

# **Revised Funeral Rites**

## **1987**

### **INTRODUCTION**

The various rites set out in this book are not designed to be followed slavishly. Every death is different. Within an overall framework which expresses the church's faith and endeavours to relate that faith to a particular death, there are a variety of rituals which can be chosen and of prayers which can be used.

The central core of the rites offered is the Service in Church. This follows the traditional structure of an office with psalmody, scripture reading and prayer. Where appropriate this can be adapted to become the Liturgy of the Word preceding a celebration of Holy Communion.

Physical circumstances vary. Funerals may be conducted in church, followed by a brief committal either at a graveside or in a crematorium. They may be held totally in a crematorium chapel. Two different congregations may attend the service in church and the committal. Part of the service may be conducted in the house. The priest and family will need to make appropriate decisions about how the geography should determine the use of material.

As well as committing the dead person into the keeping of God, within the context of the resurrection hope, there is a pastoral dimension to a funeral. Attention must be paid to the particular needs of the mourners at that death. Careful choice should be made from the alternative prayers provided. It may be right to discuss all the options explicitly with the bereaved family. On other occasions it may be the responsibility of the parish priest to make a sensitive selection, after listening carefully to the feelings expressed. Where the words provided do not meet the situation, other forms may be devised.

As well as material for inclusion in the Intercession, a selection of collects is appended. These or similar prayers

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can be included after the Intercession, or else in the Commendation or Committal.

In addition to the Funeral Service itself a number of subsidiary rites are provided for occasions which may require some formal liturgical expression. These are:

during a visit immediately after a bereavement,  
at the closing of the coffin,  
as the funeral sets out from the house,  
at the interment of ashes.

Such words as are printed here are no substitute for the pastor's own use of sensitivity and imagination.

Bereavement presents an opportunity for pastoral care at three different levels.

First there is the ministry to those who are directly involved.

Secondly there are many people who attend a funeral with little or no church connection, but, at a moment of some significance, may be helped or challenged by what the Gospel has to say about death and eternal life.

Third, a funeral service is a statement to the whole of our society of the way in which the Christian faith gives meaning to life and to its conclusion in death.

To fulfil this task, the funeral rites must both speak of God's love, forgiveness and promise of resurrection and relate these to the immediate human experience of death and mourning. The truth of the human feelings must be acknowledged in order that the theological truth can become an effective communication. Such must always have been the intention of pastoral care. This service is offered to the church as a tool to enable that work to be done more effectively in our own generation.

**PRAYERS WITH THE RELATIVES at the time of bereavement**

**Sentence**

If we live, we live to the Lord,  
and if we die, we die to the Lord;  
So then, whether we live or whether we die,  
we are the Lord's.  
For to this end Christ died and lived again,  
that he might be Lord of both the dead and the living.  
(*Romans 14.8f*)

**Psalm** (from Psalm 103)

As a father cares for his children,\*  
so does the Lord care for those who fear him.  
For he himself knows whereof we are made;\*  
he remembers that we are but dust.  
Our days are like the grass;\*  
we flourish like a flower of the field;  
When the wind goes over it, it is gone,\*  
and its place shall know it no more.  
But the merciful goodness of the Lord  
endures for ever on those who fear him,\*  
and his righteousness on children's children.

**Reading**

For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord. (*Romans 8.3 8f*)

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**Prayer**

Lord of life and death  
you are with us in the daylight and the dark.  
As this our brother/sister goes from us,  
may your love be with him/her in the shadows  
and lead him/her to your presence  
where the life that began with you  
is sustained for ever  
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Most loving Father  
the death of your Son has opened for us  
a new and living way.  
Give us hope to overcome our fear;  
help us to surrender N. into your keeping  
and let our sorrow find comfort in your care,  
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

**Commendation at the time of death**

Go forth upon your journey from this world,  
dear child of God,  
into the hands of the Father who made you,  
to find life in Christ who redeemed you,  
to rejoice in the Spirit who renews you.  
May the heavenly host sustain you  
and the company of the redeemed enfold you;  
may peace be yours this day,  
and the heavenly city your home.

