



Decree of Promulgation

Particular Law Concerning Funeral Rites for Clergy of the Diocese of Erie Who have Ceased the Exercise of Ministry through Laicization, Dismissal, or de facto Departure from Ministry.

Through the waters of baptism, the Church receives her sons and daughters and guides them through life. And then, at the time of death, the Church entrusts these sons and daughters into the Father's merciful hands. Through the Church's funeral rites, the Lord's love and mercy are recalled, the hope for eternal life is renewed, and both the joys and challenges of a person's life are entrusted to the mercy of God.

The purpose of the Church's funeral rites is two-fold: to assist the deceased person's journey to eternal life by our prayers, and to bring solace and hope to those who are left behind. The following guidelines are meant to help assure that these purposes are fulfilled, and that any difficult and painful realities of the person's life which might exist are carefully considered.

Guidelines:

With the exception of those indicated in canon 1184, all members of the Christian faithful have a right to the Church's funeral rituals (can. 1176 §1).

This right to the Church's funeral liturgies extends to those individuals who were ordained to the Order of Deacon, Priesthood, or Bishop but who ceased the exercise of their ministry through laicization, dismissal or *de facto* departure from ministry. In light of the fact that these individuals have returned to the lay state, either in law or in fact, they are to be given the same funeral rites as any baptized lay member of the Christian faithful.

Individuals in these circumstances, in accord with their wishes or the wishes of their families, are to be given funeral rites according to the norm of law. These funeral rites are to take place in the individual's parish church or another appropriate parish church. The rites are to be celebrated by the local pastor or another suitable person following the Order of Christian Funerals for a lay person. In keeping with this, the funeral prayers "For A Priest," "For A Deacon," or "For a Bishop" are not to be used. In the liturgical prayers, the individual's proper name is to be used. Ecclesiastical titles such as "Bishop," "Monsignor," "Father," "Deacon," or "Reverend" are to be avoided.

The minister presiding over the funeral liturgy is to give a brief suitable homily. Eulogies or words of remembrance in these cases are not permitted in the parish church or during any of the church's funeral liturgies.



Visitation with the family may take place in a funeral home according to the local custom. Visitation is not to take place in a church building unless this is a regular practice in that particular church. The body of the deceased is to be clothed in appropriate lay attire - not dressed in clerical or liturgical attire. The preparation of an obituary is the responsibility of the family or designated representative. Those who prepare the obituary are urged to take into consideration the sensitivities of former parishioners, possible victims, etc., and the general public who will read the obituary.

The time and place of burial is to be determined by the pastor and the individual's family. Burial is not to take place in cemetery sections dedicated to the burial of priests or deacons unless express permission is granted in advance by the diocesan bishop.

All funeral planning is to be done at the local parish according to local custom. The local pastor is to immediately inform the Chancery Office of the diocese when he receives a request for funeral rites for an individual in the above circumstances. The Chancery will, with consideration of the circumstances of each case, determine if any public notification of the death will be made by the diocese.

When there is concern that the deceased individual in question "cannot be granted ecclesiastical funerals without public scandal of the faithful (can. 1184 §1, 3°)," then "the local ordinary (diocesan bishop, vicar general, or regional episcopal vicar) is to be consulted and his judgment must be followed (can. 1184 §2)."

Conclusion:

The celebration of the Christian funeral brings hope and consolation to the living. While proclaiming the Gospel of Jesus Christ and witnessing to Christian hope in the resurrection, the funeral rites also recall to all who take part in them God's mercy and judgment and meet the human need to turn always to God in time of crisis (*Order of Christian Funeral, General Introduction no. 7*).

Given at the Chancery
of the Diocese of Erie
on the 1st Day of May, 2019

+ 
The Most Reverend Lawrence T. Persico, JCL
Bishop of Erie


The Rev. Christopher J. Singer, JCL
Chancellor