**Celebration of Life: The Catholic Funeral Rites**

You are not alone. In this time of loss and grief, the Catholic community joins with you in prayer and support. The parish church is where the person’s Christian journey began — in the waters of baptism. This is where they were formed by the Word of God and nourished in the Eucharist. It is a symbol of the faith community to which they belong.

It is the ordinary practice that Catholics bring the body of the deceased to the parish church to celebrate the funeral rites. Priests and deacons are the presiders at Catholic funeral rites.

The Catholic funeral rites consist of three distinct stations:

[The Vigil for the Deceased](https://mycatholiccemetery.org/the-catholic-funeral/%22%20%5Cl%20%22collapse-1-1551)

The Vigil for the deceased is the principal rite celebrated by the Christian community in the time following death and before the funeral liturgy.

When Christians gather at the Vigil, they show their respect and reverence for the deceased. They recall and share their memories of the person who has died. The community comforts the family with love and friendship, the assurance of prayer, and the offer of assistance.

While you and the family may find comfort in other devotional prayers, such as the rosary, these should not replace the vigil. The rosary and other devotional prayers may be offered at other times such as immediately after death or when the family first gathers in the presence of the body.

[The Funeral Liturgy](https://mycatholiccemetery.org/the-catholic-funeral/%22%20%5Cl%20%22collapse-1-1553)

The Funeral Liturgy, usually the Mass, is the central celebration of the Christian community for the deceased and takes place in the parish church. Catholics bring the body of the deceased to the church. This is the case even if cremation is chosen. This church is where their Christian journey began. In the waters of Baptism they were joined to Christ who stands victorious over death. This is where they were formed by the Word of God and fed at the Lord’s Table.

Your family and friends may serve in a variety of roles at the Funeral Liturgy, such as greeters or ushers, readers, and presenters of the gifts of bread and wine.

While the funeral Mass is the norm, there may be occasions when Mass would not be possible or appropriate. The pastor can help you with this as well as answer your other questions about the Funeral Liturgy.

[The Rite of Committal](https://mycatholiccemetery.org/the-catholic-funeral/%22%20%5Cl%20%22collapse-1-1555)

This rite is the conclusion of the funeral. It is the community’s final act in caring for the body of its deceased member. The Rite of Committal should be celebrated at the place of committal – that is, at the grave, mausoleum crypt, or cremation columbarium – and should include the actual act of committal. The Lord himself has made the grave a sign of hope that promises resurrection.

The presider of the Funeral Liturgy ordinarily conducts the Rite of Committal. When it is not possible for the presider to conduct it, another priest or a permanent deacon may be asked to preside at the Rite of Committal. In the absence of a priest or deacon, a suitable parish minister should lead those present in the Rite of Committal. The Rite of Committal may, and should, reflect and adapt the customs and language of the family heritage of the deceased.

Military services and certain fraternal rites are also permissible in the cemetery. These other services should be arranged in advance with the local priest and coordinated in such a way that they do not disrupt or detract from the integrity of the liturgical service.

**The Catholic Cemetery**

The Catholic Cemetery is the final resting place for the members of our faith community on our journey to God. It is the gate of heaven.

Burial in the consecrated ground of the Catholic cemetery allows you to share your faith values with future generations of your family. This legacy of faith is your gift to them.

The Catholic community in Western Washington is fortunate that most geographic areas have Catholic cemeteries to meet the burial needs of our faith community.