**Prayer at the death of a child**

God our Creator,  
you called into being this fragile life,  
which to us had seemed so full of promise:

Give to **N.**, whom we commit to your care,  
fulness of life in your presence,  
and to us, who grieve over hopes unfulfilled,  
courage to bear our loss;  
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

**Amen**

**Prayer at the closing of the coffin**

Father,  
your servant's eyes have closed  
in the final sleep of death,  
eyes that laughed, eyes that shed tears.  
Let them wake to the full vision of your glory,  
and our brother/sister see you face to face;  
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

**Amen.**

**Prayer on leaving the house**

Father,  
your servant has begun his/her journey  
to the place which you have made ready for him/her.  
Hallow all the memories we have of him/her  
in this house which no longer is his/her home,  
and be yourself close to us in our grief;  
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

**Amen**

**THE RECEPTION OF THE COFFIN IN CHURCH  
before the funeral service Sentence**

**Sentence**

The eternal God is a dwelling place,  
and underneath are the everlasting arms.  
(*Deuteronomy 33.27, NRSV variant readings*)

**Psalm (from Psalm 42)**

My soul is athirst for God, athirst for the living God;\*  
when shall I come to appear before the presence of  
God?  
My tears have been my food day and night,\*  
while all day long they say to me,  
'Where now is your God?'  
Why are you so full of heaviness, O my soul?\*  
and why are you so disquieted within me?  
Put your trust in God,\*  
for I will yet give thanks to him,  
who is the help of my countenance, and my God.

**At the end of the psalm either**

Glory to the Father and to the Son:  
and to the Holy Spirit;  
as it was in the beginning is now  
and shall be for ever. **Amen.**

**or**

Rest eternal grant to him/her O Lord  
**And let light perpetual shine upon him/her.**

**Reading**

In my Father's house there are many dwelling places. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, so that where I am you, there you may be also. (*John 14.2f*)

**Prayer**

Father,  
give peace to your servant.  
whose body now rests in this place:  
May the prayers of your whole Church uphold him/her  
and support us in face of death's mystery;  
may the stillness of this house enter into us,  
and our silence be the token of our trust. **Amen.**

*(After a time of silent prayer,  
the evening collect is said)*

Lighten our darkness. Lord, we pray,  
and in your mercy defend us  
from all perils and dangers of this night;  
for the love of your only Son,  
our Saviour Jesus Christ. **Amen.**

## **THE SERVICE IN CHURCH**

### **Sentence**

Jesus said, "I am the resurrection and the life.  
Those who believe in me, even though they die, will  
live,  
and everyone who lives and believes in me will never  
die.  
(*John 11.25f*)

**Additional sentences** from which selection may be  
made if required:

We brought nothing into the world, so that we can take  
nothing out of it. (*1 Timothy 6.7*)

The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away; blessed  
be the name of the Lord. (*Job 1.21*)

God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so  
that everyone who believes in him may not perish but  
have eternal life. (*John 3.16*)

What no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the human  
heart conceived, what God has prepared for those who  
love him – these things God has revealed to us through  
the Spirit; for the Spirit searches everything, even the  
depths of God. (*1 Corinthians 2.9f*)

Since we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even  
so, through Jesus, God will bring with him those who  
have died. Therefore encourage one another with these  
words. (*1 Thessalonians 4.14,18*)

The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases, his  
mercies never come to an end; they are new every  
morning. (*Lamentations 3 .22f*)

Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be  
comforted. (*Matthew 5.4*)

*(If it has not already done, the minister may here  
introduce briefly the theme of the service and make  
mention of the person who has died)*

**Collect**

God our maker,  
your creative will gives life to all that is;  
your quickening power brings us to birth.  
Let your love sustain us to the end of our days  
and bring us through death to a new beginning;  
through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

**or**

God our maker,  
your creative will gives life to all that is:  
your quickening power brings us to birth  
and raises us from death.  
Take this your son/daughter N. into your keeping  
and give him/her the new life  
that is promised in Jesus Christ our Lord,  
who once was dead and lives and reigns with you  
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,  
now and for ever. **Amen.**

**The Liturgy of the Word**

**Psalm** (from the appended list of suggested psalms)

**Reading(s)** (from the appended list) (*At a Eucharist  
these should always include a Gospel*)

**Sermon**

**Intercession**

*Prayer for the Mourners*

God of the living and the dead,  
when you raised Jesus from the tomb  
you gave new hope to his desolate disciples.  
Cleanse, restore and heal us  
in our time of sorrow.

