

## CARING FOR A LOVED ONE WHO IS SICK OR WHO HAS DIED

*The priests of Sacred Heart Parish have prepared this booklet for you in the hope that it may prove beneficial to you when called upon to meet the spiritual needs of a loved one who is sick or dying and in need of pastoral care. Please feel free to call one of us at any time if we can be of service to you.*

### WHEN SOMEONE YOU LOVE IS SICK

We are happy to pray for your loved ones personally while they are ill. In addition, we will gladly place their names on the sick list that appears every week in the bulletin. They will also be prayed for during the Prayer of the Faithful at the Weekday Mass. Simply call the rectory and we will include your loved ones in our prayers. We ask you to please call the rectory and notify us when the time has arrived in which they are no longer in need of our prayers so we can remove their names from the list. If they are in the hospital, make sure that when they register they indicate that they are Catholic. This will insure that the chaplain will stop by and visit them so that they will be able to receive the sacraments during their stay.

### WHEN SOMEONE YOU LOVE IS DYING

As we know, death is not the end of our lives but our birth to a far greater life for us with Christ. It can, nonetheless, be a very painful and difficult period of transition, not only for the one who is being called home to the Lord but also for his family and friends. Having the family present to celebrate the Anointing of the Sick with the person is a powerful way of preparing not only the person who is



dying but also the family of the sick person for their loved one's passing. If at any time you fear that a loved one is in danger of death, please call the rectory and ask for a priest to come and anoint your loved one. *It is not necessary to wait until the moment of death in order to call a priest;* in fact, calling and making an appointment for the priest to come at a time when the whole family can gather is normally a better way to celebrate the Sacrament. Do not, however, hesitate to call us when a loved one is in an emergency situation. We are on call 24 hours a day for precisely this purpose.

### LIVING WILLS AND EXTRAORDINARY MEANS

It is often useful for individuals to inform their loved ones in advance of their specific desires about resuscitation and what extraordinary means should or should not be employed to prolong their life. Be very careful, however, before signing any living wills! Not all such documents are in line with Catholic moral theology. It is wise to review the contents of any such statement with the hospital chaplain or any priest you know will advise you correctly on the Church's teachings in this matter. Catholic moral theology teaches that it is permissible to deny *extraordinary* means to prolong a person's life, but never ordinary means. **Ordinary means (food, water, normal medication, etc.) must always be employed.** Extraordinary means (serious surgery, transplants, etc.) are permissible but by no means required. Do Not

Resuscitate orders (DNR) are permissible, but orders to directly cause death are not. In summary, it is permissible to allow a person to die naturally and return to the Lord, but it is never permissible to do anything or to deny any ordinary means so as to deliberately cause or hasten death. Before signing any living wills, check them over carefully with a priest or another responsible individual, or you may end up signing, not a living will, but your death wish!

### PRE-ARRANGEMENTS

Many people find it very helpful to sit down with a funeral director beforehand to discuss arrangements. It is difficult to make major decisions at a moment when you are emotionally overwhelmed. Knowing your loved ones' desires can be of major help. For example, a person's desire to donate organs would need to be known beforehand. (Organ donation is permissible provided death does not have to be hastened in order to obtain the organs.) Making donations to charity in lieu of flowers, choosing burial plots, etc. are sometimes easier to do before the moment of death.

### WHEN SOMEONE YOU LOVE HAS DIED

When someone you love has died, a priest will be happy to come to your home or to the hospital to pray with you. It is not possible to celebrate the Anointing of the Sick once the person has already died, as sacraments are for the living. We will, however, be happy to come and bless the body, pray with you, and offer any assistance possible. Upon the death of your loved one, contact the funeral director of your choice. The funeral director will assist you with all the details, including

notifying the church and arranging the Funeral Mass.

### THE WAKE

We strongly encourage the celebration of a wake for the deceased, even if for only an hour or two the night before the Funeral Mass. While the Funeral Mass is for the deceased, the wake is for the living, and is a vital part of the grieving process. It provides a powerful means of receiving the comfort of family and friends to help you through the difficult mourning period. In addition, one of the priests will come and offer prayers of hope and consolation.



### THE FUNERAL MASS

At our baptism, every Christian is clothed with Christ and is made a member of His Body, the Church. When a Catholic Christian dies, we present his body to the Church, bless it with holy water, incense it, and present his soul to God, asking Him to be merciful in judgment. We honor the body because it is a part of the full individual and will rise from the dead on the last day. Our prayers and the celebration of the Eucharist make present the saving sacrifice of Christ on the cross, and assist our loved one by providing an expiatory sacrifice for the forgiveness of his sins. It is the most important of all the prayers we offer for our loved one. In light of this belief, the proper funeral service for a Catholic is a *Mass of Christian Burial*, or a Funeral Mass. The Funeral Mass is the Church's final act of blessing for the person who has died. It is often commonly misbelieved that

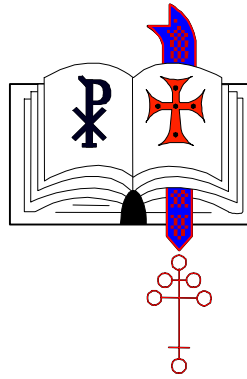
people who were not churchgoers may not have a Funeral Mass. This is not true. *All Catholics have a right to, and should receive a Funeral Mass.* A Funeral Mass should never be denied a Catholic unless there is a serious reason to do so. If you feel there is a serious reason why a Funeral Mass would not be an appropriate way to celebrate the funeral rites of your loved one, we ask you to kindly contact one of the priests of Sacred Heart Church so that we may discuss what would be the best way to commend your loved one to the Lord.

