

Parish Policy Regarding Eulogies at Funerals

for Sacred Heart - Divine Mercy & St. Bernard

Eulogies and/or Words of Remembrance have their appropriate time and place in the days following the death of a loved one. The funeral rites of the Catholic Church offer us guidance to help us find the proper setting. While eulogies and other storytelling about the deceased are more appropriate to the Cemetery or Funeral Luncheon, a few, brief words of remembrance may be offered at the end of the Funeral liturgy.

Eulogies

In the days that follow the death of a loved one there are different moments where the family and friends focus on different aspects of saying goodbye to their loved one. At the funeral home there is a greater focus on the life of the deceased with pictures, slideshows, videos and memorabilia. At the funeral service the focus shifts to prayer. At the luncheon afterwards, there may again be pictures and storytelling.

Although, people commonly think of a eulogy as a part of the funeral service, the Catholic Church does not envision a eulogy¹ as being a part of the funeral liturgy. This is more appropriately done in another setting (just as slideshows or videos are often shown at the funeral home but not at the funeral Mass). The focus of a Christian funeral is the Paschal Mystery: the suffering, death, and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ.² The funeral rites are not so much a celebration of the life of the deceased, but a prayer that the life and death of the deceased may be joined to Christ in heaven. Because the focus of a Catholic funeral is first on God, eulogies do not find their proper place within the funeral liturgy.

This does not mean we should not reflect on and celebrate the life of the deceased. It just means that such a celebration of the life of the deceased is more appropriate to a non-liturgical gathering (for example, at the funeral home, cemetery, or a post-funeral meal or reception).

Words of Remembrance

While the Church discourages eulogies at Catholic funerals, it does allow for **a few words of remembrance** at the end of the service, before the Final Commendation.³ In a funeral Mass, this would be right after the prayer after Holy Communion. This is not a full eulogy, but a brief, 2 - 3 minute remembrance of the life of the deceased. This is proportionate to the other parts of the funeral rite. Being that this is given within the context of a Catholic liturgy, care should be exercised so that these words of remembrance do not contradict the values of the Catholic faith. For example, it would be inappropriate to speak of as good or acceptable any circumstances of the deceased's life or death that were objectively sinful, according to the teachings of the Catholic Church.

Many priests ask that the words of remembrance be provided ahead of time to them in written form, so they can judge if they meet the necessary criteria of length and content. *This is also our policy.*

PARISH POLICY:

Provided that they are approved in advance by the pastor, a few, brief words of remembrance (2 -3 minutes) may be offered at the end of the funeral service before the Final Commendation (usually right after the Prayer after Holy Communion. There may however be times when it may be better to move the Words of Remembrance to another venue and the pastor reserves the right to ask the family to do this.

Please provide the text in writing to the pastor (i.e. by e-mail with a follow-up phone call to be sure he got them) for approval at least by the day before the funeral. The person chosen to deliver these remarks must be someone who is knowledgeable and respectful of Catholic beliefs and practices (ideally, a practicing Catholic).

¹ Cf. *Order of Christian Funerals*, nos. 27, 141. Cf. GIRM, no. 382.

² *Order of Christian Funerals*, nos. 1; 22; 27.

³ *Ibid*, no. 170; no 197.