



DIOCESE OF FORT WAYNE-SOUTH BEND

Policy for “Speaking in Remembrance” at Funerals

Preface

Funeral liturgies are momentous occasions of prayer in the lives of Christians, as friends and family gather to take final leave of loved ones. Funerals, therefore, are also great opportunities for evangelization: when the rites are celebrated with great reverence and pastoral sensitivity, it is a moment of Christian witness to the beauty of our faith.

The option for “speaking in remembrance” is one with profound implications for reverent liturgical practice at Catholic funerals. The *Order of Christian Funerals* allows for an individual to speak in remembrance of the deceased during the Vigil (OCF #80), funeral Mass (OCF #170), or funeral liturgy outside Mass (OCF #197).

The Distinction between “Speaking in Remembrance” and Eulogies

To “speak in remembrance” means to give a brief reflection on the life of the deceased in the context of his or her life of faith. Any remarks made should revolve around God’s action in the life of the deceased, and how His blessings have enriched the world through that life. We might recall the words of St. Augustine: “When God crowns our merits, He does nothing else than crown His own gifts.”

These words of remembrance are not the same as a eulogy, which is a reminiscing and toasting of the life of the departed outside the context of faith. While meaningful in its own way, such a tribute has no place in the sacred liturgy: the *Order of Christian Funerals* notes that there is “never” to be any kind of eulogy (OCF #27, 141).

Recommended Times and Places for Reflections

Due to the difficulty often encountered in ensuring that elements of eulogies are not conflated with liturgical words of remembrance, it is preferable that all such reflections take place apart from the funeral Mass or the funeral liturgy outside Mass, since these hold a particular primacy as solemn ceremonies of prayer for the deceased.

The most preferable arrangement would be to have reflections delivered in one of the following settings:

- At the funeral home when mourners are gathered
- During the Vigil on the night before the funeral
- As part of the farewell at the cemetery (separate from the Rite of Committal)
- At the communal meal following the funeral events

A secondary option would be to have words of remembrance delivered immediately before the funeral Mass begins. In such a scenario, after the body is brought into the church, the celebrant could send the designated speaker up to the ambo to deliver a few words of remembrance, as the rest of the family stands elsewhere. Once the speaking in remembrance is complete, the sign of the cross is made, and the reception of the body proceeds as usual.

This option may be exercised at the discretion of the pastor, and may need to account for the architecture of the church. A potential benefit of doing this prior to the funeral is that the speaker might be relieved of any anxiety from awaiting his or her time to speak at the end of Mass, and can instead focus on prayer. Also, beginning a few minutes prior to the scheduled start of Mass can establish a clear time frame for the words of remembrance.

Regulations for Speaking in Remembrance during a Funeral Mass

While the aforementioned alternatives are strongly encouraged, the possibility of speaking in remembrance before the Final Commendation during the funeral liturgy remains an option, as given in the *Order of Christian Funerals*.

However, when exercising this option, it is imperative that the integrity and purpose of the funeral liturgies be respected by not unduly disrupting their flow. Particularly since speaking in remembrance would occur soon after the reception of Holy Communion during a funeral Mass, it must be ensured that the words are prayerful, and bespeak the distinctly Christian context described previously.

As such, if words of remembrance shall be used during a funeral Mass or during a funeral liturgy outside Mass, the following regulations must be observed:

- Only one person may deliver the words of remembrance
- The spoken words of remembrance should not exceed two or three minutes in length – the basic equivalent of a single typed page of double-spaced text in regular 12-point font
- The remarks should be put on paper beforehand and read

Lastly, the attached sheet of specific guidelines for speaking in remembrance should be copied and distributed to anyone who will be preparing such remarks for use during the funeral liturgy.

All these same regulations apply to funeral rites for children.

Conclusion

All churches that host funerals in this diocese should distribute and implement these regulations. In addition, all funeral directors and pastoral ministers who assist in planning funerals should have copies of these diocesan directives, so that they may properly educate and instruct the bereaved family members and friends of the deceased.

A correct understanding of words of remembrance is essential to a reverent celebration of the funeral rites. The use of the term “eulogy” and its secular understanding must be entirely discouraged in relation to funeral liturgies, as well as in any media accounts of Catholic funerals.

By our attentiveness to these matters surrounding the faithful departed, we can accommodate the desire to honor them, while preserving the sacred nature and purpose of the Catholic funeral.