### CREMATION

The Catholic Church prefers that the body of a loved one be buried. There are, however, situations in which a family decides that cremation is a more suitable, or perhaps a necessary, form of burial. In the past, the Church did not permit cremation because there were groups hostile to Christianity that deliberately practiced cremation so as to deny the resurrection of the body on the Last Day. Since this is no longer a worry, the Church now permits cremation, provided it is not being done so as to deny the resurrection of the body. If you should choose to have your loved one cremated, it is preferred and strongly urged that this take place *after* the Funeral Mass and not before. If cremation must take place before the Funeral Mass, the ashes, or *cremains*, should be placed in a worthy vessel. You can purchase a proper urn in a variety of pleasant options from your funeral director. The cremains must be buried in the same manner in which a body would be buried. *It is not permissible to scatter ashes or to keep them in an urn on a mantle or tabletop.* All cremains must be placed in a grave, mausoleum, or columbarium.

### SELECTING READINGS AND HYMNS

Family members often wish to select readings and hymns for the Mass. Your funeral director has a copy of the choices of readings that are used at a Funeral Mass. The first reading is taken from the Old Testament; the second reading is taken from the New Testament. During the Easter season, it is appropriate that



the first reading be taken from one of selections from the Acts of the Apostles. You are welcome to have members of your family proclaim the two readings. The individuals chosen, however, should preferably be people comfortable with public speaking who will be well composed on the day of the funeral. The Gospel reading is always proclaimed by the priest or a deacon. We will be happy, to the extent possible, to honor your requests for any specific hymns which you feel will be prayerful and will comfort you at the Funeral Mass. Please bear in mind, however, that the purpose of our song is not to pay tribute to the life of the individual but to praise the Lord and present our loved one to Him in prayerful song. Thus, all songs at the funeral must be songs of worship that are normally sung at Mass. It would not be appropriate, for example, to request a song by your loved one's favorite rock group or from his favorite Broadway show be performed at the funeral.

## MEMORIALS

### EULOGIES

It is occasionally desired by the family that one of the members give a eulogy at the end of Mass. While we realize that this is often a powerful means of healing and can be a most appropriate way of expressing a public farewell to our beloved, we are unfortunately often under time restrictions and a strict time schedule at the Funeral Mass. There may be a second funeral coming in shortly, or the cemetery may need to have you arrive at a certain time, etc. All these concerns can unfortunately make a person delivering a eulogy feel rushed, which lessens the comfort the words may bring. We therefore request that all eulogies be given during the wake, when there is more time available and more people who wish may speak than we could possibly permit at Mass. Should, however, there be a compelling reason why presenting the eulogy at Mass would be necessary, we ask that, in accordance with approved archdiocesan guidelines, the following be observed: only one person should approach to speak rather than a series of people. The speaker should be someone comfortable with public speaking who will be well composed and therefore comforting to you and to your guests. The eulogy should be brief – two or three minutes - positive in nature, and be appropriate to be delivered at Mass. The eulogy should emphasize the Christian faith of the individual and our gratitude to God for the gift of this beloved person in our lives. It might be helpful to have the speaker write out his words and share them with the priest beforehand. If you wish, it would be perfectly appropriate for an individual merely to thank those who have come to offer their support.

The best spiritual gift for a person who has died is to offer a Mass for the repose of his soul and the forgiveness of any sins he may have committed. A set number of announced Masses is available each year. There is no spiritual difference between an announced and an unannounced Mass. An announced Mass offers the family the opportunity to



attend the actual Mass being offered; however, they usually must be booked at least a year in advance.

Unannounced Masses will be offered in a shorter period of time, but will be offered in private. In addition to Masses, the bread and wine and the sanctuary lamp may be offered in memory of the person. The names of those being so honored are published weekly in our church bulletin. It is often desired by family and friends to purchase an item in memory of their loved one. We would ask you kindly to consult the pastor of the parish before purchasing the item. This will assure that your gift will be something that will be used on a regular basis. If you wish to make a donation to the church in your loved one's memory or if your loved one has requested that you do so, please call the pastor and speak with him. There are a variety of ways to leave money to the Church; thus, you may inadvertently make a type of donation that you did not intend. By contacting the pastor before making a bequest, you can assure that your donation is applied in the manner in which you intend.