

Catholic Cemeteries Parish Engagement

Proclaiming the beauty of the funeral liturgy & the right to a Christian burial (9th–12th Grade)



Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ Jesus,

The Catholic Cemetery Conference (CCC) strives to provide information, training, best practices and guidance for Catholic Cemeteries throughout the United States and Canada. CCC's mission is to promote, to educate and to inculcate a culture of Catholic burial. Burying the dead is a Corporal Work of Mercy and an essential part of the Church's mission.



We live in the hope of the resurrection promised by Christ who spoke of the human person as a temple of the Holy Spirit. For that reason care and respect for the deceased matters greatly. The Church strives to assist grieving families in laying their loved ones to rest and provides support and comfort to the family and loved ones of the deceased.

These materials and videos presented by the CCC spell out what that care and respect needs to look like through the whole burial process. From pre-planning for death to the Vigil, to the Funeral Mass and the Rite of Committal, these materials and videos provide information on how Catholic Cemeteries accompany families in this difficult time.

Likewise, lesson plans are presented in order to introduce children and young people to the Rites of Christian Burial, outlining how and why the Church treats the human body in death with the utmost respect and dignity.

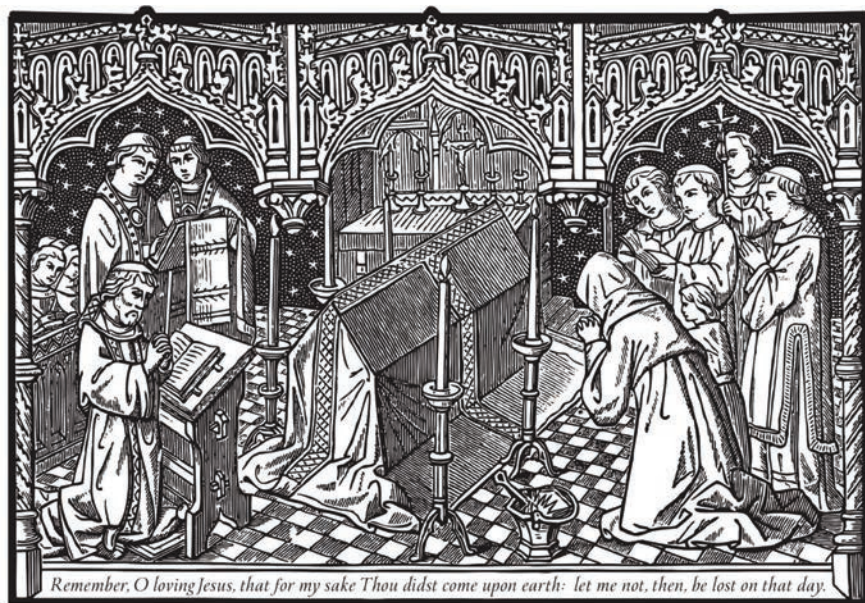
The burial or entombment of the deceased person's body or cremated remains is central to the Church's mission. The hope of CCC is that these materials will assist bishops, priests, Catholic cemeterians and pastoral educators to inform our Catholic people of the Church's approach to death and burial of loved ones.

Choicest blessings!

Sincerely yours in Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Gerald Kicanas". The signature is written in a cursive style.

Most Rev. Gerald F. Kicanas
Episcopal Advisor for the Catholic Cemetery Conference
Bishop Emeritus of the Diocese of Tucson



Nihil Obstat

Most Rev. Gerald F. Kicanas
Bishop Emeritus,
Diocese of Tucson
Episcopal Moderator of the
Catholic Cemetery Conference
April 2020

Imprimatur

Most Rev. Gerald F. Kicanas
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Diocese of Tucson
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High School 9th-12th Grade– Preparation

Catholic Funerals

Please read before the lesson to prepare

Nearly all teenagers will have known someone who has passed away and many will have attended a funeral for a family member or friend. However, it is likely that they have not participated nor understand the traditions of the Catholic funeral. This lesson is designed to cover all grades and relies heavily on the discretion of the teacher to guide the conversation.

Below are some Bible and Catechism quotes that will help you to prepare for this lesson.

