

2 VIGIL FOR THE DECEASED

*Happy now are the dead who die in the Lord;
they shall find rest from their labours*

72 The vigil for the deceased is the principal rite celebrated by the Christian community in the time following death and before the funeral liturgy, or if there is no funeral liturgy, before the rite of committal. It may take the form either of a liturgy of the word (nos. 87-99, 100-125) or of some part of the office for the dead (see Part IV, p. 378). Two vigil services are provided: 'Vigil for the Deceased' and 'Vigil for the Deceased with Reception at the Church.' The second service is used when the vigil is celebrated in the church and begins with the reception of the body.

73 The vigil may be celebrated in the home of the deceased, in the funeral home, parlour or chapel of rest, or in some other suitable place. It may also be celebrated in the church, but at a time well before the funeral liturgy, so that the funeral liturgy will not be lengthy and the liturgy of the word repetitious. Adaptations of the vigil will often be suggested by the place in which the celebration occurs. A celebration in the home of the deceased, for example, may be simplified and shortened.

If the reception of the body at church is celebrated apart from the vigil or the funeral liturgy, the 'Simple Form of Reception at the Church', p. 63, may be used.

74 At the vigil the Christian community keeps watch with the family in prayer to the God of mercy and finds strength in Christ's presence. It is the first occasion among the funeral rites for the solemn reading of the word of God. In this time of loss the family and community turn to God's word as the source of faith and hope, as light and life in the face of darkness and death. Consoled by the redeeming word of God and by the abiding presence of Christ and his Spirit, the assembly at the vigil calls upon the Father of mercy to receive the deceased into the kingdom of light and peace.

STRUCTURE AND CONTENT OF THE VIGIL

75 The vigil in the form of the liturgy of the word consists of the introductory rites, the liturgy of the word, the prayer of intercession, and a concluding rite.

INTRODUCTORY RITES

76 The introductory rites gather the faithful together to form a community and to prepare all to listen to God's word. The introductory rites of

the vigil for the deceased include the greeting, an opening song, an invitation to prayer, a pause for silent prayer, and an opening prayer.

In the vigil for the deceased with reception at the church, the rite of reception forms the introductory rites (nos. 100-104). In this case the family and others who have accompanied the body are greeted at the entrance of the church. The body is then sprinkled with holy water and, if it is the custom, the pall is placed on the coffin by family members, friends, or the minister. The entrance procession follows, during which a hymn or psalm is sung. At the conclusion of the procession a symbol of the Christian life may be placed on the coffin. Then the invitation to prayer, a pause for silent prayer, and an opening prayer conclude the introductory rites.

The opening song or entrance song should be a profound expression of belief in eternal life and the resurrection of the dead, as well as a prayer of intercession for the dead.

LITURGY OF THE WORD

77 The proclamation of the word of God is the high point and central focus of the vigil. The liturgy of the word usually includes a first reading, responsorial psalm, gospel reading, and homily. A reader proclaims the first reading. The responsorial psalm should be sung, whenever possible. If an assisting deacon is present, he proclaims the gospel reading. Otherwise the presiding minister proclaims the gospel reading.

78 The purpose of the readings at the vigil is to proclaim the paschal mystery, teach remembrance of the dead, convey the hope of being gathered together in God's kingdom, and encourage the witness of Christian life. Above all, the readings tell of God's designs for a world in which suffering and death will relinquish their hold on all whom God has called his own. The responsorial psalm enables the community to respond in faith to the reading and to express its grief and its praise of God. In the selection of readings the needs of the mourners and the circumstances of the death should be kept in mind.

79 A homily based on the readings is given at the vigil to help those present find strength and hope in God's saving word.

PRAYER OF INTERCESSION

80 In the prayer of intercession the community calls upon God to comfort the mourners and to show mercy to the deceased. The prayer of intercession takes the form of a litany, the Lord's Prayer, and a concluding prayer.

