



FUNERALS

PREPARATION FOR THE SERVICE

1. The Priest, Minister or clergyman taking the service will usually visit the family of the deceased person to offer words of comfort and consolation. He will also talk about the possible forms of service that are available.
 2. Some Christian groups allow cremation of human remains, others will only permit burial.
 3. Nevertheless the service usually falls into two parts
The first part is the funeral proper and the second is the committal.
Usually the first part is taken in church and the second at the graveside or at the crematorium.
In other cases the whole ceremony may happen at the crematorium.
 4. Although there is a set form of service much depends on the family's choice of readings, music, and even prayers. There is likely to be someone, either a minister or a lay-person who will wish to speak about the deceased.
 5. Today it is generally recognised that a funeral service has two aims.
The first is to carry out a funeral for the dead person in a manner which that person would have wished.

The second is to allow grieving friends and relatives to express their emotions and to receive the support and care of those around them
- Sometimes it is difficult to say which is the more important objective.

FUNERAL SERVICE

1. The Sentences said by a minister as he leads the coffin and mourners into the church.
2. Opening prayer expressing the Christian hope.
3. Psalm may be said or sung
4. Reading from the Bible or devotional literature
5. Sermon
6. Prayers including the Lord's Prayer
7. The deceased person is commended to God's care and keeping.

THE COMMITTAL

1. Sentence of scripture
2. Psalm may be read
3. prayer of committal

We have entrusted our brother/sister to God's merciful keeping, and we now commit his/her body to the ground (or to be cremated) in sure and certain hope of the resurrection to eternal life...

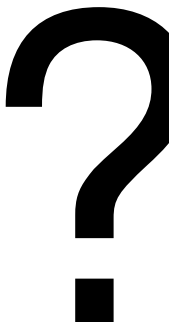
In addition to this a Requiem Mass may be said.

WHAT CHRISTIANS BELIEVE ABOUT DEATH

The Christian teaching is that death should not be feared. It is a gateway to eternal life. Having accepted Christ's death as a supreme sacrifice for people, it is believed that this sacrifice will pardon their own sins and secure for them a place in heaven.

ROMAN CATHOLIC TEACHING

Roman Catholics teach that only those who led a pure life will enter God's presence immediately. The majority have to undergo a period of purification called Purgatory, where their chief suffering will be their loss of vision of God. But they will no longer be distracted by the pleasures of this world so their yearning for God will become more intense. Aided by the prayers of the living, the saying of Masses and the help of the saints, their souls will at last be purged of all sin and they will see God. Those who die loving evil and hating God banish themselves from him for ever. They will suffer eternally in Hell. One day Christ will come in judgement and the dead will rise and the universe will be cleansed and changed.



OTHER CHRISTIAN VIEWPOINTS

Not all Christians would agree with this viewpoint

Creeds often include the words "I look for the resurrection of the dead" but do not define what that means.

Bible reference on the subject are

1 Corinthians 15:20-26, 35-38, 42-44, 53-end and 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18.

Protestants tend to argue that bodies are mortal and that it is a person's soul which is everlasting.

Orthodox Churches say that bodies will be restored to life again on the last day.

In one way Christianity is unique as it proclaims that the end is already here in the God has entered the world in the substance of Jesus, so that the final outcome of history has already occurred.

John 1:1-14.

The new age in which God's Holy Spirit is available to believers is with them already as Christ saved them from their sins by his death and resurrection. Those who believe in him have eternal life already. The human race already has the new relationship with God.

Most people who attend funerals believe that the dead person goes straight into the presence of God.

YET

In another sense the end has not come yet and there have been people who proclaim a second coming of Christ in all his glory, which will include the collapse of all the universe.

In the Bible there is evidence of this in Mark 13:24-27 and in Romans 8 and Rev 21:1-4.

The Nicene Creed says "He (Christ) will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead."

"We look for the resurrection of the dead and the life of the world to come"

What form this resurrection will actually take is not clear.

Although this is a much more complicated and confused picture it is the traditional one of the Church. The return of Christ is associated with the Day of Judgement. Notice how graves in churchyards tend to be laid out facing from west to east in anticipation of the general resurrection on the last day.

For a funeral of a Christian friend what readings would you choose?

Some suggestions by the prayer book St John 14:1-6, 1 Corinthians 15:20-26, John 6:35-40, John 11:17-27, Mark 5:21-43.

Would you include a psalm?

Suggestions Psalm 23, Psalm 90, Psalm 121, Psalm 130, Psalm 42:1-7.

What hymns would you choose?

