

On Death XX

The order of the funeral

The traditional Catholic funeral has three movements, [1] the vigil, [2] the Mass and [3] the burial. The funeral mass is first of all a Mass; it is a solemn worship by means of the liturgy of the Church. Who can have a Mass? Actually even non-Catholics can have a Mass because it is principally a prayer for those who remain. The deceased is remembered at God's Altar, and the grace of the Mass is intended to speed the person on his or her way to God. From time to time it seems more appropriate to not celebrate a Mass if there are no Catholics among the deceased person's family and friends. For example a year or so ago a man came for reconciliation with the Church, and shortly thereafter died. His wife proudly announced that she was an atheist, his family had no connection to the Church and among his many friends there were no Catholics. It was better to have a service that was centered on remembering him and celebrating his life. There were readings and prayers but nothing that a non-Catholic could not relate to. However for the most part the Mass will be celebrated in memory of the loved one. At the Mass appropriate music and readings can be chosen by the family; they can participate by reading, and assisting with other parts of the liturgy. It has become common for a large picture of the deceased to be placed next to the casket, or the "cremains". Sometimes there is neither ashes nor body present, and this is called a "Memorial Mass". Other objects that were significant to the person can also be presented during the Mass as a remembrance of him or her.

IHM Pray for us.

Fr. Jerry