

Resource for Catholic Funerals

Words of Remembrance



A Guide for Speakers at the Funeral Liturgy

You have been invited to offer words of remembrance at the Funeral Liturgy. This is a great honor and responsibility. Please note that this is taking place in the context of Divine Worship. It is a sacred time and place where our primary purpose is to commend our beloved to the mercy and love of our Lord Jesus Christ. Any words must both respect and reflect this sacred character.

The primary focus during the days immediately following death is on the family—making funeral preparations and dealing with their own feelings and needs. The wake is a time to focus on the deceased—a time to tell the stories that gave meaning to the many relationships that have been a part of that person’s life.

When you arrive at the Church for the funeral liturgy, the focus shifts to what Jesus has done for us and how our faith offers us hope. It marks the end of an earthly journey that began in the context of faith at baptism and continues with a new life in God. It is within this context that you are asked to prepare your remembrance—to remember the ways a person was faithful to their Baptism call by loving God and loving their neighbor. It is not a place to list accomplishments or summarize the deceased life story. Rather, if you share a single blessed memory that indicates the deceased faith and character, the hearers can recognize their giftedness as God-given and how they shared that gift with others. Keep in mind that the purpose of the liturgy is to thank God for the resurrection of Jesus that the deceased

now shares, to celebrate the life we share together and to pray for strength to continue to faithfully continue the journey.

The words you share should reflect the virtue and goodness of the person. It is not the time to speak of bad habits or less than honorable experiences, even if they seem humorous. While humor is fine, it should be done in good taste and dignity. Other times and places may be more suited to telling stories and jokes about a person.

The following guide is intended to help you plan your remembrance and to deliver it well.

Begin by praying that you will honor the person you are speaking about and that your words will be a witness to his or her faith and a blessing to family and friends.

- Words of remembrance should not exceed three minutes. This is roughly one typed page. It is very important that you respect this policy.
- It is an emotional and difficult task to limit one's words, as memories flow freely and easily. Therefore, prepare your remembrance in writing.
- Choose one or two memories that capture the virtue and character of the person.
- You may share common memories of the person but it is not the place to speak for every person's memories or give a chronology of the person's life.
- Speak sincerely and respectfully, reflecting your experience.
- Avoid using "inside jokes" or forms of humor which may be misunderstood, or sharing incidents not widely known, which may cause confusion or hurt.
- Choose one trusted advisor who also knew the deceased and use this person as a "sounding board" when you prepare your remembrance.
- Show your written remembrance to the priest the night before the funeral, at the latest. He may offer helpful comments on the text.
- Pray that you will do honor to your loved one's memory and that your words will be a witness to faith and a blessing to family and friends.
- If you have been asked to offer a remembrance, but are unaccustomed to public speaking, or are concerned that your emotions may hinder your ability to speak, do not hesitate to respectfully decline this task.

If possible leave the text of your remembrance on the ambo before Mass and leave it behind when you walk away from the lectern.

As we mark the promulgation of revised [funeral norms](#) for the Diocese of Bridgeport, we will be publishing these helpful resources from the Leadership Institute weekly.