



THE OXFORD  
ORATORY

# Funerals at the Oxford Oratory





# Introduction

When someone we love dies, there are many things to arrange, and the most important is their funeral. For Catholics, organising a Requiem Mass is the best way of showing our continued love for the deceased person. Once you have made contact with the funeral director, ask them to contact the Oratory to begin making the arrangements. One of the Fathers will then be in touch to meet with you and plan the funeral. The Fathers are here to reassure and help guide you through the planning of a Catholic funeral using the consoling rites and prayers that the Church gives to us.

# What happens at a Catholic funeral?

It is customary for the body of the deceased to be brought into the church the evening before the funeral. The priest meets the family and the coffin at the door of the church and a short service follows. You will be able to spend some time in private prayer in the church after this if you want to. It may not always be possible for this to take place, in which case the coffin will be brought in at the beginning of the funeral Mass itself.

The coffin will be placed before the altar and covered with a funeral pall. No other objects may be placed on the coffin, although a single floral arrangement may be permitted. Flowers are not otherwise used at a Catholic funeral Mass, as a sign of our mourning.

Catholic funerals should always involve a Requiem Mass, in which we commend the soul of the departed to God. Mass can be celebrated in English or Latin. The priest will be able to provide the funeral director with the relevant readings and texts for the order of service and should approve the final order of service before it is printed.

The Requiem Mass can last up to an hour, depending on the choice of music and number of people attending. If you choose to have music, you will find more information in the section below.

You may like to provide the priest with some details of the life of the deceased that he may include in his sermon. A member of the family or a close friend may speak briefly about the life of the deceased before Mass begins. This must always be from a written text approved beforehand by the priest. This is not to be a eulogy of the deceased and is entirely optional. You may find it more appropriate to do this at another time, such as at the crematorium or at a reception afterwards.

At the end of Mass, the coffin is sprinkled with holy water and incensed before being carried out of the church.

Burial is the ancient custom of the Church, which reflects our belief in the resurrection of the body. Cremation is permitted, but the ashes must be buried (not scattered or kept at home) in a brief service soon after. The priest will normally accompany the coffin and the family to the crematorium or the graveside where he leads the mourners in the final prayers for the departed.

# Practical arrangements

You should discuss the time and date with the funeral director, who will co-ordinate with the church and cemetery or crematorium.

The funeral director will arrange all fees and payments, and can advise on charitable donations in memory of the deceased.

We have a live streaming facility set up in church. If you would like the funeral streamed online for those unable to be here in person, you will be provided with a private link before the day that you can share. A recording can be made available online after the funeral as well.

The Father organising the funeral will be happy to help you if you have any other questions.

# Music

These notes are to help you select the music that you want for your loved one's funeral. The list of suggestions in the section below is not exhaustive, but please note that only sacred music (and no recorded music) is permitted in church.

If you want to have hymns at the funeral, it is recommended that you also book at least one singer, unless you are confident that the congregation will know and be able to sing the hymns that you choose. You can choose any that are included in 'The Catholic Hymn Book' (as used in our church). Please use the texts as printed in that hymnal.

These guidelines are for funerals in the Ordinary Form, either in English or in Latin. If you would prefer the Mass to be sung in Latin in the Extraordinary Form, all of the texts of the Mass must be sung, either to Gregorian chant or a polyphonic setting.

Music for liturgical celebrations at the Oratory is always of a uniform standard. In order to ensure this we use only our own musicians, who are all experienced professionals. This means that no other singers, organists or musicians are permitted to provide music at the Oratory.

Arrangements for music should be finalised with the Father conducting the funeral. He will make sure that the musicians and funeral director are all informed of your choices. The funeral director will include the cost of the funeral music in their invoice. The fees for musicians are:

Organist only	£100
Organist and solo singer	£225
Organist and choir	£390 (based on four singers)

A choir of four should be able to sing most of the repertoire, but please ask if you are interested in a choir of a different size.

There are three possible combinations of musicians:

**1. Organist only**

The organist will provide suitable organ music at the appropriate parts of the Mass.

**2. Organist and soloist**

The soloist can sing some or all of the proper chants of the Requiem Mass, namely:

*Requiem æternam* at the entrance

The *Kyrie, Sanctus* and *Agnus Dei*

*Lux æterna* during Communion

*In paradisum* as the body leaves the church

Other music will need to be chosen for the Offertory. This might be a motet suitable for a soloist, or a hymn, or you may ask to the organist to select some organ music.

The Entrance chant and the Communion chant may be replaced with a hymn.

**3. Choir**

The choir can sing all or some of the proper texts of the Requiem Mass, namely:

*Requiem æternam* at the entrance

The Gradual (*Requiem æternam*) and/or the Tract (*Absolve Domine*)  
before the Gospel

*Domine Jesu Christe* at the offertory

The *Kyrie, Sanctus* and *Agnus Dei*

*Lux æterna* during Communion

*Libera me* at the absolutions

*In paradisum* as the body leaves the church



These texts may be taken from the Gregorian Mass setting, or from a polyphonic setting. The following polyphonic settings are available in the Oratory Music Library:

*Missa defunctis*, Felice Anerio Anerio (1560–1614)

*Missa pro defunctis a 4*, Tomás Luis de Victoria (1548–1611)

*Officium defunctorum a 6*, Tomás Luis de Victoria (1548–1611)

*Missa pro defunctis a 5*, Cristóbal de Morales (1500–1553)

*Requiem in D minor*, Gabriel Fauré (1845–1924)

You may wish to have another suitable motet or a hymn at the entrance, offertory or Communion.

# Funeral directors

The following are local independent funeral directors that the Fathers can recommend:

C.S. Boswell Funeral Services      [www.boswellfuneralservices.co.uk](http://www.boswellfuneralservices.co.uk)

Sandra Homewood Funerals      [www.homewoodfunerals.co.uk](http://www.homewoodfunerals.co.uk)

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