

When using funeral-related terminology, what is the difference between an obituary, a eulogy and the homily?

Christians celebrate funeral customs, practices and rituals to offer prayer, worship, praise and thanksgiving to God for the gift of a life which has now been returned to Him, the author of life and the hope of the Just.

What is an **obituary**? Generally, it is a written notice or announcement of an individual's death, printed in a local newspaper, which typically includes brief biographical information concerning the deceased person (such as names of family members, past employment, military service, etc.).

Historically, funeral home owners or directors normally assist the family regarding the crafting and publishing of an obituary for the decedent within local newspapers.

What is a **eulogy**? A verbal presentation of information by someone (who knew the decedent) which focuses on the life of a person who has died. It commemorates and celebrates the life, goodness and accomplishments of the deceased person. This is not a vocal recitation of an obituary, however.

By definition, a “eulogy” is a favorable and positive tribute of the person who has died and is being remembered (i.e., how were they in life Christ-like?). It is presented during the Funeral Vigil within a Catholic Church or funeral home. [NB: Eulogies are not permitted during the funeral Mass. (cf: Ritual for Christian Burial, General Instructions, paragraph 27: “... *but, there is never to be a eulogy*”).]

A good rule of thumb is for the eulogy to be a written work (generally 3-5 minutes in duration). Some valuable and proven guidelines include: (a) In your eulogy, you should always acknowledge the person you are writing about in a **positive** manner; (b) Pay your final respects and tribute to this person in a loving and respectful manner; (c) Eulogies are best **written out** and help the reader to maintain a clear message and line of thought. “I remember when” and “I can remember” are commonly used phrases in eulogies.

When writing the eulogy, provide only the necessary details and elements. When you're presenting your eulogy, face, look and “talk” to the assembled people as though you were talking to a friend. Get the audience involved in what you are telling them—make them laugh, make them cry, make them happy to be part of this final tribute. Make your eulogy memorable.

What is a **homily**? A homily (a part of the liturgy) is a carefully crafted verbal presentation given by a priest or deacon in a Roman Catholic Church after the liturgy's scripture passages have been read. The purpose of the homily is to provide insight into the meaning of the scripture and how it relates to the lives of the parishioners of the church present. The homily is not to sound like an obituary. Lastly, from the homily, members of the family and gathered community should receive consolation and strength to face the death of one of their members with a hope nourished by the saving Word of God.