

What to do for your loved one before death

Are they Homebound or at the Nursing Home or admitted to the Hospital?

- Inform the parish so the priest can administer the sacraments on a regular basis

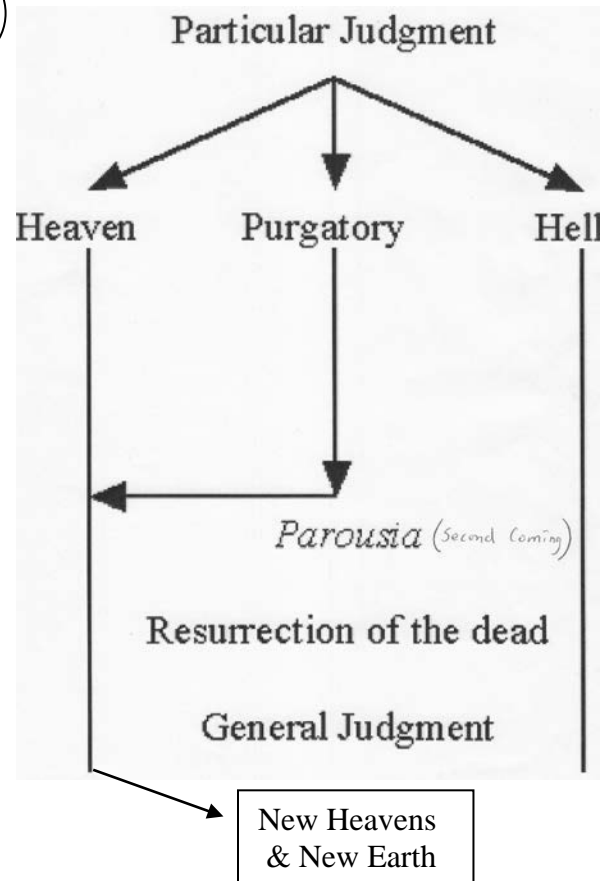
Last Rites

- Confession
- Anointing of the Sick
- Viaticum ("food for the journey" - last Eucharist)
- Apostolic Pardon (forgiveness for all temporal punishment for sins)

Other Prayers (esp. when family is present)

- Commendation of the dying
- Prayers for the Dead

Roadmap after Death



Respect for the Body as a Temple

The Christian faithful are unequivocally confronted by the mystery of life and death when they are faced with the presence of the body of one who has died. Moreover, the body which lies in death naturally recalls the personal story of faith, the loving family bonds, the friendships, and the words and acts of kindness of the deceased person. Indeed, the human body is inextricably associated with the human person, which acts and is experienced by others through that body. It is the body whose hands clothed the poor and embraced the sorrowing.

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. Thus, the Church's reverence for the sacredness of the human body grows out of a reverence and concern both natural and supernatural for the human person. The body of the deceased brings forcefully to mind the Church's conviction that **the human body is in Christ a temple of the Holy Spirit and is destined for future glory at the resurrection of the dead.** This conviction in faith finds its expression in a sustained and insistent prayer that commends the deceased person to God's merciful care so that his or her place in the communion of the just may be assured. A further expression is the care traditionally taken to prepare the bodies of the deceased for a burial that befits their dignity, in expectation of their final resurrection in the Lord.

Why Have the Body Present at the Funeral Mass?

Although cremation is now permitted by the Church, it does not enjoy the same value as burial of the body. The Church clearly prefers and urges that the body of the deceased be present for the funeral rites, since the presence of the human body better expresses the values which the Church affirms in those rites. Sometimes, however, it is not possible for the body to be present for the Funeral Mass.

Handling Cremated Remains

The cremated remains of a body should be **treated with the same respect given to the human body** from which they come. This includes the use of a worthy vessel to contain the ashes, the manner in which they are carried, the care and attention to appropriate placement and transport, and the final disposition. The cremated remains should be buried in a grave or entombed in a mausoleum or columbarium. [**Never scatter ashes.**] The practice of scattering cremated remains on the sea, from the air, or on the ground, or keeping cremated remains in the home of a relative or friend of the deceased are not the reverent disposition that the Church requires. Whenever possible, appropriate means for recording with dignity the memory of the deceased should be adopted, such as a plaque or stone which records the name of the deceased.

When the choice has been made to cremate a body, it is **recommended that the cremation take place after the Funeral Liturgy**. In this case, the Vigil for the Deceased and related rites and prayers, as well as the Funeral Liturgy are celebrated as they are provided in this ritual.

What is Redemptive Suffering?