Bible Quotations

“By the sweat of your brow you shall eat bread, until you return to the ground, from which you were taken; For you are dust, and to dust you shall return.” – *Gen 3:19*

“But now made manifest through the appearance of our savior Christ Jesus, who destroyed death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel.” – *2 Tim 1:10*

“For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in Him might not perish but might have eternal life.” – *John 3:16*

“Or are you unaware that we who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? We were indeed buried with Him through baptism into death, so that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might live in newness of life.” – *Romans 6:3-4*



Catechism Quotations

CCC 1032 – “From the beginning the Church has honored the memory of the dead and offered prayers in suffrage for them, above all the Eucharistic sacrifice, so that, thus purified, they may attain the beatific vision of God. The Church also commends almsgiving, indulgences, and works of penance undertaken on behalf of the dead:

Let us help and commemorate them. If Job’s sons were purified by their father’s sacrifice, why would we doubt that our offerings for the dead bring them some consolation? Let us not hesitate to help those who have died and to offer our prayers for them.”

CCC 1055 – “By virtue of the ‘communion of saints,’ the Church commends the dead to God’s mercy and offers her prayers, especially the holy sacrifice of the Eucharist, on their behalf.”

CCC 1685 – “The different funeral rites express the Paschal character of Christian death and are in keeping with the situations and traditions of each region, even as to the color of the liturgical vestments worn.”

CCC 1686 – “The Order of Christian Funerals of the Roman liturgy gives three types of funeral celebrations, corresponding to the three places in which they are conducted (the home, the church, and the cemetery), and according to the importance attached to them by the family, local customs, the culture, and popular piety. This order of celebration is common to all the liturgical traditions and comprises four principal elements. [The Greeting of the Community, the Liturgy of the Word, the Eucharistic Sacrifice, and the Farewell]”

CCC 1689 – “The Eucharistic Sacrifice. When the celebration takes place in church the Eucharist is the heart of the Paschal reality of Christian death. In the Eucharist, the Church expresses her efficacious communion with the departed: offering to the Father in the Holy Spirit the sacrifice of the death and resurrection of Christ, she asks to purify his child of his sins and their consequences, and to admit him to the Paschal fullness of the table of the Kingdom. It is by the Eucharist thus celebrated that the community of the faithful, especially the family of the deceased, learn to live in communion with the one who ‘has fallen asleep in the Lord’ by communicating in the Body of Christ of which he is a living member and, then, by praying for him and with him.”

CCC 1690 – “A farewell to the deceased is his final ‘commendation to God’ by the Church. It is ‘the last farewell by which the Christian community greets one of its members before his body is brought to its tomb.’ The Byzantine tradition expresses this by the kiss of farewell to the deceased:

By this final greeting ‘we sing for his departure from this life and separation from us, but also because there is a communion and a reunion. For even dead, we are not at all separated from one another, because we all run the same course and we will find one another again in the same place. We shall never be separated, for we live for Christ, and now we are united with Christ as we go toward him . . . we shall all be together in Christ.”

The Three Sacred Moments of a Catholic Funeral



The Vigil. The rite celebrated by the Christian community in the time following death and before the funeral liturgy. It is a time when loved ones show their respect and greet the family and friends of the deceased. It is also the most ideal time to share their memories of the deceased through a eulogy or video tribute, usually held at the funeral home the day before the Funeral Mass.



Funeral Mass. This is the central liturgical celebration held with the deceased’s body present at a church. Part of Catholic belief is that those who follow the way of Jesus shall forever be in Heaven, body and soul, in the presence of God. We believe in the bodily resurrection. Also, the Church honors the body because it has been the temple of the Holy Spirit. Therefore, the Church says that the body should be present at the funeral rites. If cremation is selected, the Church prefers that the body be present at the Mass.



Rite of Committal. This rite is the final act of our faith community in caring for the body of its deceased member. By our presence at this rite, we help the mourners face the end of one relationship with the deceased and the beginning of a new one based on prayerful remembrance, gratitude and the hope of resurrection and reunion. The celebration, whenever possible, takes place not in a cemetery chapel but at the open grave or place of interment. The act of committal expresses that the grave, once a sign of despair, is now, through Christ’s own death and Resurrection, a sign of hope and promise. The Church encourages all Catholics to seek out a Catholic Cemetery that has been blessed and consecrated as a final resting place.

9th-12th Grade – Lesson

Opening Prayer

The prayer said at the graveside, modify to suit your use as needed

Lord Jesus Christ,	Grant that our brothers and sisters may sleep
by Your own three days in the tomb,	here in peace
You hallowed the graves of all who believe	until You awaken them to glory,
in You	for You are the resurrection and the life.
and so made the grave a sign of hope	Then they will see You face to face
that promises resurrection	and in Your light will see light
even as it claims our mortal bodies.	and know the splendor of God,
	for You live and reign forever and ever. Amen.

