

Many of the symbols used during the funeral liturgy reflect back to our Sacrament of Baptism – it is through Baptism that our loved one has already shared Christ's death and resurrection. At the Funeral Mass we offer worship, praise, and thanksgiving to God, for we are strengthened by our belief in the resurrection and find strength and consolation through our faith in God.

**The Reception of the Deceased** at the entrance to the church is a reminder that the church is the home of all Christians. At Baptism, we were received at the same door and the sprinkling of holy water at this time reminds us of the person's Baptism and initiation into the community of faith.

**The Placing of the Pall** on the casket serves to remind us of the white garment received at Baptism. At present, there is no pall for an urn containing cremated remains, however.

**The Paschal Candle** reminds us of Christ, the Light of the World, His victory over sin and death and of our share in that victory by virtue of our baptism. The Paschal candle (placed before the remains of the decedent) reminds us of the Easter vigil, the night when we remember the Lord's resurrection and when new light for the living and the dead is kindled.

**Incense** is used during the final commendation at the Funeral Mass as a sign of honor to the body of the deceased, which through baptism became the temple of the Holy Spirit. It is also a sign of our prayers for the deceased rising up to our Lord and as a symbol of purification as a gift offered back to God, the Lord of all creation, just before the individual's proper and timely burial.

**The Cross** that is usually placed in or on the casket is a reminder that we, as Christians, were marked with the cross in baptism and, through Jesus' suffering on the cross, we are brought to his resurrection and God's promise of eternal life, for those who believe.

**White Vestments**, the color used through the Easter season of the Church are worn by the presiding priest as an expression of Christian joy. Traditionally, it may be black colored also.

**The Readings, Prayers and Psalms** proclaim to us the promise of eternal life, convey the hope of being gathered together again in God's kingdom, and support the witness of Christian life. Family members also have the choice of choosing the readings and the psalm appropriate for their loved one. During the Funeral Mass, a total of three readings are recommended. Family or friends of the deceased are welcome to proclaim the first two readings, while the priest or deacon must proclaim the Gospel.

**The Presentation of the Gifts** is the ritual in which bread, wine and water are brought to the altar. Family members or friends of the deceased are invited to serve as gift bearers and in so doing serve as a reminder to all present of our commitment to become what we will soon share – the Body and Blood of Christ.

**The Final Commendation** at the end of Mass expresses our farewell and shows honor to one of its members, a temple of the Holy Spirit, before the body or cremated remains are buried. At this time, the celebrant incenses the deceased, as together we entrust our loved one to our Lord and profess that we will share the resurrection with our loved one on the last day.

**The Rite of Committal** is the final act of the community of faith in caring for the body of its deceased member. It marks the physical separation of the deceased from the mourners. It may be celebrated at the grave, mausoleum, or columbarium. Through this simple, dignified rite, the Church assists us as we complete our care of the deceased and lay the body or cremated remains to rest. This rite also expresses the decedent's and our continued link as the Community of Saints.