

Notre Dame Parish – Clarendon Hills, IL

Words of Remembrance

A guide for the speaker at a funeral liturgy

The guidelines for a Catholic Funeral Mass provide for the opportunity for a member or friend of the family to speak in remembrance of the deceased. These words do not constitute a eulogy as such, but rather they are to express appreciation for the life of the deceased.

You have been invited by the family to offer some words of remembrance at the funeral liturgy for someone who was important to them. It is the policy in all parishes in the diocese that there be only one speaker. This is an honor and a responsibility. This guide is to help you plan your remembrance and to deliver it well.

The primary focus during the days immediately following death is on the family - making funeral preparations and dealing with their own feelings and needs. The wake is a time to focus on the deceased – a time to tell the stories that gave meaning to the many relationships that have been a part of that person's life.

When we get to the Church for the funeral liturgy, the focus shifts to what Jesus has done for us and how our faith offers us hope. It marks the end of an earthly journey that began in the context of faith at baptism and continues with a new life in God. It is within this context that you are asked to prepare your remembrance – to remember the ways a person was faithful to their Baptism call by loving God and loving their neighbor. ***It is not a place to list accomplishments or summarize the deceased life story.*** Rather, if you share a single blessed memory that indicates the deceased faith and character, the hearers can recognize their giftedness as God-given and how they shared that gift with others. Keep in mind that the purpose of the liturgy is to thank God for the resurrection of Jesus that the deceased now shares, to celebrate the life we share together and to pray for strength to continue to faithfully continue the journey.

- Use your own words and speak from your own experience.
- Prepare your remembrance in writing. It makes your delivery easier for you and your thoughts clearer to the listener.
- Avoid inside jokes or humor, which may be misunderstood.
- Remember this is not to be a verbal obituary, listing important dates or events in the deceased's life.
- Begin by praying that you will honor the person you are speaking about and that your words will be a witness to his or her faith and a blessing to family and friends.
- You might read the scripture texts that the family has selected. It may bring to mind a specific quality or an incident or a deed, which symbolizes his or her faith.

Content might include the following:

- Inspiring qualities of the deceased, including their life of faith;
- How the deceased may best be remembered
- How our relationship with the deceased is maintained even in death and how we look forward to meeting them again in the future
- Try to convey the consolation of God's love, grace, and mercy.
- God's gifts to the deceased, especially the gift of the Christian life.

- Please keep your remembrance short – no more than 2 minutes. That is, about two pages of printed text.
- If possible leave the text of your remembrance on the lectern before Mass and leave it behind when you walk away from the lectern.
- The 'Words of Remembrance' should speak honestly about the characteristics and qualities of the deceased, including their life of faith and how these may be of inspiration and comfort to those gathered.

Words of Remembrance must be submitted to the Funeral Coordinator at least 24hrs prior to the funeral so that the Celebrant of the Funeral may approve them. If they are not submitted prior to the Funeral than they will be omitted from the Funeral Mass.

WORDS OF REMEMBRANCE (A MODEL)

If I were to choose a few words that would aptly characterize my mother as I remember her, "selfless", "compassionate", and "gracious" immediately come to mind. In addition to being a faithful and loving wife and mother, she patiently, gently and lovingly cared for her own mother, our grandmother, who lived with us and was physically disabled for the last fifteen years of her life. I recall no words of complaint about the tediousness of the day-to-day nursing care nor the frequent limitations placed upon her own social life. She taught me that patience, selflessness and compassion are the true qualities of both a devoted mother and daughter. My mother was a woman of gracious hospitality. Family, friends and neighbors were always warmly welcomed into our home. My mother would respond immediately whenever a neighbor had a need. If there was a death in someone's family, or if a neighbor became ill, she was there to offer comfort, or to prepare and deliver a meal. As children, we quickly learned from her words and example, that it was not our place to judge or be critical of other people, but to always look for the positive qualities in another person. Her parish family was also very important to her. Mom was actively involved in the Rosary and Altar Society at Blessed Sacrament Church. While we were in school there, she participated in many school and church functions through the years. She considered her friends in our parish community as part of our extended family. Our hearts are filled with gratitude that God blessed us with such a wonderful wife, mother, friend and woman of faith!