

## **Policy of the Diocese of Saint Augustine on the Sharing of Remembrance in the Funeral Mass**

### **Introduction**

The Catholic Funeral rites celebrate the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. (*Order of Christian Funerals* [ *OCF* ], no. 1)

It is because of Christ and not any achievement on our part that we are saved and also hope to share in his resurrection. The Church intercedes for the deceased Christian, “whose life of faith was begun in the waters of baptism and strengthened at the Eucharistic table.” (*OCF* , no.4)

The Catholic funeral offers “worship, praise and thanksgiving to God for the gift of a life [that of the deceased] which has now been returned to God, the author of life...” (*OCF* , no.5) The funeral is not so much a celebration of the life of the deceased, but a celebration of the blessings God gives us, the greatest blessing being eternal life in Christ Jesus.

### **Speaking in Remembrance of the Deceased**

As part of the Funeral Mass, a brief homily is given by an ordained minister based on the Scripture readings. This is never to be a eulogy ( *OCF* , no.27), where a eulogy is a formal speech praising the achievements and personality of the deceased. To preach a eulogy is to give the impression that it is our own achievements that save us and not the gracious gift of God's love. There can be some mention of the deceased's life which witnesses to this love and the deceased's disciple of Christ.

There are two moments in the Order of Christian Funerals where a family member or friend may speak in remembrance of the deceased: at the Vigil and at the Funeral Mass. Because of the more formal nature of the Mass, the Bishop of the Diocese of Saint Augustine has issued the following guidelines for the sharing of remembrances at a Funeral Mass. They are to be followed faithfully:

### **Guidelines**

1. **Biographical Information.** It is recommended that biographical information about the deceased be printed in a program to be handed out before the funeral, if the family desires this. The sharing in remembrance of the deceased is not a biography.
2. **The Sharing.** It is the policy of the Diocese of Saint Augustine (also stated in the *Order of Christian Funerals*) that only *one* member or friend of the family should speak in remembrance of the deceased at the Funeral Mass. The pastor or presider of the Funeral Liturgy may determine otherwise, but the number who will speak must be determined before the liturgy.

The Vigil or wake is the more appropriate time for sharing informal stories about the deceased. Though not mentioned in the *Order of Christian Funerals*, a sharing might also be given at the burial or interment of the deceased.

3. **Content of the Sharing.** It is recommended that the sharing address the following question:

*"What blessings did God give your deceased loved one during his or her life  
and how were those blessings shared with others?"*

This sharing must never include anything that is inappropriate for a church setting; for example, off-color jokes or remarks that might offend the mourners are inappropriate. The sharing is not a time to philosophize about death, but to recall with gratitude the blessings of God for one loved by God and now returned to God.

[N.B. – The sharing is not expected to be a eulogy; neither is it called a eulogy in the *Order of Christian Funerals*.]

4. **Preparation.** It is recommended that the family prepare the remembrance together. The sharing must be written ahead of time. The sharing may be reviewed by the presider before the Funeral Mass.

When the presider or another minister prepares the Funeral Rites with the family and friends, an informal discussion of the blessings of the deceased might occur. With this list of blessings the family can be assisted in preparing the text for the sharing. A copy of this policy may be given to the family, as well as the Sample of such a sharing (included with this policy).

5. **Length of Sharing.** The sharing should not take more than 3 minutes.
6. **Delivery.** If the family wants a sharing of blessings to occur, but cannot deliver it because of grief, the priest may read the text for the family.
7. **Place of Sharing within the Mass.** In the *Order of Christian Funerals*, the speaking in remembrance normally occurs following the Prayer after Communion and before the Final Commendation. In the case of a true pastoral necessity, the presider may direct that the sharing occur before the reception of the body or the cremated remains at the Church (if the reception has not already occurred) or before the Opening Prayer of the Funeral Liturgy by way of introduction.

If the sharing occurs at the beginning of the Funeral Mass, another sharing should not be given after Communion.

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This includes the celebration of the Funeral Liturgy outside of Mass.