

Guidance for Those Preparing Words of Remembrance to be spoken at a Funeral Liturgy at St. Mary's

Please accept the condolences of the people of St. Mary's Church as you mourn the passing of your loved one from this world. The family has entrusted you with a sacred task in asking you to "speak in remembrance" of the departed on their behalf. Most often, personal remarks are given at Parish Prayers the night before the funeral. However, many people no longer hold a vigil the night before. In preparing your remarks, it is important that you understand that the Funeral Mass itself has a different nature than does parish prayers.

The following guidelines are provided to help you prepare and deliver your remarks:

- To **"speak in remembrance"** means to give a brief reflection on the life of the deceased **in the context of his or her life of faith**. Such a reflection should revolve around *God's action* in the life of the deceased and how God's blessings have enriched the world through the life of the one you love. It also serves an *evangelizing purpose*, by drawing attention to the deceased in accordance with *how his or her life bore witness to the Gospel of Jesus Christ*.
- These liturgical **words of remembrance** are therefore *not the same as the secular understanding of a "eulogy,"* which is a reminiscing and "toasting" the life of the departed outside the context of faith.

In preparing words of remembrance, it might be helpful to consider **these questions**:

*I saw God/Christ/the Holy Spirit acting in (name)'s life when (name)
did this (or)
said this (or)
believed this:*

Where did I see God in my loved one's life, in his/her actions/ in his/her words or attitudes?

What did I see in my loved one's life that was life-giving, healing, joyful, prophetic or courageous on behalf of others? There were signs of the Holy Spirit at work in my loved one's life for which I give thanks.

Christians believe that in death, *"life is changed, not ended."* Consider not only the person's past life, but also the hope we have of being united again in God's presence.

Additional Guidelines:

- Only one person may deliver the words of remembrance at the funeral Mass.
- It is never acceptable to use crude or profane language, or to engage in actions that would not ordinarily take place during the sacred liturgy.
- The spoken words of remembrance should not exceed five minutes in length – the basic equivalent of 1-½ double-spaced text in regular 12-point font.
- The remarks should be put on paper beforehand and read. Rehearsing your remarks aloud will help you to prepare and deliver the reflection more confidently. This will also help you to time what you are saying.
- If you have questions, you can email Fr. Steve at frsteve@stmaryalexandria.org. He will seek you out no less than 20 minutes before the funeral to familiarize you with the microphone and the procedure. Remember, you must speak clearly and slowly, projecting your voice appropriately so as to be heard.