

Guidelines for Eulogies

The *Order of Christian Funerals* provides for memories to be shared before the Rite of Commendation near the end of the funeral service (whether during Mass or outside of Mass). Often called a “eulogy,” this time of sharing personal memories can complement the homily and assist those in attendance with their grieving of a loved one’s death. A eulogy or sharing personal memories is not required in the Church’s funeral rite, but may be done if the family so chooses.

The homily is intended to speak to the mysteries of Christian faith, in particular the redeeming sacrifice of the Cross of Jesus and the hope of resurrection and eternal life. While some personal details and examples of the person’s life may be included by the homilist, the focus is primarily on the faith of the Church that gathers us in hope for eternal life.

If included during the funeral, a eulogy becomes a part of the Church’s liturgy. Therefore, the eulogy is intended specifically *to reflect how the deceased exemplified Christian living and virtue as a witness to Christ’s Gospel*. It is more than simply sharing stories of past experiences or a tribute to the person’s accomplishments. Rather, it is a reflection of faith on how God’s grace was evident and at work in the person’s life. The ultimate goal of the eulogy at a Christian funeral is not so much to praise the deceased as to praise God for that person’s share in Christ’s goodness and mercy.

Guidelines

The eulogy:

- is done after the Communion rite is complete (during a Mass) or after the intercessions (outside of Mass).
- should be delivered by one person. Various people can contribute to the narrative, with the combined thoughts shared by the designated speaker.
- should not exceed five minutes, out of consideration for the nature of the funeral rites and in being respectful of the time of those in attendance, those waiting to assist at the cemetery, and those assisting with the luncheon.
- should be prepared in advance, with either a written script or notes. Ad-libbed comments or spontaneous additions are discouraged.
- can simply be an appropriate poem or song.

The eulogy is to avoid stories that may embarrass the family or others in attendance; stories that reveal matters that are confidential or highly personal about the person’s life; language that includes swearing, slang, off-color terms or jokes; and anything else not appropriate in a religious setting.

If there are several people who wish to speak, it is more appropriate to open a time of sharing at the visitation the evening before, or at the luncheon following the funeral. Spontaneous sharing is discouraged at the funeral itself; therefore, do not invite others to come forward to share at this time.

Thank you for your cooperation and understanding.