

FUNERAL MASS MUSIC GUIDELINES
DIOCESE OF ORANGE
ST. JULIANA PARISH

While a funeral is an intensely personal event in the lives of people, it is more than a private celebration of love honoring the deceased. It is act of worship. Because it takes place in the church, the funeral liturgy expresses the faith, not just of a particular person and his/her family and friends, but of the whole church. Therefore it is most important that all the elements of the funeral Mass, including the music, reflect this faith.

Appropriate music is so vital to good liturgy that in 1972 the American Bishops published *Music in Catholic Worship*. This important document explains and clarifies the role of music in the liturgy. One of the primary principles advocated is that **any** piece of music used **must** be evaluated according to its musical, liturgical, and pastoral effectiveness. This means that the music in question must be “technically, aesthetically, and expressively good,” that it must function appropriately in the liturgy itself, and that it must assist those present to express their faith (*Music in Catholic Worship, Articles 25-39*). These criteria apply to funeral liturgies just as they do to any public liturgical event. The following music guidelines are based on *Music in Catholic Worship* as well as other sources, and will assist in planning the most beautiful and appropriate music possible.

MUSICAL PRIORITIES. When thinking about music for a funeral Mass, the first things that come to mind are organ processionals and recessionals, and solos. These pieces, accompanied by the organ or another appropriated musical instrument (s) should reflect both the seriousness of death and the hopefulness of the risen life of Jesus. Certainly, two or three solo pieces (either sung or instrumental) can add a beautiful dimension to the music.

An area that is often overlooked for funeral liturgies is assembly participation. This is unfortunate, because when the people in attendance join in the sung prayer at a funeral Mass, it is a powerful sign of their love and support. In fact there are certain texts that the Church recommends be *sung* rather than *recited* whenever possible, and furthermore, that they be sung by the assembly-not a soloist. These are the Responsorial Psalm, Gospel Acclamation, the Holy, Holy, Memorial Acclamation and the Great Amen (*Music in Catholic Worship, Articles 53-63*). It is also a good idea to have the assembly join in singing a hymn or two during the funeral Mass.

The music that is chosen for assembly participation should be as familiar as possible. This type of participation can only be accomplished with the help of an *experienced cantor*. Even though the family might have a friend or acquaintance who sings beautifully, unless he/she is a *trained cantor who ministers regularly in a Catholic Church*, he/she will not be effective in, and may **not** assume this role.

HYMNS TO MARY. Devotion to Mary is an important part of our Catholic faith. However, since the Mass is a great prayer of praise and thanksgiving to God himself, hymns to Mary during Mass itself (e.g. at Preparation of the Gifts or Communion) are

out of context. The custom of singing the Ave Maria as a solo piece after Communion is permitted.

THE LORD'S PRAYER is normally recited at a funeral Mass. It can be sung by cantor and assembly. Because it is the *one thing* that everyone knows and can join in on regardless of their religious affiliation, the Lord's Prayer is *never* sung as a solo.

TAPED MUSIC. In a document named *Resolution on the Use of Pre-recorded Music in the Liturgy. Position Statement of the director of Music Ministries Division of the National Association of Pastoral Musicians* (Washington, DC: the Pastoral Press) we read: "*Because the liturgy is an encounter between the God of Life and the human beings created in God's image, its modes of expression ought to be authentic expressions of living persons.*" Following this guideline taped music is **not** allowed in church before, during, and after the funeral Mass.

The person who is best able to help with selections and to guide family members in matters of appropriateness is the parish music minister. He will use these guidelines and counsel family members. The parish office staff will make these guidelines available to the family.

CHOICE OF MUSICIANS. Since the parish community has chosen parish musicians who minister in the parish with their unique gifts and charisms, only St. Juliana cantors, instrumentalists, and musicians may play at funerals celebrated in the Church during a funeral Mass. If outside musicians are chosen to play at funerals, these musicians must be church musicians who play regularly for Liturgical services in a Catholic Church and are familiar with the funeral liturgy. A "bench fee" will be required if musicians other than St. Juliana cantors, instrumentalists, and organists are chosen..