

**Planning ahead for your Catholic funeral is an important step.** By planning ahead, you can have peace of mind knowing that your funeral will be celebrated according to your wishes and desires as a faithful Catholic. We strongly encourage you to speak to your family about your funeral plans. Most importantly, *write them down*, making sure that a close relative or friend knows your wishes and has received a copy. Your loved ones can then be spared the burdens and stresses of planning during a time of grief. Both you and your loved ones can be secure in the knowledge that your intentions will be honoured.

End of life planning, whether at time of need, or when you pre-arrange, involves a number of steps. The portion of the planning specific to the funeral liturgy itself is done with the parish. When death has occurred, it is here in the selecting of readings and music, along with sharing about the life of the deceased that a meaningful interaction can occur between the Church and those who are grieving a loss. The Priest is able to minister to the immediately bereaved – helping them to see how the Church consoles them in their faith. This step of funeral liturgy planning with the parish can also provide insight as to how God’s healing grace unfolds within the “Ritual Moments” throughout a Catholic funeral. With this greater comprehension, ideally families gain greater understanding as to the importance of including all of these moments in the Catholic funeral plan.

Many resources exist for helping you to begin organizing end of life plans. The Catholic Cemeteries can assist you with your planning, through to burial in a Catholic cemetery. Visit our website at [www.thecatholiccemeteries.ca](http://www.thecatholiccemeteries.ca) or contact our office for your complimentary Family Records Guide. Your local funeral home can also assist you with pre-arrangement of funeral and burial plans.

Our Catholic funeral rites unfold offering praise, worship and thanksgiving to God for the gift of a life now returned to God. In these rites we affirm and express our union with Christ in life and in death. The rites bring hope and consolation to the living and allow us to recall God’s mercy and judgment, helping us to turn always to God. If unaware of these rites and their purpose, they may not be requested during funeral planning.

## The Ritual Moments within a Catholic Funeral

Following death, the Church accompanies those who mourn the death of a loved one in three ritual moments of prayer for the dying and those who mourn their loss. These ritual moments express our Catholic faith about death and the promise of eternal life.

**The Vigil and Related Rites.** The Vigil may take place in the setting of a Liturgy of the Word or in the context of Evening Prayer. It includes readings from scripture, prayers and a time of quiet reflection. Before the Concluding Rite words may be shared in remembrance of the deceased (eulogy).

**The Funeral Liturgy.** The funeral liturgy is the central celebration of Catholic funeral rites. A Funeral Mass, which like Sunday Mass, includes the Liturgy of The Word and the Liturgy of the Eucharist, is ordinarily celebrated in the parish church. A Funeral Outside Mass (which takes place in the context of the Liturgy of the Word) may be chosen if the parish Priest and family judge that it may be a more suitable form of celebration. It is ordinarily celebrated in the church but may be celebrated in the home of the deceased, or in the funeral home chapel. The readings for the funeral liturgy are selected from Sacred Scripture during the planning meeting with the parish Priest, who can also assist with selecting appropriate liturgical music. Other guidance regarding the general liturgy can be discussed here as well.

During the course of the funeral liturgy we see the use of a number of meaningful symbols: the pall, holy water, a Paschal Candle and incense...all are used to express our faith in Christ’s victory over sin and death by his resurrection and our hope in the promise of eternal life. Following the funeral liturgy, the funeral rites continue as the faithful join in procession to the final resting place of the deceased (unless this is to take place at a later time).

**The Rite of Committal.** The final act of the community of faith in caring for the body of its deceased member. In this rite is expressed the hope that the deceased awaits the glory of the resurrection and the communion that exists between the Church on earth and the Church in heaven. This rite includes a short reading from Sacred Scripture, prayers, intercessions, the committal to the final resting place (the ground, the mausoleum, or columbarium), blessing and dismissal. ***Please note that it is never too late for this final rite. If you are still holding onto cremated remains, you may contact your parish office or The Catholic Cemeteries to arrange for the Committal of your loved one.***

**On Eulogies:** The Order of Christian Funerals permits someone to speak in remembrance of the deceased before the Concluding Rites of the Vigil. Additionally, individuals may be encouraged to offer reflections at the reception following the funeral liturgy. Your parish Priest will be able to assist you in choosing appropriate opportunities to recall the life of your loved one. Sharing memories, laughter and the fond recollection of life events is an important part of healing grief and can be effectively and appropriately planned for.

