

CELEBRATION OF LIFE

For several years, the word and celebration of “funeral” has been replaced with the phrase “celebration of life.” Although people may deem the Church to be antiquated and “out-of-touch,” the Liturgy or the Mass always has been a celebration of life: the life, death, and resurrection of Christ Jesus and our lives’ participation in His life. At the Funeral Liturgy, we are celebrating the departed person’s entrance into the fullness of eternal life. And so, as we celebrate and thank God for this life, we appreciate this life within the context that it is part of the journey toward our destination to an eternal life with our Triune God.

The Liturgy is Christ Jesus’ supreme and unique gift to His Church because we participate and share in the Son’s consummate gift of self to the Father. The Church and Her people, therefore, have a serious responsibility to preserve the awe and beauty of the Liturgy. St. Elizabeth Seton provides guidelines to ensure that the sacredness of the Liturgy and the “celebration of a life in Christ Jesus” remain true.

Eulogies are not a part of the Liturgy. They never have been in the Roman Catholic Faith Tradition part of a Funeral Liturgy. It is not that we do not want to remember the life shared with someone dear to us. However, we want to recall how that person “lived Christ” when having dwelt among us. There are many numerous venues for family members and loved ones to offer eulogies: at the Funeral reception after the Liturgy; at the gravesite after the religious service; and on a separate occasion at one’s home are a few examples of the family and friends of the deceased to recall and share memories.

Pictures and other items are permissible upon the administrator’s discernment and decision. “Props” are not allowed. Again, we are celebrating a religious rite, and the type and volume of pictures and other items detract from an authentic celebration of life. An overabundance of pictures, statues, and other items are not conducive to a celebration of the Liturgy.

No unplanned or unapproved changes should be implemented the day of the Funeral Liturgy. Our lay ministers, volunteers, and priests and staff labor diligently to provide family members and friends a beautiful and sacred Liturgy. Disruptions and interruptions occur in this life, and we realize and appreciate that plans change. And also, these should be the exception to the rule, not the rule of thumb. Any changes either planned or unplanned should be requested and discussed with the bereavement minister whose duty it is to consult the priest.