May we go forward in his strength upon our pilgrimage,  
sharing the fellowship of the redeemed,  
both living and departed.  
Lord, in your mercy,  
**Hear our prayer.**

*Prayer of Faith*

Father,  
you are from everlasting,  
your compassion knows no bounds:  
Though we are dust and to dust shall return,  
we trust in your power to fashion us anew  
in the likeness of your Son, who endured the cross  
to become the firstborn in your new creation;  
who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,  
and now and for ever. **Amen.**

*The Prayer for the Mourners and the Prayer of Faith should always be said. Other prayers may be chosen according to circumstances from those printed in the Appendix p. i6 or composed as appropriate. The Versicle and Response may be varied. The accompanying Taizé Kyrie may be sung first by a cantor, the people responding, as suitable.*

**Kyrie Eleison**  
Lord, have mercy



(At a Eucharist the **Liturgy of the Sacrament** follows here. Otherwise the Lord's Prayer is said)

As our Saviour has taught us,  
so we pray:

**Our Father in heaven,  
hallowed be your name,  
your kingdom come,  
your will be done,  
on earth as in heaven.  
Give us today our daily bread.  
Forgive us our sins  
as we forgive those who sin  
against us.  
Do not bring us  
to the time of trial  
but deliver us from evil.  
For the kingdom,  
the power and the glory are  
yours,  
now and for ever. Amen.**

or

As our Saviour Christ has  
commanded and  
taught us, we are bold to say:  
**Our Father,  
who art in heaven,  
hallowed by thy name;  
thy kingdom come;  
thy will be done;  
on earth as it is in heaven.  
Give us this day our daily bread;  
and forgive us our trespasses,  
as we forgive those  
who trespass against us.  
And lead us not into temptation,  
but deliver us from evil.  
For thine is the kingdom,  
the power and the glory,  
for ever and ever. Amen.**

#### **THE COMMENDATION**

Father,  
we commend to your care our brother/sister N.,  
giving thanks for all that he/she brought us.  
Though now taken from us,  
let him/her not be parted from you.  
May your servant, set free from the bondage of earth,  
be changed into your likeness, from glory to glory;  
through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

**A hymn** may follow, or this anthem:

Give rest, O Christ, to your servant with your saints:  
where sorrow and pain are no more;  
neither sighing, but life everlasting.

You only are immortal, the Creator and Maker of all:  
and we are mortal, formed of the earth,  
and to earth we shall return:  
for so you did ordain when you created me, saying,

Dust you are and to dust you shall return.  
All we go down to the dust;  
and, weeping o'er the grave, we make our song:  
alleluia, alleluia, alleluia.

**or**

Go forth upon your journey from this world,  
dear child of God,  
into the hands of the Father who made you,  
to find life in Christ who redeemed you,  
to rejoice in the Spirit who renews you.  
May the heavenly host sustain you  
and the company of the redeemed enfold you;  
may peace be yours this day,  
and the heavenly city your home.

## **THE COMMITTAL**

### **Sentence**

I heard a voice from heaven saying, 'Write this:  
"Blessed are the dead who from now on die in the  
Lord."  
"Yes," says the Spirit,  
"they will rest from their labours".' (*Rev. 14.13*)

### **Silence or Collect**

**Prayer of Farewell** (which may be said by a relative,  
if desired) (*see Appendix IV, page 21*)

**The minister then says**

*At a burial:*

We have entrusted our  
brother/sister N.  
to God's merciful keeping;  
we now commit his/her body  
to the ground,  
earth to earth, ashes to ashes,  
dust to dust;  
in sure and certain hope of the  
resurrection  
to eternal life through our  
Lord Jesus Christ,  
who died, was buried and rose  
again for us.  
To him be glory for ever and  
ever. **Amen.**

*At a cremation:*

We have entrusted our  
brother/sister N.  
To God's merciful keeping;  
we now commit his/her body  
to the fire,  
ashes to ashes, dust to dust;  
in sure and certain hope of the  
resurrection  
to eternal life through our  
Lord Jesus Christ,  
who died, was buried and rose  
again for us.  
To him be glory for ever and  
ever. **Amen.**

Now to him who is able to keep you from falling, and  
to make you stand without blemish in the presence of  
his glory with rejoicing, to the only God our Saviour,  
through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty,  
power, and authority, before all time and now and for  
ever.