**On Cremation and The Disposition of Cremated Remains:** Since 1963, Catholics have been free to choose cremation. It remains the preference of the Church to celebrate the funeral rites with the body present, with cremation to take place afterwards. Although the preference, if this is not possible, it is permitted in the Diocese of Hamilton to celebrate funeral rites in the presence of cremated remains. Cremated remains are to have been placed in a dignified container. At the conclusion of the funeral rites, the cremated remains are to be reverently buried in a grave or placed in a mausoleum or columbarium as soon as conveniently possible. Cremated remains are not to be retained in the family home nor are they to be scattered. The practice of scattering cremated remains or keeping them at home does not display appropriate reverence for what was the temple of the Holy Spirit. Neither does dividing the remains among family members or placing portions of the remains in items of jewellery to be kept by family members show the reverence due to cremated remains. Such practices are not in keeping with our Catholic faith.

*Adapted from the Diocese of Hamilton Policy Regarding the Disposition of Cremated Remains, April 26th 2014, The Most Reverend Douglas Crosby, OMI, Bishop of Hamilton. Copies are available at your parish or at [www.thecatholiccemeteries.ca](http://www.thecatholiccemeteries.ca)*

## A Few Points to Help Guide You

### Planning For Death – Planning for Peace of Mind

- ✓ **Your parish has helpful information to assist in planning the funeral rites.**
- ✓ **The Liturgy Office of the Diocese of Hamilton** can provide assistance in understanding Catholic funeral rites and practices, and has published resources for funeral planning. Please contact Christina Ronzio (905) 528-7988 x2232 or visit [www.hamiltondiocese.com](http://www.hamiltondiocese.com)
- ✓ **The Catholic Cemeteries staff can guide you through pre-arranging, including cremation and/or burial in a Catholic Cemetery.** Relieve your loved ones the burden of sudden planning, decision making and expense. A complimentary Family Records Guide to help you to begin organizing your wishes is available to download from The Catholic Cemeteries website or contact us for your personal copy and any questions you have.
- ✓ **Talk to your loved ones about your wishes.**

### When Faced With Illness

- ✓ **Contact your parish Priest when faced with illness, when death is near, and immediately when a death has occurred.** When ill, people often appreciate the chance to share deep feelings and to receive God's blessing. The Priest can celebrate the Sacraments of Reconciliation, Anointing of the Sick and bring Holy Communion – so vital for profound healing & peace, especially while the gravely ill can communicate.
- ✓ **Grieving is normal – and important!** Your parish is there for you: from the celebration of Mass, to support from caring friends, bereavement resources and social groups – we encourage you to stay connected. The **Family Ministry Office of the Diocese of Hamilton** provides a variety of faith based resources on coping with grief and loss. Please contact Teresa Hartnett at (905) 528-7988 x2250 or visit [www.hamiltondiocese.com](http://www.hamiltondiocese.com). Grief resources are also available at [www.thecatholiccemeteries.ca](http://www.thecatholiccemeteries.ca) along with our special feature "Life Stories", an opportunity to celebrate the life of your loved one. Local funeral homes can offer information as well on grief resources available to you.

*We hope that this guide to Planning A Catholic Funeral will be of assistance to you.*

*Your parish is available for help and guidance at any stage and welcomes your contact. You may also contact our office – we are happy to help you through all stages of Catholic funeral, cremation & burial planning through to choosing your final resting place.*



**THE CATHOLIC CEMETERIES**  
of the Diocese of Hamilton

**Catholic Funeral Planning, Cremation & Burial Services in the Diocese of Hamilton**

Contact us: [waterlooregion@thecatholiccemeteries.ca](mailto:waterlooregion@thecatholiccemeteries.ca) or 1-800-661-5985

For a listing of Catholic Cemeteries including select video tours please visit [www.thecatholiccemeteries.ca](http://www.thecatholiccemeteries.ca)

For resources to help cope with grief & loss please visit "Family Ministry" at [www.hamiltondiocese.com](http://www.hamiltondiocese.com)

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