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Funeral Preparation

by Amy Fernaays

Those who know me, know that Funeral Ministry is a passion and a focus of my Pastoral Ministry work here at Assumption. Being able to walk the difficult journey with someone who has lost a loved one and assist them along their path through grief to a healing place is a gift from God, and when God gives us gifts, we need to put them to good use! So let me share with you some thoughts on Funeral Planning in our Catholic Christian tradition.

In the 'General Introduction' of the Order of Christian Funerals, the first paragraph reads as follows: In the face of death, the Church confidently proclaims that God has created each person for eternal life and that Jesus, the Son of God, by his death and resurrection, has broken the chains of sin and death that bound humanity. Christ 'achieved his task of redeeming humanity and giving perfect glory to God, principally by the paschal mystery of his blessed passion, resurrection from the dead, and glorious ascension.' (Order of Christian Funerals, Vatican Council II)

Preparing and planning a funeral can be difficult for anyone who has lost a loved one, but there are several Assumption staff members and lay persons who are well trained at guiding and planning a funeral Mass. When a loved one passes, the first point of contact is with a funeral director and that funeral director will connect with our parish office to begin the process of setting up a funeral Mass. One of our funeral planners will contact the family and set up a time to meet. At that meeting, some counseling may occur and certainly some time for family members to reflect and share fond memories of their loved one will happen. The family will then be given the opportunity to select scripture readings – an Old Testament Reading, a New Testament Reading and a Gospel Reading. A selection for the Prayers of the Faithful will also be offered. We encourage someone from the family or a close friend of the family to be a lector for the first two readings, as well as the Prayers of the Faithful at the funeral Mass. Often, young family members will be selected to bring up the gifts of bread and wine at the offertory. If there is a casket present for Mass, a few family members are asked to unfold the pall (a white cloth in memory of the baptismal garment that covers the casket during Mass) and cloak the casket at the beginning of the service.

The family will also select music to be played throughout Mass. COTA is blessed to have a full volunteer choir, appropriately named "The Resurrection Choir," to lead the congregation in the hymns that the family selects. There is also the opportunity for one speaker to share what is liturgically called 'Words of Remembrance' for a few moments at Mass as well.

This is just a brief overview of the Funeral Planning process. If you would like to discuss further details or if you might like to do some pre-planning for your own funeral Mass, please feel free to contact me at 223-8048 or 880-2174.

In Christ,
Amy Fernaays
