

# FUNERAL RITES FOR PRIESTS AND DEACONS CATHOLIC DIOCESE OF SPOKANE

## GUIDING PRINCIPLES

1. Every member of the Christian faithful has a right to a Funeral Mass. (CL 1176). This right is established in baptism and the promise of God's merciful salvation won for us in Jesus Christ.
2. The funeral rites of the Church ask spiritual assistance for the departed, honor their bodies as former temples of the Holy Spirit, and bring the solace of hope to the living. (CL 1176:2)
3. Church authorities rightly oversee the celebration of funeral rites which are conducted under the auspice of the Catholic Church. The local Bishop reserves the right to make policy exceptions or final decisions regarding all funeral arrangements for a deceased priest/deacon. This may be the case, in particular, when funeral arrangements are made for a priest who resides in the Diocese but is incardinated elsewhere (or the opposite).
4. The funeral rites for deceased priests/deacons are to follow the *Code of Canon Law*, the norms of liturgical law, and must be consistent with this policy. If aspects of the planned funeral are to the contrary, the local Ordinary may limit or deny Catholic approbation or even use of Catholic premises for the rites. The Church properly should conduct the funeral rites of one who publicly has lost the clerical state in a manner different from those celebrated with one who has been restricted in the public exercise of his priestly ministry (Cf. Endnotes).
5. Given the special witness to evangelical poverty associated with his ordination, funeral rites for the priest/deacon not only should reflect Christian values, but also should offer witness to simplicity.
6. The management of memorial gifts made by the deceased to the Diocese is conducted by the Bishop's Secretary for Business Affairs, or an individual to whom the Bishop assigns this responsibility.

### A. ANTICIPATION

As soon as possible after his ordination, the priest/deacon is to provide for inclusion in his personal file at the Catholic Pastoral Center written documentation regarding matters associated with his funeral rites. These expressed wishes, and eventually those of the family, are to be followed to the extent permitted by liturgical norms and the stipulations of this policy. The location of the deacon/priest's Last Will and Testament - as well as the name of any executor - are to be included in his personal file. The priest/deacon is responsible for keeping this documentation current.

### B. EXPENSE

The priest is encouraged to make arrangements, vis-à-vis insurance or documentation, in his Last Will and Testament (or related documentation) for meeting the expense of his funeral rites and associated activities such as funeral home services, interment/inurnment, musicians, meal/reception.

When provision is not made, the Diocese properly holds this responsibility and has a more direct say in decisions made regarding the funeral rites and associated activities which effect the accrual of expenses.

The family of the deacon (or his estate) is responsible for the financial satisfaction of his funeral rites and associated expenses.

### **C. NOTIFICATION**

Upon notification of the priest's/deacon's death, the Bishop/Vicar General will identify a priest or the Director of Deacons to represent to the executor of his last Will and Testament and/or family of the deceased the needs of the diocesan Church regarding arrangements for the funeral rites and interment/inurnment.

### **D. LOCATION**

By their very nature, the Church's funeral rites are public events which engage the faithful in their celebration.

Normally, the Vigil and Funeral Mass for the priest is to be celebrated at the Cathedral Church using the Ordinary Form. The Vigil and Funeral Mass for a deacon may be celebrated either at the Cathedral Church or a parish church designated in the documentation of the deceased or as expressed by his family.<sup>1</sup>

### **E. PRESIDENTIAL ROLE**

The Bishop shall preside at the Vigil and Funeral Mass for the priest/ deacon, or may delegate another priest/deacon to do so.

### **F. CONCELEBRATION**

Any priest in good standing is encouraged to attend (vested) the Vigil and concelebrate the Funeral Mass of a deceased brother priest. It is laudable that deacons attend (vested) the funeral rites of a deceased brother deacon.