St. Paul wrote to the Colossians (1:24), *“I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake, and in my flesh I am filling up what is lacking in the afflictions of Christ on behalf of his body, which is the Church.”* The only thing lacking in Christ’s sufferings on the Cross is our individual participation as members of his body. Redemptive suffering is how we unite ourselves to the one perfect offering and sacrifice made on Calvary.

The way we approach Calvary is first by meditating on Christ’s Passion and by participating in the Mass. Our active participation in Calvary, however, comes by way of experience, namely suffering. The Crucifixion is not an event where we can be a passive bystander. We either allow ourselves to be swept up by what he did for us or we turn away and refuse to look at him. We are either hanging there with him or shouting come down from there.

But why run, why fear suffering – is it the pain or the sense of helplessness? Blessed Brother Andre said, *“We shouldn’t always pray for miseries to be removed . . . [but] for the strength to bear them.”* If our experience is joined to Christ’s we will find hope in our own passions, not despair. We do not suffer alone for St. Paul said, *“Christ’s sufferings overflow to us, so through Christ does our encouragement also overflow.”*

The twelfth station – Jesus dies on the Cross. Perhaps it is this moment that we realize what has been given to us. This act proves that we have a God that loves us even unto death. A certain power was released at the Crucifixion, the power of a love that transforms hearts. If this love has transformed us then we can say with St. Paul, *“It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me.”* It is also Christ who suffers in us. For example, when we pray to do God’s will, it is a prayer to lift us to his divine level, not bring him down to ours. Just so, when suffering in a redemptive fashion we must not place our pains in His but rather make His pain ours.

But why would we want to make Christ’s suffering ours? God can mysteriously use our suffering to benefit another member of the Body of Christ. Simple acts of love – a mother staying up half the night with a sick child to lessen her child’s pain or offering up our suffering for souls that we haven’t met in Purgatory – are selfless acts that bring to perfection Christ’s saving act on the Cross. Redemptive suffering releases power to transform hearts to be receptive to Jesus Christ. It is a struggle to do this, but remember what the Catholic poet, Paul Claudel wrote, *“Christ did not come to explain suffering, but to fill it with his presence.”*

Suggested Funeral Readings

OLD TESTAMENT READINGS

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|-------------------------------|------------------------|
| 1 Job 19:1, 23-27 | 4 Isaiah 25:6a, 7-9 |
| 2 Wisdom 3:1-9
or 3:1-6, 9 | 5 Lamentations 3:17-26 |
| 3 Wisdom 4:7-15 | 6 Daniel 12:1-3 |
| | 7 2 Maccabees 12:43-46 |

NEW TESTAMENT READINGS

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| 1 Acts 10:34-43
or 10:34-36, 42-43 | 9 1 Corinthians 15:51-57 |
| 2 Romans 5:5-11 | 10 2 Corinthians 4:14-5:1 |
| 3 Romans 5:17-21 | 11 2 Corinthians 5:1, 6-10 |
| 4 Romans 6:3-9
or 6:3-4, 8-9 | 12 Philippians 3:20-21 |
| 5 Romans 8:14-23 | 13 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18 |
| 6 Romans 8:31b-35,
37-39 | 14 2 Timothy 2:8-13 |
| 7 Romans 14:7-9, 10b-12 | 15 1 John 3:1-2 |
| 8 1 Corinthians 15:20-23,
24b-28
or 15:20-23 | 16 1 John 3:14-16 |
| | 17 Revelation 14:13 |
| | 18 Revelation 20:11-21:1 |
| | 19 Revelation 21:1-5a, 6b-7 |

GOSPEL READINGS

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| 1 Matthew 5:1-12a | 10 Luke 24:13-35
or 24:13-16, 28-35 |
| 2 Matthew 11:25-30 | 11 John 5:24-29 |
| 3 Matthew 25:1-13 | 12 John 6:37-40 |
| 4 Matthew 25:31-46 | 13 John 6:51-58 |
| 5 Mark 15:33-39; 16:1-6
or 15:33-39 | 14 John 11:17-27
or 11:21-27 |
| 6 Luke 7:11-17 | 15 John 11:32-45 |
| 7 Luke 12:35-40 | 16 John 12:23-28
or 12:23-26 |
| 8 Luke 23:33, 39-43 | 17 John 14:1-6 |
| 9 Luke 23:44-46, 50, 52-53;
24:1-6a
or 23:44-46, 50, 52-53 | 18 John 17:24-26 |
| | 19 John 19:17-18, 25-30 |