Archdiocese of Birmingham

Instructions for my Funeral Mass
A Message from Archbishop Bernard Longley

Dear Parishioners

As Catholic Christians the subject of death, so often a taboo subject in our secular society, is one we should have the confidence to face. This is due to the keystone of the faith – the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead on Easter Day. Each Easter of our lives we renew that faith, a faith that tells us that, through our Baptism, we already share that risen life of Jesus, a bond that nothing – including death – can ever destroy. That is why we have the confidence to pray the following in the Funeral Mass:

“In him the hope of blessed resurrection has dawned, that those saddened by the certainty of dying might be consoled by the promise of immortality to come. Indeed for your faithful, Lord, life is changed not ended, and, when this earthly dwelling turns to dust, an eternal dwelling is made ready for them in heaven.”

Even so, the prospect of our death can worry us, and it’s easy to put off making arrangements such as our will, or our funeral, to another day.

Completing this document will make it so much easier for your family or friends to make the arrangements for your funeral at what will be a sad and difficult time. More importantly, when perhaps your family are not Catholics, or have lapsed from the practice of the faith, or where there is no family around to ensure that your wishes will be followed, it guarantees that you will receive what is your right as a member of the Catholic Church.

For parishioners who may have relatives in care homes, or receiving care at home, please make use of the section on the back page which covers the ministry of the Church to the sick. This form is currently being used in a few care homes and has proved to be most valuable for staff and relatives in relation to the sacraments and when to contact a priest.

When using this form may I suggest that you make use of two copies. One you can keep among your papers so that those who want to know your instructions will find it there. The second could well be given to your parish priest who will be able to have it at hand when preparations are being made for your Funeral Mass.

In offering this message, I am very grateful to the Diocesan Pastoral Care Project for all the work that they have done in developing this document. It has been well tried out in practice and found to be of great help. I am glad to make it widely available through the Archdiocese.

You may want some help or assistance in filling out the sections of this document. I hope that your parish will be able to identify a point or a person of contact for you.

As we reflect on the goodness of the Lord and the bright promise of immortality, we are thereby helped so much to consider our own dying and the care that we would like others to take in expressing that faith and indeed building upon it for themselves. As an additional source of support you may find it helpful to visit the Bishops’ Conference website The Art of Dying Well at www.theartofdyingwell.org

May God bless you.

+ Bernard Longley
Archbishop of Birmingham
Pastoral Care of the Sick

For the person living alone or receiving professional care

- If you are admitted to hospital please insist the hospital chaplain is informed of your admission and of this form
- If you are receiving formal care it is important that you notify your care provider of this form, as they will be assessing and recording your care needs

At a time of Critical Illness or Approaching Death

Ministry of the Church is important during critical illness and many would wish, in addition to a lay minister of Holy Communion, to have their priest minister to them, e.g. for the Sacrament of the Sick and/or Confession. These sacraments give peace and often renewed strength. It’s a very special and intimate time of blessing; not just for the sick person but for the priest and the family, who may wish to join in prayer for their loved one. The family may even wish to join in receiving Holy Communion which is a most beautiful moment to cherish forever - a sign of the heavenly banquet.

Such opportunities for prayer and the sacraments brings about consolation and peace, not only for the individual and family but also for the care staff who want to give the best care.

Name.......................................................................................................................... Date of Birth................................................
Next of Kin.................................................................................................................. Tel No..........................................................
Power of attorney....................................................................................................... Tel No..........................................................
Family Church .......................................................................................................... Tel No..........................................................

Prayer of Anointing
Through this holy anointing may the Lord in his love and mercy help you with the grace of the Holy Spirit.
May the Lord who frees you from sin save you and raise you up. Amen.

Prayer of Blessed John Henry Newman
May He support us all the day long, till the shades lengthen and the evening comes, and the busy world is hushed, and the fever of life is over, and our work is done. Then in His mercy may He give us a safe lodging, and a holy rest and peace at the last. Amen.

‘Instructions for my Funeral Mass’ has been reproduced by the Development Team in partnership with the Pastoral Care Project.

For further information visit
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Resources for Parishes, Care Settings and Schools