” is not used*).
- ❖ BURIAL or RITE OF COMMITTAL (either term may be used).
- ❖ Cremated remains of the body (proper term for the cremated remains).

***“But the Lord Jesus Christ will change our mortal bodies to be like his in glory, for he is the firstborn from the dead...”***

OCP 406





# Good Stewardship

Now which of these was  
neighbor to the man?

...a willingness on the part of all who are served by the parish and its ministries to help provide the necessary resources for the parish to continue its mission and ministries.

...an offering reflects the commitment of the family to the ongoing life and ministry of the Church as well as demonstrating their willingness to be a part of the parish's ministry of service. The offering should also reflect a sense of gratitude to God for the life of the deceased and for the faith celebrated in the funeral rites.



©2002 John August Swanson. Good Samaritan

The one who treated him with MERCY.  
The one who treated him with MERCY.



**MUSIC FEES:** The just compensation of parish musicians and cantors reflects both the parish and family commitment to providing just remuneration for services provided.



**GIFTS AND MEMORIALS:**  
an expression of love and respect family and friends have for the memory of their loved one.

**“Go and do likewise.”**  
GO AND DO LIKewise

**PLANNING A CATHOLIC FUNERAL?**

*It is therefore a holy and wholesome thought to pray for the dead.*  
2 Maccabees 12:46

Gifts and memorials are an expression of the love and respect family and friends have for the memory of their loved one.

The most cherished milestones of your loved one's life; baptism, first communion, confirmation, marriage and other significant life events have been celebrated with their faith community.

There is no greater way to honor that memory than with a memorial to the parish where they sought and received the sacraments and had their spiritual home.

With that in mind, if you are planning a Catholic funeral, it is recommended that gifts given in memory of your loved one be directed first to the benefit of their parish home and then to other Catholic organizations.

To obtain the address of your loved one's parish visit: [www.diocesehelena.org](http://www.diocesehelena.org) or contact the Development Director or Stewardship Director at the Diocese of Helena 406-442-5820.

A list of other Catholic organizations is included on the back of this card.  
To reorder this information card please contact [stewardship@diocesehelena.org](mailto:stewardship@diocesehelena.org)

After first considering your loved one's parish as the recipient of gifts given in memory we hope you will consider gifts in memory to your local food bank or emergency assistance program or the following Catholic organizations:

- Butte Central Catholic Schools  
9 South Idaho, Butte, MT 59701
- Catholic Social Services of Montana  
PO Box 907, Helena, MT 59624
- Carroll College  
1601 N Benton Avenue, Helena, MT 59625
- De La Salle Blackfeet School  
PO Box 1489, Browning, MT 59417
- Foundation for the Diocese of Helena  
(Parish Endowments ~ Diocesan Ministries)  
PO Box 1729, Helena, MT 59624-1729
- Guatemala Mission  
PO Box 1729, Helena, MT 59624-1729
- Loyola Sacred Heart Foundation  
300 Edith Street, Missoula, MT 59801
- Montana Catholic Conference  
PO Box 1708, Helena, MT 59624
- Providence St. Joseph Medical Center  
PO Box 1010, Polson, MT 59860
- Resurrection Cemetery Association  
PO Box 5029, Helena, MT 59604
- St. James Healthcare  
PO Box 3300, Butte, MT 59702
- St. Matthew Elementary School  
602 S Main Street, Kalispell, MT 59901
- St. Patrick Hospital  
PO Box 4587, Missoula, MT 59806

**For information regarding Estate Planning contact:**

The Foundation for the Diocese of Helena, Executive Director, PO Box 1729, Helena, MT 59624-1729 or [www.fдох.org](http://www.fдох.org) or 406-442-5820

