

Church of the Resurrection

Ellicott City, MD

Funeral Resources

Words of Remembrance

Guidelines:

How can you summarize somebody's life in a few short minutes? Writing and delivering words of remembrance can be a therapeutic tool to help deal with your grief, and being chosen to speak is an honor and should be treated that way. Here are some tips for writing and delivering eloquent and memorable words of remembrance:

- Gather information such as:
 - Family and other close relationships.
 - Education & career.
 - Hobbies or special interests.
 - Places the person lived or traveled.
 - Special accomplishments.
- Don't *only* talk about yourself.
 - Talk about the *person's life*, not yours.
 - What influence did they have on your life?
 - What interesting things did they do in/for the community?
- Organize your thoughts.
 - Jot down your ideas.
 - Create an outline.
- Be brief.
 - Words of Remembrance should last between three and five minutes.
- Write it down, don't ad-lib.
 - This helps you remember every detail.
 - Make sure it is easy to read, print in large font.
 - Keep things on the short side.
- Review and Revise.
 - Your first draft may not be the final.
 - Sleep on it and look it over in the morning.
 - Make any necessary revisions.
- Make them laugh but be respectful.
 - A funeral is not a roast, but there is room for appropriate humor.
 - Fondly remember a story about the person to which everyone can relate.
 - Remember there will be others present who may not share the same sense of humor.
- Don't be afraid to show emotion. Funerals are an extremely emotional event, and no one expects you not to shed a few tears.
- Have a glass of water as well as tissues handy.

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Frequently Asked Questions

What is the difference between a 'Eulogy' and 'Words of Remembrance'?

A eulogy recounts some or all the significant events in the life of the deceased. Words of remembrance do not give a complete biography but share some insight into the faith and values of the deceased as seen in one or two examples from his/her life. A eulogy by its very nature tends to be lengthy, while words of remembrance are brief.

Why are the Guidelines necessary?

For several reasons:

- A funeral can lose its essential nature as an act of worship of God and prayer for the soul of the deceased if it becomes merely a series of eulogies.
- While the funeral is a time of support for the bereaved family and friends, there should also be consideration of other factors:
 - people taking time off work to attend.
 - funeral directors having difficulty with scheduling multiple funerals.
 - parishes having need of their churches for other liturgies, etc.
- If the speaker is particularly emotional and has difficulty delivering his/her words, the situation becomes uncomfortable for the assembly and may result in more grief for the bereaved at a time when they have hopefully been lifted a little beyond grief through the Eucharistic celebration.
- When there are several speakers, some in the congregation think that anyone is free to walk up to the sanctuary and speak, resulting in very lengthy funerals.
- Inappropriate remarks might embarrass the priest, the family and the congregation and becoming the focus of the service.

Archdiocese of Baltimore Policy:

The norm of law is that there are to be no eulogies at a Funeral Mass. It is up to the pastor to the parish to determine whether a remembrance will be permitted at a Funeral Mass for his parish. If a remembrance is permitted it must take place according to the procedures listed below. Visiting clergy are required to abide by the decision of the pastor and this policy (GIRM no.382).

Procedure:

- A. If a pastor permits a remembrance, it should take place immediately before the Funeral Liturgy begins.
- B. It should be limited to 3-5 minutes.
- C. Only one person should represent the family and friends. Multiple remembrances are not permitted.
- D. The pastor may request a written outline of the proposed remembrance remarks if he deems it appropriate.
- E. The current liturgical guidelines clearly indicate, "[a]t Funeral Masses there should usually be a short Homily, but to the exclusion of a funeral eulogy of any kind."