

Estancia Valley Catholic Parish, Notes for Funeral Planning (15 March 2010)

To assist you in planning funeral arrangements, the following guidance is provided. A family representative must make an appointment with the Pastor or his representative to provide information and finalize arrangements.

Music—Only “Church music” is allowed in the church. This includes the “rosary” and the Mass and any other time. That is, no secular or popular music may be played in the church. Musicians who play at the rosary or Mass must be informed of this and adhere to it. The person making arrangements for the funeral should discuss with the Pastor or his representative anyone he/she wishes to ask to play for the rosary or Mass. The musicians or choir must be familiar with the Mass in order to play for it. No recorded music may be used at Mass.

Readings—Readings for the Mass will be chosen from the book of readings which will be given to the family as part of making the arrangements. One reading from each of the sections of the Old Testament, Psalms, New Testament and Gospel may be chosen by the family. The priest or deacon reads the Gospel. The family may choose anyone else to read the other readings. This should be a person at least 16 years old, and confident enough to read at the Mass. The reader does not have to be Catholic. It should be a person who will be able to maintain composure. There is nothing wrong with crying at Mass. However, it is very hard on the family when a person who is reading cannot read through the readings without crying. Readers should identify themselves to the celebrant before the funeral Mass so that he knows who they are and where they will be seated. This also gives them the opportunity to be familiarized on when and how to move to the pulpit, go over pronunciation of unfamiliar words in the readings, and ask any questions they may have so that they are comfortable with what they are going to do.

Please note the following in reference to music and readings: There is no requirement to have music at a rosary or funeral Mass. Since we do not have “parish staff musicians” who are obliged by their work agreement to play for funerals, it may be difficult to find capable musicians for the funeral or rosary. The parish will try its best to assist the family to find out if any of our choir members are available for a funeral, if the family wishes. There may be a fee for the musician/singer. If the family wishes, they may leave selection of the readings to the celebrant, and may even ask the celebrant to do all the readings himself or ask a parish lector to read the readings for them if one is available.

Remarks/“Eulogy”—There is no place in the liturgical directives of the Church for a eulogy at a funeral Mass. Remarks on a person’s life may be made at the rosary, after the rosary is prayed, or at the graveside. There will be no exceptions made to this. Therefore, the family must determine when and who will speak, if at all, since this is not required. There should be one, or at most two people to speak. Try to anticipate what weather conditions may exist at the time of burial, if that is when someone plans to deliver the remarks because they may not be given at Mass. No matter when such remarks are delivered, or by whom, the person must be one who will respect the sacredness of the church, and the celebration of the liturgy, including the burial and cemetery. Likewise, no one should be chosen to speak who may deliver remarks even implicitly contrary to the Catholic Faith. It sometimes happens that a person will tell inappropriate stories or jokes concerning the deceased and his/her past or family. This must be absolutely avoided. Proper respect and behavior must be practiced at all times. Clergy or ministers from non-Catholic churches may not be invited to speak in the church.

Power Point, Slide Show or Similar Presentations—This is not appropriate for any liturgy in a Catholic Church, including the rosary. Though it has become accepted practice at some non-Catholic churches, it may not be done in our Church. A brief display of this type may be presented in the hall after the rosary or during a meal after the funeral Mass, if it is coordinated with the parish beforehand. The parish will not provide any equipment for such a presentation. Any material included in such a display should also be respectful and appropriate for viewing on church grounds.

Pictures—Pictures or picture boards of the deceased and his/her life may be displayed in the church. These also must be appropriate for display in the church. Prior to the celebration of Mass, all pictures will be removed and may be taken to the back of the church. No pictures will be displayed at the front of the church during Mass. This includes any portrait of the deceased in the case of cremated remains. The family may keep such an individual portrait with them in the pew, if they wish.

Scheduling—The parish must give approval for any scheduling of rosary or Mass dates, times and places. Do not make any final arrangements until the Pastor has concurred and given his permission. Lacking this, it may not be possible to honor any arrangements. Only the Pastor or his representative may oblige the parish to any schedule.

Burial plots—Purchase of plots must be made through the parish unless the cemetery is administered by the local town or city government. Likewise, designation of plots will be made by the appropriate cemetery committee, either of the parish or local government. Because there is a wide variety of methods, fees and organizations for the administration of these details from place to place, please check with the parish business manager before making assumptions or plans concerning these matters. The same applies to the digging of graves. Burial plots may be purchased in advance of need. A certificate of purchase is issued when the plot(s) is purchased through the parish office.

Cremation—The Catholic Church allows cremation of the deceased as long as this is not done as indicating disbelief in the resurrection of the body. It is strongly encouraged that the body be present for the funeral Mass, since it is the body which received the sacraments and sanctification through them. Cremation can then take place after the funeral with interment to take place soon after the ashes are received. However, it is permissible for cremation to take place prior to the Mass with the ashes present at Mass. Ashes of the deceased are to be honored and properly cared for. Ashes of the cremated remains of a person must be kept together. Dividing ashes, spreading them or doing anything other than keeping them together is absolutely forbidden. The policy of the Archdiocese of Santa Fe is that nothing can be done by way of liturgy or service of *any kind* if the intention is to do anything other than keep the ashes complete and together.