*(Jude 24.25)*

**Amen.**

**A FORM TO BE USED AT THE INTERMENT  
OF ASHES**

**Sentence** We brought nothing into the world, and we take nothing out. The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away: blessed be the name of the Lord.

**Psalm** (from Psalm 145)

All your works praise you O Lord,\*  
and your faithful servants bless you.  
They make known the glory of your kingdom\*  
and speak of your power;  
That the peoples may know of your power\*  
and the glorious splendour of your kingdom.  
Your kingdom is an everlasting kingdom;\*  
your dominion endures through all ages.  
(*or Psalm 103, as at 3.*)

**Reading**

Our citizenship is in heaven, and it is from there that we are expecting a Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ. He will transform the body of our humiliation that it may be conformed to the body of his glory, by the power that also enables him to make all things subject to himself. Therefore, my brothers and sisters, whom I love and long for, my joy and crown, stand firm in the Lord in this way, by beloved. (*Philippians 3.20-4.1*)

**Interment**

We have entrusted our brother/sister N. to God's merciful keeping; we now commit his/her ashes to the ground, in sure and certain hope of the resurrection to eternal life through our Lord Jesus Christ, who died, was buried, and rose again for us. To him be glory for ever and ever. **Amen.**

Remember, Lord, your servant, who has gone before us with the sign of faith, and whose ashes we have committed to the ground. According to your promises, grant to him/her and to all who rest in Christ. refreshment, light and peace; through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

Lord, grant that we, with all those who have believed in you. may be united in the full knowledge of your love and the unclouded vision of your glory; through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with us all evermore. **Amen.**

## Appendix

### I PETITIONS FOR INSERTION INTO THE INTERCESSION

#### **Thanksgiving for the life of the departed**

Creator of Heaven and Earth,  
through all our days you fashion us  
and by your grace we grow.  
We thank you for all that was accomplished in your  
servant **N.**

As in life he/she glorified your name,  
so beyond death may he/she serve you still.

Lord, in your mercy,

**Hear our prayer.**

#### **After a long life**

Lord of all our days,  
we thank you for the years, from childhood to old age,  
in which **N.** was among us.

May death bring him/her comfort, rest and peace  
and open the way to life with you forever.

Lord, in your mercy,

**Hear our prayer.**

#### **After a short life**

God of all mystery, whose ways are beyond under-  
standing,

lead us, who grieve at this untimely death,  
to a new and deeper faith in your love

which brought your Son Jesus,  
the young prince of glory,  
into resurrection life.

Lord, in your mercy,

**Hear our prayer.**

**After a courageous death**

Sustainer of all,  
you gave strength to your servant N.  
to finish his/her course with courage:  
Grant him/her now part in that victorious life  
which your Son our Saviour has won for us,  
who by his suffering on the cross  
overcame the dominion of death.

Lord, in your mercy,

**Hear our prayer.**

**After a difficult death**

Gentle Lord,  
your servant has come  
by a hard and painful road  
into the valley of death.  
Lead him/her now into the place  
where there is no more pain.

Lord, in your mercy,

**Hear our prayer.**

**In sorrow, guilt and regret**

Forgiving God,  
in the face of death we discover  
how many things are still undone,  
how much might have been done otherwise.  
Redeem our failure.  
Bind up the wounds of past mistakes.

Transform our guilt to active love,  
and by your forgiveness make us whole.

Lord, in your mercy,

**Hear our prayer.**

**Pardon for the deceased**

God our Redeemer,  
you love all that you have made,  
you are merciful beyond our deserving.

Pardon your servant's sins,  
acknowledged or unperceived.

Help us also to forgive as we pray to be forgiven,  
through him who on the cross  
asked forgiveness for those who wounded him.

Lord, in your mercy,

**Hear our prayer.**

**In grief**

Father,

You know our hearts and share our sorrows.