### **G. HOMILY**

The Bishop shall preach the homily at the Vigil and Funeral Mass for the priest/deacon, or may delegate another priest or deacon to do so. Recognizing that the Church does not eulogize the deceased in its funeral rites, the focus of the homily is to be the redemption of the deceased by Jesus Christ, the Risen Lord, who has gained for us in God's mercy the gift of eternal life.<sup>2</sup>

### **H. PERSONAL REFLECTION**

To the extent permitted by liturgical norms, a person designated by the Bishop (or identified by the family/executor and approved by him) may offer a brief personal reflection at an appropriate moment at the Vigil and/or Funeral Mass. If circumstances warrant, the Bishop or his delegate may review the presentation and grant approval.<sup>3</sup>

### **I. PALL BEARERS**

Unless the deceased has identified in some written manner, or the family/executor has identified them, the pall bearers are to be selected by the Bishop's representative from among fellow priests/deacons. In regard to priests, preference should be given to the remaining members of his prayer support group.

### **J. HONOR GUARD**

Unless specified otherwise in the documentation provided by the deceased priest/deacon, or unless requested by the family/executor, the Bishop's representative is free, but not obliged, to select and direct the assistance of an honor guard of some type for engagement in the funeral rites of a priest/deacon.<sup>4</sup>

### **K. BURIAL ATTIRE**

A priest is to be buried in clerical attire or in Mass vestments (including alb/stole) provided by the Diocese or his family. A deacon is to be buried either in alb and stole or street attire as determined by the documents provided by the deceased, or as determined by the family/executor.<sup>5</sup>

#### **L. PUBLIC VIEWING**

Public viewing is to take place in a manner and place determined in the documentation of the deceased priest/deacon, or in its absence and with preference of the family/executor not forthcoming, as determined by the Bishop's representative.<sup>6</sup>

#### **M. COLOR OF VESTMENTS**

The color of vestments used in the funeral rites is to be white.

#### **N. LITURGICAL MUSIC AND SCRIPTURE READINGS**

The Bishop's representative is to approve all music selections and readings used in the funeral rites for a deceased priest/deacon. If they are acceptable according to liturgical norm, the preferences expressed in the documentation provided by the deceased priest/deacon – or his family – are to be respected.

#### **O. DISPOSITION**

The disposition of the remains of the deceased priest/deacon is to be exercised in the manner identified in the documentation provided by the deceased or the family representative. In the absence of such, the manner of disposition is at the discretion of the Bishop's representative.

#### **P. PLACE OF INTERRMENT/INURNMENT**

Unless a canonically acceptable determination is provided otherwise in the documentation provided by the deceased priest, he is to interred/inurned in a Catholic cemetery in the geographical Diocese of Spokane. Preference is to be given to space reserved for clergy. The priest may be interred/inurned elsewhere at the expense of the estate. The family of the deceased deacon is to determine the place of interment/ inurnment, but it is to take place in a cemetery or other canonically acceptable place.<sup>7</sup>

#### **Q. MARKER**

The wording on the headstone at the place of internment/inurnment of a priest is to identify him with either the title "Father" [Monsignor] or "Reverend." [Right Reverend; Most Reverend]. If it is expressly addressed in the documentation provided by the deceased, preferences in this regard should be respected. The wording on the headstone at the place of internment/inurnment of a deacon is to identify him by his known name. The title "Deacon" may precede the name or be used in another acceptable manner on the marker, if the documentation provided by the deceased or his family so desires. The title "Reverend Mister" in full or abbreviated fashion is not to be used in any circumstance.<sup>8</sup>

#### **R. PUBLISHED REFERENCE**

Reference to a deceased priest originating from the Diocese for broadcast or publication, shall identify the priest as "Father" [Monsignor] or "Reverend." [Right Reverend; Most Reverend].<sup>9</sup>

Unless he has lost the clerical state, the priest/deacon is to be included in the annual memorial listing of deceased clergy in the *Inland Register*.