1) Proclamation

(From the Order of Christian Funerals) At the death of a Christian, whose life of faith was begun in the waters of baptism and strengthened at the eucharistic table, the Church intercedes on behalf of the deceased because of its confident belief that death is not the end nor does it break the bonds forged in life. The Church also ministers to the sorrowing and consoles them in the funeral rites with the comforting word of God and the sacrament of the eucharist.



2) Explanation

Below is a brief outline of the main points to cover. The conversations can be geared to focus on specific aspects of death, dying, resurrection and the funeral rite appropriate to student age. We recommend that when possible, this lesson be connected to a visit to a Catholic Cemeteries.

Freshman Focus: Death is not the end. In Christ there is Resurrection

Sophomore Focus: Corporal works of Mercy. Burying the Dead

Junior Focus: The Four Last Things. Death, Judgment, Heaven and Hell

Senior Focus: Showing respect and praying for the dead.

Witness

- If appropriate, share a story of a funeral you attended, share what happened focusing on the two most important aspects,
 - 1) The dead was commended to the mercy of God.
 - 2) The grieving were consoled and given an opportunity to mourn the loss of their loved one.

Catechesis (main points to cover)

- Jesus loves us so much that He died to free us from sin and death. He wants us to live with Him and all the angels and saints forever in heaven.
- When someone dies, we have a special way of remembering and honoring them called a funeral which prepares the person who has died to enter into new and everlasting life with Jesus and helps the family mourn their loss.
- Cemeteries are permanent resting places for the bodies of the dead. They can be buried in the ground, interred in a mausoleum (an above ground tomb), or their cremated remains can be put in a columbarium (a small niche). It's customary that families visit the burial place of their dead loved ones on special anniversaries and All Souls Day or Día de los Muertos.
- Usually the funeral has three distinct parts.
 - 1) The Vigil
 - 2) The funeral liturgy
 - 3) The Rite of Committal
- We pray for our family and friends who have died hoping that they will experience the love and mercy of God, and we ask for their prayers and intercession to help us grow in holiness and to love God with all our hearts.
- We believe that we will be reunited with our family and friends and all those who are in heaven.

3) Application

Guided reflection and discussion

- What are some of the common ways people approach funerals today? (Attempt to show the challenges that we as a society have with funerals and treating the death of a family member with respect)

- Does it provide the family with the opportunity to mourn properly?
- Does it respect the dignity of the person?
- Does it honor their baptism and desire to be in heaven?

- Why does the Church provide for three moments of the funeral rite?
- How is the funeral rite a fulfillment or completion of baptism?
- Key points to reinforce.
 - Honoring and burying or interring the dead is a duty of every Catholic.
 - The funeral commends the dead to the mercy of God.
 - The funeral provides consolation and healing for those who mourn.
 - The funeral includes the Vigil, Funeral Mass, and Committal (Burial).
 - Visiting the gravesite of family members who have passed away is a longstanding custom in the Church.
 - Recommended Video Resource:
Fr. Mike Schmidt "The Real Purpose of Funerals" ascensionpresents.com/video/the-real-purpose-of-funerals

"The Three Sacred Moments



4) Celebration

Finish the lesson by reinforcing any key points and offering a concluding prayer inviting adults to pray for any family members who have died.

From Sacred to Soulless?

What Death Can Tell Us About Life

One of the quickest ways to discover a culture's beliefs surrounding man's purpose in life is to look at that culture's treatment of its deceased. In doing so, we discover its beliefs about the afterlife, spirituality, and man's relationship to the divine. In an age where ashes are scattered whimsically, and the ideas of the soul, God, and Heaven seem like fairytales, it may surprise us to discover that this is, in fact, grossly abnormal, compared with the vast majority of human history.

In the Past...

