

Both the priests and staff of St. William of York Catholic Church offer our deep sympathies over the loss of your loved one. We know that this time of mourning and loss can be difficult and we hope that we can assist you in giving your loved one a proper and reverent farewell through the liturgies of the Church. In the face of death, the Church confidently proclaims that God has created each person for eternal life and that Jesus, the Son of God, by his death and resurrection, has broken the chains of sin and death that bind humanity. After the death of a loved one, it is our preference to meet with you and to pray for you prior to your meeting with the funeral home staff.

In order to assist you in making your arrangements for a wake and/or funeral or a memorial Mass, we ask you to be mindful of the following practices and customs at St. William of York Catholic Church:

1. When meeting with one of the parish priests to make funeral or memorial Mass arrangements, the priest must confirm that the date and time of the proposed liturgy does not conflict with other events occurring in the church. If there is a conflict, the priest will make every effort to reconcile conflicting events. Upon reaching an agreed time and date, the family of the deceased is asked to contact the funeral home to notify them of the schedule. The priest will coordinate the church schedule with the funeral home.
2. Priests who are either friends or relatives of the family are welcome to concelebrate a funeral or memorial Mass. However, it is the prerogative of the parish priest to be the main celebrant and homilist.
3. When selecting readers for the liturgy, please be reminded that the liturgical law of the Church requires the readers to be practicing Catholics.
4. If there is a desire for music to be used during the liturgy, the family must contact Ashleigh Messer, our director of music, to confirm musical selections. She may be reached at 540-658-1776. The Church's liturgical law only permits the use of sacred music for her liturgies. Taped music or karaoke-style performances are not permitted for liturgical use in the church. A list of approved music for funeral rites is available from either Ms. Messer or one of the priests. If there is a desire to engage outside musicians/cantors, arrangements should be made with Ms. Messer immediately.
5. Family and friends may be permitted to process the gifts of bread and wine for the Mass at the beginning of the Liturgy of the Eucharist, if Mass is included in the rite.

6. With respect to cremation, the instruction found in the Order of Christian Funerals states, “The cremated remains of a body should be treated with the same respect given to the human body from which they come. This includes the use of a worthy vessel to contain the ashes, the manner in which they are carried, the care and attention to the appropriate placement and transport, and the final disposition. The cremated remains should be buried in a grave or entombed in a mausoleum or columbarium. The practice of scattering cremated remains on the sea, from the air or on the ground or keeping cremated remains in the home of a relative or friend of the deceased are not the reverent disposition that the Church requires.”
7. Eulogies are not a part of the Catholic rite of burial. The instruction found in the Order of Christian Funerals reminds priests that, “*A brief homily based on the readings is always given after the gospel reading at the funeral liturgy and may also be given after the readings at the vigil service; but there is never to be a eulogy.*” It is our recommendation that eulogies be saved for either the wake, graveside service or the reception which almost always follows the funeral or memorial Mass. These environments dramatically lessen the stress of public speaking associated with a formal liturgy while also respecting the liturgical law of the Church.
8. Because the church facility is unable to accommodate a wake service, we recommend that wake services be held at the funeral home of the family’s choosing. Please consult with one of the priests if different arrangements are necessary.

Again, please accept our condolences over the loss of your loved one. May they rest in peace and be admitted into heavenly glory.

In Christ,

Fr. Robert J. DeMartino
Pastor

cc: local Stafford area funeral homes