We are hurt by our parting  
from N. whom we loved:

When we are angry at the loss we have sustained,  
when we long for words of comfort,  
yet find them hard to hear,  
turn our grief to truer living,  
our affliction to firmer hope  
and our sorrow to deeper joy.

Lord, in your mercy,

**Hear our prayer.**

## **II SUGGESTED PSALMS AND SCRIPTURE READINGS**

**Psalm** 23; 90; 121; 130; 139.1-18

**Old Testament** Isaiah 61.1-3; Wisdom 3.1-9 and 5.15-16;  
Wisdom 4.8-15; Ecclesiasticus 38.16-23.

**New Testament** Romans 6.3-8; 1 Corinthians 15.20-22  
and 51-58; 2 Corinthians 4.13-18; 1 Peter 1.3-9;  
Revelation 7.9-17; Revelation 21.1-7.

**Gospel** John 6.37-40; John 14.1-6.

## **III ADDITIONAL COLLECTS**

O God, the king of saints, we praise and glorify your holy name for all your servants who have finished their course in your faith and fear: for the blessed Virgin Mary; for the holy patriarchs, prophets, apostles, and martyrs; and for all your other righteous servants, known to us and unknown; and we pray that, encouraged by their examples, aided by their prayers, and strengthened by their fellowship, we also may be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light; through the merits of your Son Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

Eternal Lord God, you hold all souls in life: shed forth, we pray, upon your whole Church in paradise and on earth the bright beams of your light and heavenly comfort; and grant that we, following the good example of those who have loved and served you here and are now at rest, may at the last enter with them into the fullness of your eternal joy; through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

Father of all, by whose mercy and grace your saints remain in everlasting light and peace: we remember with thanksgiving those whom we love but see no longer; and we pray that in them your perfect will may be fulfilled; through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

Almighty God, Father of all mercies and giver of all comfort: deal graciously, we pray, with those who mourn, that casting all their care on you, they may know the consolation of your love; through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

O Lord, support us all the day long of this troublous life, until the shades lengthen, and the evening comes, and the busy world is hushed, the fever of life is over, and our work is done. Then, Lord, in your mercy grant us safe lodging, a holy rest, and peace at the last; through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

O God, the maker and redeemer of all, we pray for the coming of your Kingdom, that in the last day, when you bring together all things in Christ, we, with all who have died in him, may enjoy the fulfilment of your promises, through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

Lord, you alone are the source of life, may your life-giving Spirit flow through us, grant us your compassion one for the other, in our sorrow give us the calm of your peace, kindle our hope and let our grief give way to joy, through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

Grant that all who have been baptised into Christ's death and resurrection may die to sin and rise to newness of life, and that through the grave and gate of death we may pass with him to our joyful resurrection. **Amen.**

#### IV FAREWELL BY A RELATIVE

*Where a model is required for this prayer the following text may be adapted to reflect the age, sex and other aspects of the deceased person.*

God of grace and glory, we thank you for N. who was so near and dear to us, and who has now been taken from us.

We thank you for the friendship he/she gave and for the strength and peace he/she brought.

We thank you for the love he/she offered and received while he/she was with us on earth.

We pray that nothing good in this mans/woman's life will be lost, but will be of benefit to the world; that all that was important to him/her will be respected by those who follow~ and that everything in which he/she was great will continue to mean much to us now that he/she is dead.

We ask you that he/she may go on living in his/her children, his/her family and his/her friends; in their hearts and minds, in their courage and their consciences.

We ask you that we who were close to him/her may now, because of his/her death, be even closer to each other, and that we may, in peace and friendship here on earth, always be deeply conscious of your promise to be faithful to us in death.

We pray for ourselves, who are severely tested by this death, that we do not try to minimise this loss, or seek

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refuge from it in words alone, and also that we do not brood over it so that it overwhelms us and isolates us from others.

May God grant us courage and confidence in the new life of Christ.

We ask this in the name of the risen Lord. **Amen.** †

† Adapted from 'For a Dead Person' from *Your Word is Near* by Huub Oosterhuis. © 1968 by the Missionary Society of St. Paul the Apostle in the State of New York. Used by permission of the Paulist Press.



