



THREE TASKS

1. intercede for the dead
2. minister to the sorrowing (or, for the bereaved, to move through “crisis grief” and begin the “work of mourning”)
3. offer worship, praise, and thanksgiving to God for the one deceased

Key Concepts

The body is the “sacrament” of the person, and therefore is to be respected.

The liturgical rites must be seen in the context of global pastoral care for the dying and bereaved.

Movement is an important part of the OCF. The processions “sacramentalize” both the journey through life and the journey through grief. Likewise, the emphasis in the OCF shifts from shock and grief to thanksgiving and intercession to final farewell and hope.

The Vigil

The ministry of the Church in the time after death is to accompany mourners in their bewilderment, shock, and grief. The Vigil and related rites are intended to help “Mourners express their sorrow and to find strength and consolation” in the paschal mystery of Christ (OCF §52). The importance of the Christian community’s support to mourners is stressed, as is the central importance of the word of God as source of consolation (OCF §§51, 56, 59-60; see also Rutherford and Barr, 163, 167).

Structure

Introductory Rites

- Greeting
- Opening Song
- Invitation to Prayer
- Opening Prayer (for the deceased or for the bereaved)

Liturgy of the Word

- First Reading
- Responsorial Psalm
- Gospel
- Homily

Prayer of Intercession

- Litany
- Lord’s Prayer
- Concluding Prayer (for the deceased or for the bereaved)

[Speaking in remembrance of the deceased]

Concluding Rite

- Blessing
- (note: no dismissal)

The First Procession: from (funeral) home to church

There are two key processions in the normative structure of the OCF: the first from the (funeral) home to the church, and the second from the church to the place of burial. The OCF notes that “[t]he procession to the church is a rite of initial separation from the deceased; the procession to the place of committal is the journey to the place of final separation of the mourners from the deceased: (OCF §120). As such, these transitional times may be very difficult for mourners. Therefore, the mourners are to be supported through these transitions by the pastoral presence of the church’s ministers as well as by prayer and song (OCF §§120, 149).

The Funeral Liturgy & Rite of Final Commendation

While the Funeral Liturgy (within and outside of Mass) still remains attentive to the mourners, these rites focus primarily on giving “praise and thanks to God for Christ’s victory over sin and death” and on commending “the deceased to God’s tender mercy and compassion” (OCF §129). This latter aspect is especially evident in the Final Commendation, which may be celebrated either as part of the Funeral Liturgy or, if necessary, with the Rite of Committal (OCF §146).

Structure

Introductory Rites (Reception of the Body)

Greeting (note: no sign of the cross)

Sprinkling with Holy Water

[Placing of Pall] (no national flags or insignia of organizations)

Entrance Procession (and song)

[Placing of Christian Symbols] (no national flags or insignia of organizations)

Opening Prayer (for the deceased)

Liturgy of the Word

First Reading / Psalm / (Second Reading) / Gospel

Homily

Prayer of the Faithful

[Liturgy of the Eucharist]

[Speaking in remembrance of the deceased]

Final Commendation

Invitation to Prayer

Silence

[Signs of Farewell – such as incense]

Song of Farewell

Prayer of Commendation

Procession to the Place of Committal

No dismissal (but invitation to “take our brother/sister to his/her place of rest”)

Psalmody

The Second Procession: from church to cemetery

The Rite of Committal

The emphasis in the Rite of Committal is on hope in the face of the stark and final reality of death (OCF §§206, 209; Rutherford and Barr, 201). This rite makes the faith professed in the Rite of Commendation concrete and “bonds the Church on earth with the Church in heaven” as farewell and welcome are simultaneously celebrated; grief and joy coexist and both are acknowledged (Rutherford and Barr, 200, 203-4).

Structure

Invitation (note: no sign of the cross)

Scripture verse

Prayer over the place of committal

Committal (note: it is intended that the body be placed in the ground as part of the rite, either here or at the end)

Intercessions

Lord’s Prayer

Concluding Prayer

Prayer over the People

Blessing and Dismissal

Cremation

CREMATION	
Introduction	(413) While cremation is permitted, it does not enjoy the same value as burial of the body. (417) Cremated remains are to be treated with the same respect given to the human body from which they come. Therefore, no scattering & no keeping cremated remains at home.
Cremation after the Funeral Liturgy	(418) Vigil and Funeral Liturgy celebrated as usual (419) Final Commendation uses alternate form of dismissal (#437) (420) At Rite of Committal, the cremated remains are buried or entombed and the alternate wording is used (#438) [note that #406.3 was to be used for ashes, but the new prayer supersedes]
Cremation & Committal before Funeral Liturgy	(422) Prayers after Death & Vigil may be adapted; Rite of Committal with Final Commendation may be used; alternate form of words of committal (#438) is used. (423-25) Funeral Liturgy takes place without the final commendation; prayers that make reference to honoring or burying the body of the deceased are not used.
Funeral Liturgy in the presence of cremated remains.	(426) Granted by indult; requires approval of Bishop. (427) Cremated remains are to be in a worthy vessel; a small table or stand is prepared. The remains may be placed there before the liturgy or be carried in procession (435). (433-35) The vessel may be sprinkled with holy water, alternative words are used; the pall is not used. Paschal Candle may be used. (428-29) Prayers that make reference to honoring or burying the body of the deceased are not used. The Rite of Final Commendation uses the alternate dismissal (437). (430-31) The Rite of Committal is celebrated at the cemetery or columbarium; the alternate words of committal are used (438).