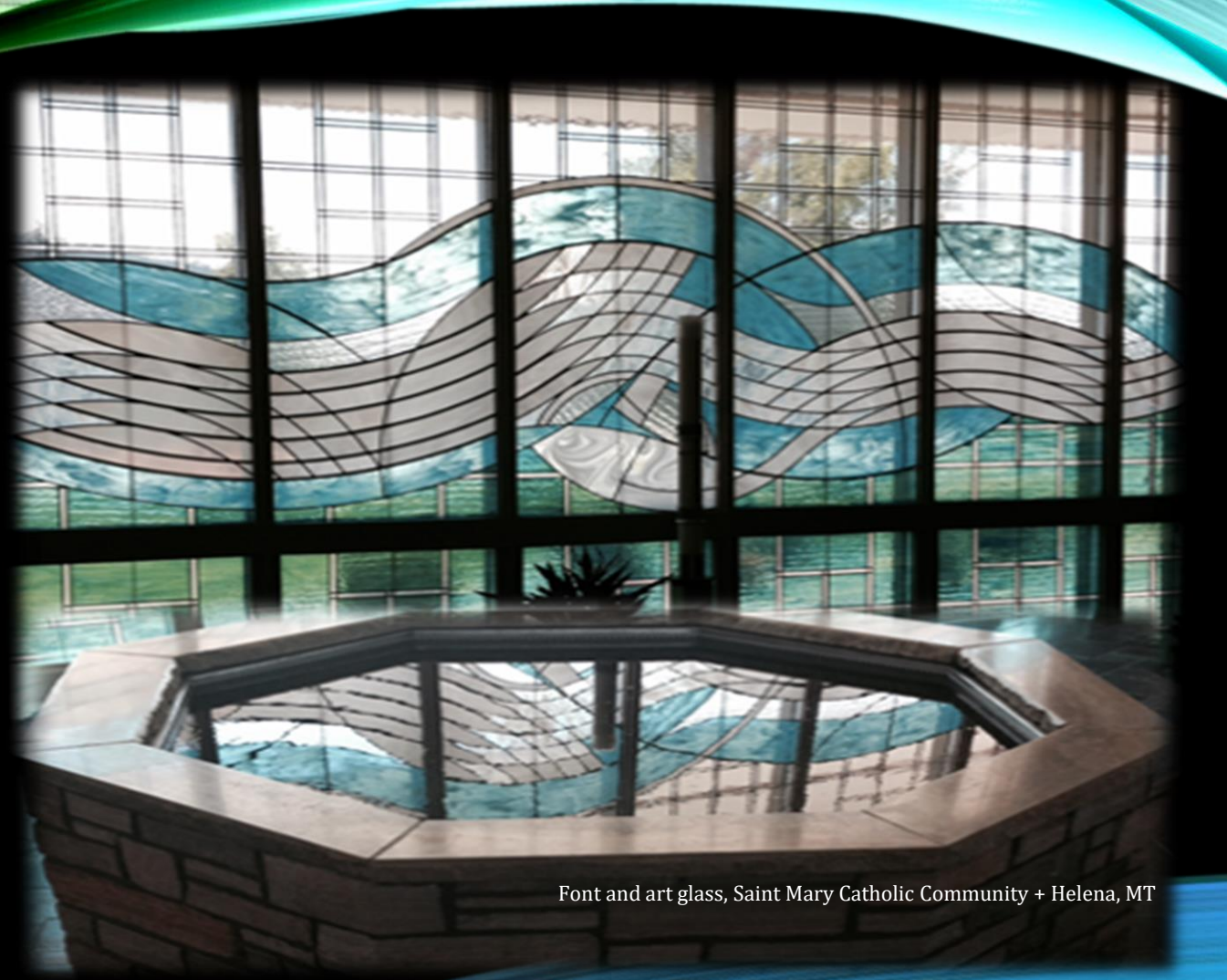


*“Do you not know that all of us  
who have been baptized into Christ Jesus  
were baptized into his death?*

*Therefore we have been buried with him  
by baptism into death,  
so that, just as Christ was raised from the dead  
by the glory of the Father,  
so too we might walk in newness of life.*

*For if we have been united with him  
in a death like his,  
we will certainly be united with him  
in a resurrection like his.”*

*The Letter of Saint Paul to the Romans 6:3-5*



Font and art glass, Saint Mary Catholic Community + Helena, MT

# Acknowledgements

Excerpts from *Order of Christian Funerals* © 1985, International Commission on English in the Liturgy, Inc. (ICEL). All rights reserved. Used with permission.

Excerpts from *Appendix to the Order of Christian Funerals: Cremation* © 1997, United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB). All rights reserved. Used with permission.

Excerpts from *Sing To the Lord: Music in Divine Worship* © 2007, United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB). All rights reserved. Used with permission.

Excerpt from *Parish Funerals*, Michael Marchal © 1987 Archdiocese of Chicago. Liturgy Training Publications. 1-800-933-1800. [www.ltp.org](http://www.ltp.org). All rights reserved. Used with permission.

## SPECIAL THANKS:

The Missoula Deanery for its original development and publication of this document;  
Diocese of Helena LITURGICAL COMMISSION for its review and recommendations.  
Diocese of Helena COLLEGE OF CONSULTORS / PRESBYTERAL COUNCIL for its review and recommendations.

✠ Most Reverend George Leo Thomas, Bishop Helena,  
approves the publication and implementation of this document  
in the Catholic Parishes of the Diocese of Helena.  
Feast of All Souls, November 2, 2014

No part of this work may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying, recording, or by any information storage and retrieval system, without permission in writing from the copyright holders.

*For further information please contact*  
*Father Ed Hislop, Chair, Diocese of Helena Liturgical Commission*  
*406-721-2405*