As far back as we can study, the predominant cultural beliefs surrounding humanity involved some sort of relationship with one or more divine beings, and the human person was most often viewed as having a spiritual component that persisted beyond the grave. Indeed, even our discoveries of the most ancient Neanderthals reveal that tools, treasures, and flowers were buried with them¹, indicating a belief in life after death, and some sort of burial custom to honour the deceased. There are numerous other examples spanning throughout all cultures in all of human history (the magnificent Egyptian tombs, the burial mounds of North American aboriginals, the Taj Mahal, to name a few), which tells us that the overwhelming body of humanity has believed in life after death in some form, and their burial practices and customs intentionally expressed that belief. **This is important, because what we believe about what happens after death “is very much going to define what is happening to us right now.”**²

Why These Practices Were Valid

The Catholic Church is constantly reminding us of the dignity of the human person – we are created in the image and likeness of God, and we are called to participate in His very life and love for all eternity. Moreover, through baptism, a Christian's very *body* becomes a temple of the Holy Spirit; through reception of the Eucharist, a person's body becomes a tabernacle carrying our Lord; and even in death, we believe that someday the body will be reunited with the soul and become a glorified body for all eternity. The human body is therefore a vessel destined for unimaginable glory and eternal happiness, and as such is worthy of noble treatment here on earth, even after death. For these reasons, a Catholic funeral service has a beautiful form and set of guidelines to uphold and celebrate this dignity.

Today, however, the widespread notions of secularism have infiltrated every aspect of human life, including how we view death. From scattering ashes in the wind to having exotic dancers perform at the graveside, our culture has clearly deviated from the wisdom passed down through the centuries. How did it come to this?

¹ Retrieved July 27, 2015, from <http://thefuneralsource.org/history.html> and <https://bonesdontlie.wordpress.com/2011/04/25/neanderthal-burials/>

² Groeschel, B. J. (2009). *After this life: What Catholics believe about what happens next*. Huntington, IN: Our Sunday Visitor (p. 15).

Philosophical Shift in the Age of Enlightenment

The threat of secularism has its roots about 400 years ago. The major scientific discoveries of the 17th century³ laid the foundation for what is known as the Age of Enlightenment (most of the 17th and 18th centuries):

“As scientific discoveries began to prove the effectiveness of human reason and show that scientific knowledge could be useful in many areas of human life, many began to believe that the study of science and nature could help correct all the problems of society, including poverty, disease, and war. . . . Soon, everything that did not fall under the umbrella of scientific explanation was dismissed, and ... what could not be proved could not be called true. . . . Previous moral and ethical codes were also regarded as outdated and superstitious, and contempt grew for things of the past. Many attacked the moral authority of the Church, and proponents of the Enlightenment looked to create a world devoid of supernatural meaning by totally ignoring the reality of divine revelation.”⁴

Rousseau, Voltaire and the Modern World

The Swiss thinker, Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712 – 1778), proposed that individuals should not be subject to any authority, and that being answerable to a higher power was contrary to man’s nature.⁵ A contemporary of his, Voltaire (1694 - 1778), who was one of the better known writers of the Encyclopedia, was viciously critical of institutions, especially the Catholic Church. Voltaire once famously said that twelve philosophers could certainly destroy a religion started by twelve fishermen.⁶ For Voltaire, faith had no place⁷; good and evil came from reason alone. The ideas of both Rousseau and Voltaire became quickly widespread and permeated the intellectual climate of the time, paving the way for the disastrous French Revolution, and the rise of fascism.⁸

Skip ahead to the 19th century, and we see an ever-growing worldview that is devoid of any spiritual or religious component. This mindset is a main philosophical undercurrent of *Secular Humanism*, and its effects are poisonous not only to religious faith, but also to the lens through which people resolve moral and ethical dilemmas: “As philosophy drifted even further from notions of God and religion, many began to argue that the world does not reflect the eternal wisdom and law of God and, therefore, standards for governing what is right and wrong do not apply, or, at best, they are relative. Instead of God, man became the subject of study.”⁹

Secularism Today

The secularism of today affects all areas of human life. Perhaps the most revealing evidence of this claim is found in that critical transition between our life in this world and our life everlasting: dying. If we look at a culture’s burial customs, we will quickly discover what that culture believes about life, the afterlife, the spiritual, and the divine. The question is, then, how does our culture typically treat its deceased?

³ The work of Johannes Kepler (1571-1630), Galileo Galilei (1564-1642), and Sir Isaac Newton (1642-1747), to name a few. It is important to note, however, that these scientists had strong religious convictions, and they themselves were not secularist thinkers.

⁴ Armenio, P. V. (2007). *The history of the Church: A complete course*. J. Socias (Ed.). Woodridge, IL: Midwest Theological Forum (p. 593, 594).

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 602.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 600, 601.

⁷ However, despite his anti-religious views, Voltaire paradoxically was a practicing Catholic, and allegedly repented later in life (*Ibid.*, p. 601).

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 602.

⁹ Armenio, 2007, p. 683.

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