

## GUIDELINES REGARDING WORDS OF REMEMBRANCE AT FUNERAL LITURGIES

### INTRODUCTION

“Christians celebrate the funeral rites to offer worship, praise and thanksgiving to God for the gift of a life which has now been returned to God, the author of life and the hope of the just.”  
(*Order of Christian Funerals, OCF, 5*)

The ritual aspects of the Catholic funeral rites provide a tradition by which those mourning the loss of a loved one can express their grief and sadness while maintaining the central focus of the liturgies, which is the person of Jesus Christ and His death and resurrection, to which all baptized are called. This act of worship belongs to the whole community, to the whole Church, and not to any individual or group. Any elements that do not give expression to this act of worship do not have a place in the liturgy.

A eulogy – by definition a speech of praise in commendation of a person citing his/her valuable qualities or services – would shift the focus from Christ to the deceased person, and is therefore not appropriate and is never permitted in the Catholic funeral liturgies. (*OCF, 27*) The policy of the Archdiocese of Newark, consistent with the Church’s position, is that **no eulogies are to take place within the context of any of the funeral liturgies including the vigil service, funeral Mass or the rite of committal**. Eulogies may be delivered during the time of visitation outside of the vigil service itself, at the cemetery following the rite of committal, or at a reception following the committal.

### WORDS OF REMEMBRANCE

“A member or a friend of the family may speak in remembrance of the deceased before the final commendation begins.” (*OCF, 17*)

A eulogy is never allowed, and it is, in fact, the Church’s preference that even words of remembrance by family members and friends be shared outside of the funeral liturgies (ie, before or after the vigil service during the visitation, after the rite of committal at the gravesite, or at the reception). However, when the words of remembrance are to be offered during the funeral Mass - with advance permission of the presiding parish priest only - it must be noted that this remembrance is not a eulogy.

Words of remembrance:

- give a brief snapshot into the faith and values of the deceased as seen in one or two examples from his/her life and express how these qualities can inspire the hearers.

**What it is not:**

- a biography of the deceased's life;
- a testimonial;
- a recounting of the presenter's personal relationship with the deceased;
- it is not lengthy;

**GUIDELINES FOR WORDS OF REMEMBRANCE:**

**(The person delivering the remembrance must review and abide by these parameters.)**

- **are to be delivered by only one person**, preferably a family member;
- **are to be delivered from written text prepared in advance**; the presiding priest may request to see a copy of the remarks before the Mass and will revoke the permission for words of remembrance if these guidelines are not followed;
- **must be brief**; 2 to 5 minutes, maximum; (1 page double-spaced is a good rule-of-thumb); this is in keeping both with the focus of the liturgy itself (Jesus Christ, not the deceased), and in consideration of the logistical factors of the day including:
  - the time involved in traveling from church to cemetery,
  - the schedule of the church, funeral home, or cemetery which may have several services that day and,
  - the need of some in the assembly to return to work or other responsibilities.
- **should speak to the faith-life of the deceased**; it may be helpful in preparation to reflect on such questions as:
  - How did the Catholic faith and practice enrich your loved one's life?
  - How did your loved one speak of his/her Christian faith?
  - What was his/her favorite image of Jesus?
  - What did belonging to this parish mean to him/her?
  - How did he/she put their hope and trust in God?
  - How were Christ's compassion and love modeled in your loved one's actions?
  - How was his/her example of faith an inspiration to others?
- **must be appropriate in both content and delivery** to the sacredness of the liturgy.
- will be delivered from a stand and not from the ambo which is reserved for the proclamation of the Word of God;

At any time during the words of remembrance, the presiding priest may require the deliverer to stop for reasons of either content or duration. Visiting priests are given delegation to preside at the Church of the Little Flower provided these guidelines are adhered to.