Funeral Rights & Rites

“Precious in the sight of the LORD is the death of God’s Faithful ones.” (Pss 116:15)

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The Place & Rôle of Law in the Church

- The place of law
  - In the Church of Christ
  - Where our redemption is enacted

- The rôle of law
  - To assist Christians
  - In the reception of God’s saving mysteries
  - And actively living the Christian way of life
Rules for Interpretation

Read canons & terms in context (c. 17)

- Ecclesial
- Historical
- Literary
- Theological
Rules for Interpretation

- Restrictive canons interpreted strictly (c. 18)
- Permissive canons to be interpreted broadly
- Custom is the best interpreter (c. 27)
- Faith, hope, & charity come before the law
Key Canonical & Theological Terms

- Body
- Canon
- Indult
- *Ius canonici*
- Ordinary
- Parish
- Resurrection
  “We believe in ... the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the Body, and the life everlasting.” (Apostle’s Creed)
- Sacred Space
Catholic Burial Rights

Those who have lived in Christ should be buried in Christ

- Baptized Catholics
- Catechumens
- Un-baptized children whose parents intended Baptism
- Baptized non-Catholics
  - In pastoral need
  - If not against her/his conscience
Christian Understanding of Death

But we do not want you to be uninformed, brothers and sisters, about those who have died, so that you may not grieve as others do who have no hope. For since we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so, through Jesus, God will bring with him those who have died. ... The dead in Christ will rise ... and so we will be with the Lord forever. [1 Thess 4:13–14, 18]
Christian Understanding of Death

Indeed, just as the Father raises the dead and gives them life, so also the Son gives life to whomever he wishes. ... Amen, I tell you, whoever hears my word and believes the One who sent me has eternal life.... [John 5:21, 24a]

Jesus said to her, “I am the resurrection and the life. Those who believe in me, even though they die, will live, and those who live and believe in me will never die. [John 11:25–26]
We have been buried with Christ by baptism into his death, so that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might ... be united with him in a resurrection like his. (Rom 6:4, 5b)
Why Funeral Rites?
The Christian’s Last Passover

- **Celebrate**
  “Precious in the sight of the LORD is the death of God’s Faithful ones.” (Pss 116:15)

- **Pray**
  “All then blessed the ways of the Lord … and gave themselves to prayer, begging that the sin committed might be completely forgiven. … After this [Judas Maccabaeus] took a collection from them individually, amounting to nearly two thousand drachmas, and sent it to Jerusalem to have a sacrifice for sin offered, an action altogether fine and noble, prompted by his belief in the resurrection. For had he not expected the fallen to rise again, it would have been superfluous and foolish to pray for the dead, whereas if he had in view the splendid recompense reserved for those who make a pious end, the thought was holy and devout. Hence, he had this expiatory sacrifice offered for the dead, so that they might be released from their sin.” (2 Macc 12:41a, 42a, 43–45)

- **Comfort**
  The dead in Christ will rise … and so we will be with the Lord forever. Therefore encourage one another with these words.” (1 Thess 4:13–14, 18)

- **Console**
  “We know that Christ, being raised from the dead, will never die again; death no longer has dominion over him … The free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.” (Rom 6:9, 23b)
Ministry of Consolation

- Recall God’s mercy and judgment
- Meet human need to turn to God in crisis
- Body of Christ—when one suffers, all suffer \[1\text{ Cor 12:26}\]
- “Bear with one another” \[\text{Col 3:13}\]
Order of Christian Funerals

(Ordo exsequiarum)

1. Vigil and related rites
2. Funeral Liturgy
   - Norms:
     • The Mass of Christian Burial
     • In parish church
   - Permitted:
     • Cremation after Funeral Mass
     • Another church by consent & notification
3. Rite of Committal
   - In blessed grave/tomb
   - Pref. in parish cemetery
1. The Vigil or “Wake”
2. Mass of Christian Burial

INTRODUCTORY RITES
- Greeting & Sprinkling with Holy Water
- Placing of the Pall (and Christian Symbols)
- Entrance Procession
- Song
- Opening Prayer

LITURGY OF THE WORD
- Old Testament Reading
- Responsorial Psalm
- Epistle
- Gospel Acclamation
- Gospel Reading
- Homily
- General Intercessions

LITURGY OF THE EUCHARIST
- Preparation of the Altar and the Gifts
- Eucharistic Prayer
- Communion Rite

FINAL COMMENDATION
- Invitation to Prayer
- Song of Farewell and Incense
- Prayer of Commendation

PROCESSION TO PLACE OF COMMITTAL
The Last Farewell:  
“May the Angels Lead You Into Paradise”

“May the Angels lead you into paradise; may the martyrs greet you at your arrival and lead you into the holy city, Jerusalem.”

“May the choir of Angels greet you and like Lazarus, who once was a poor man, may you have eternal rest.”
3. The Rite of Committal

Procession to the Place of Committal
  – I.e., the grave or tomb itself

Rite of Committal
  – Invitatory
  – Scripture verse
  – Prayer over the Place of Committal
  – Committal
  – Intercessions
  – The Lord’s Prayer
  – Concluding Prayer
  – Prayer over the people/final blessing
  – Dismissal
  – Closing song (opt.)
  – Sign or gesture of leave-taking (opt.)
Ecclesial Rôle of Catholic Cemeterians

• Catholic cemeterians are in a unique position to evangelize bereaved Catholics who are alienated or separated from the Church.

• This ministry challenges the secular tendencies to remove death from our life experience through quick disposition without mourning or prayer.

• Corporal works of mercy:
  – Comfort the sorrowful
  – Bury the dead.
Additional Resources

- [http://www.jcu.edu/bible/480/Readings/Texts.htm](http://www.jcu.edu/bible/480/Readings/Texts.htm)
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