#### **T. RELIGIOUS PRIESTS**

The elements of this policy apply to the celebration of the funeral rites for Religious Priests which are celebrated in the Diocese of Spokane.

## ADDENDUM

### PRIESTS/DEACONS REMOVED FROM ACTIVE MINISTRY OR HAVE LOST CLERICAL STATE

In the case of priests/deacons removed from active ministry, it is to be noted that the canonically protected right to a Funeral Mass cannot be denied to a member of the faithful who has given some sign of repentance before his death. (CL 1184) If repentance and associated obedience to his instruction have not been manifest to his satisfaction, the local Ordinary may determine that the (public) celebration of funeral rites for a non-repentant priest/deacon would cause scandal, and deny the public celebration of the rites or provide a special context for their celebration.

The Church properly should conduct the funeral rites of one who publicly has lost the clerical state in a manner different from those celebrated with one who has been restricted in the public exercise of his priestly ministry. If he has been removed from active ministry, or even has lost the clerical state by a formal act of the Church, a priest/deacon retains his sacramental identity as an ordained priest/deacon. While the Church must manifest compassion and proper sensitivity to the victims of abuse or any other sanctionable moral infraction, the sacramental identity of the priest/deacon cannot be denied, nor pretence made, that the offending priest's/deacon's sinfulness is not a part of the actual history of the Church.

If the deceased priest/deacon was removed from active ministry, special liturgical arrangements are laudable which add a penitential nuance to the celebration of the funeral rites. These may include special prayers for the survivors of abuse in the *Prayers of the Faithful*, a litany of repentance, a special meditation hymn, and the use of black or purple decoration.

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### ENDNOTES

1. If the individual has lost the clerical state, the funeral rites may not be celebrated at the Cathedral Church, even if requested in the documentation provided by the deceased priest/deacon (even if it was his parish of residence).

Arrangements for funeral rites for one who has lost the clerical state must follow liturgical norms and the reasonable application of this policy statement. In these instances arrangements for funeral rites are to be reviewed and approved by the Bishop or his representative before they are publicized.

2. If the priest/deacon was removed from active ministry, the homily should acknowledge in some recognizable manner, the harm he has done to the survivors of his abusive actions, and to emphasize the need of all God's people for love and mercy.

3. If the priest/deacon was removed from active ministry, the reflection must include acknowledgment of the harm done by the deceased and sincere apology given to his victims.

4. An honor guard is not to be engaged if the deceased priest/deacon was removed from active ministry or if he lost the clerical state.

5. If the priest was removed from active ministry, he may not be buried in Mass vestments or in clerical garb if there is a public viewing. Any instruction of the deceased to be buried in street attire is to be respected. If the priest/deacon has lost the clerical state, he may not be buried in clerical attire, or Mass vestments (including alb/stole).
6. If the priest/deacon was removed from active ministry, or lost the clerical state, there is to be no public viewing in association with the funeral rites. Arrangements for public viewing may be made for a different time and place.
7. A priest/deacon who has lost the clerical state may not be interred/inurned in the clergy section of a Catholic cemetery.
8. If the priest was removed from active ministry, only the title "Reverend" is to be used, regardless of the documentation provided by the deceased or the wishes of the family. If the individual has lost the clerical state, no ecclesiastical title may be used.
9. If the priest was removed from active ministry, reference to him is to be made by use of the title "Reverend," but not "Father." In releases originating with the Diocese, in addition to whatever else is written, proper sensitivity is to be made in relation to his moral error. If the deceased is a deacon who was removed from active ministry, reference to him is to be made by use of his known name with no clerical title. In addition to whatever else is written or said, acknowledgment is to be made in relation to his moral error. If the individual lost the clerical state, no ecclesiastical title may be used.

**All other diocesan policies and instructions regarding funeral rites for priests/deacons notwithstanding.**

**Date: April 1, 2010**

**Approved**

**The Most Reverend William S. Skylstad  
Bishop of Spokane**