

## Christian Funerals

Those who work with families in times of grief know how emotional people can be when discussing how they will proceed with the funeral arrangements. Since family members often request a rosary service prior to the funeral, it is appropriate to clarify the Church's rituals at the time of death. These universal Church guidelines were authorized by Pope Paul VI in 1969 and decreed by the U. S. National Conference of Catholic Bishops in 1985.

### ***General overview of the Order of Christian Funerals (OCF) - 1989***

The common celebration of the rites surrounding death takes the form of three distinct rites in one continuous liturgical celebration: a "Vigil and Related Rites and Prayers", the "Funeral Liturgy," and the "Rite of Committal."

The Vigil for the Deceased usually takes place the day or evening before the Funeral Liturgy. There are two forms that this vigil may take: "Vigil for the Deceased," and "Vigil for the Deceased with Reception at the Church." The second service is used when the vigil is celebrated in the church and begins with the reception of the body. The vigil consists of the introductory rites, the liturgy of the word, the prayer of intercession and a concluding rite. It can also include singing and a time of story-telling or eulogizing.

Another option may be to pray the Office of the Dead (Liturgy of the Hours) consisting of the same elements as the above but in different form (See OCF, Part IV, p. 296).

Prior to the revision of the funeral rites in 1969, the common practice was to gather mourners and well-wishers together at the funeral home the evening prior to the funeral to pray the Rosary. This private devotion was prayed to fill the void where the public liturgy no longer provided a ritual. The reinstatement of the vigil in the funeral rites has replaced the need for other devotions. The vigil, however, in no way prohibits the praying of the Rosary or other devotions.

To this end, the Iowa Knights of Columbus have made "The Rosary of Christian Hope" available. This is a variation on the rosary booklet provided by Supreme. Many times, families request that a rosary be prayed in the place of the funeral vigil. While the praying of the rosary must never replace the official liturgy of the Church, it can certainly be offered and should be encouraged to be prayed in conjunction with the Vigil service. We ask for your help in moving others towards this understanding.

Copies of *The Rosary of Christian Hope* can be requested from the State Church Activities Chairman or is available for download from the Iowa State Council website at: [www.iowakofc.org](http://www.iowakofc.org).

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