After this prayer and before the blessing or at some other suitable time during the vigil, a member of the family or a friend of the deceased may speak in remembrance of the deceased.

CONCLUDING RITE

81 The vigil concludes with a blessing, which may be followed by a liturgical song or a few moments of silent prayer or both.

MINISTRY AND PARTICIPATION

82 Members of the local parish community should be encouraged to participate in the vigil as a sign of concern and support for the mourners. In many circumstances the vigil will be the first opportunity for friends, neighbours, and members of the local parish community to show their concern for the family of the deceased by gathering for prayer. The vigil may also serve as an opportunity for participation in the funeral by those who, because of work or other reasons, cannot be present for the funeral liturgy or the rite of committal.

83 The full participation by all present is to be encouraged. This is best achieved through careful planning of the celebration. Whenever possible, the family of the deceased should take part in the selection of texts and music and in the designation of liturgical ministers.

84 Besides the presiding minister, other available ministers (a reader, a cantor, an acolyte) should exercise their ministries. Family members may assume some of these liturgical roles, unless their grief prevents them from doing so.

The presiding minister and assisting ministers should vest for the vigil according to local custom. If the vigil is celebrated in the church, a priest or deacon who presides wears an alb or surplice with stole.

85 As needs require, and especially if the funeral liturgy or rite of committal is not to take place for a few days, the vigil may be celebrated more than once and should be adapted to each occasion.

86 Music is integral to any vigil, especially the vigil for the deceased. In the difficult circumstances following death, well-chosen music can touch the mourners and others present at levels of human need that words alone often fail to reach. Such music can enliven the faith of the community gathered to support the family and to affirm hope in the resurrection.

Whenever possible, an instrumentalist and a cantor or leader of song should assist the assembly's full participation in the singing.

In the choice of music for the vigil, preference should be given to the singing of the opening song and the responsorial psalm. The litany, the Lord's Prayer, and a closing song may also be sung.

81. The vigil concludes with a blessing which may be followed by a final prayer or a few moments of silent prayer or both.

82. Members of the local parish community should be encouraged to participate in the vigil as a sign of concern and support for the minister. In many instances the vigil will be the first opportunity for friends, neighbors, and members of the local parish community to show their concern for the family of the deceased by participating in the vigil. This will also serve as an opportunity for participation in the funeral by those who, because of work or other reasons, cannot be present at the funeral itself or the rite of committal.

OUTLINE OF THE RITE

83. The full participation by all present is to be encouraged. This is best achieved through the use of the following: Whenever possible, the family of the deceased should be invited to participate in the rite. The full participation by all present is to be encouraged. This is best achieved through the use of the following: Whenever possible, the family of the deceased should be invited to participate in the rite.

INTRODUCTORY RITES

- Greeting
- Opening Song
- Invitation to Prayer
- Opening Prayer

LITURGY OF THE WORD

- First Reading
- Responsorial Psalm
- Gospel
- Homily

PRAYER OF INTERCESSION

- Litany
- The Lord's Prayer
- Concluding Prayer

CONCLUDING RITE

- Blessing

VIGIL FOR THE DECEASED

INTRODUCTORY RITES

GREETING

87 Using one of the following greetings, or in similar words, the minister greets those present.

- A May the God of hope give you the fullness of peace, and may the Lord of life be always with you.
R. And also with you.
- B The grace and peace of God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ be with you.
R. And also with you.
- C The grace and peace of God our Father, who raised Jesus from the dead, be always with you.
R. And also with you.
- D May the Father of mercies, the God of all consolation, be with you.
R. And also with you.

OPENING SONG

88 The celebration continues with a song.

INVITATION TO PRAYER

89 In the following or similar words, the minister invites those present to pray.

My brothers and sisters, we believe that all the ties of friendship and affection which knit us as one throughout our lives do not unravel with death.

Confident that God always remembers the good we have done and forgives our sins, let us pray, asking God to gather **N.** to himself.

Pause for silent prayer.

OPENING PRAYER

90 The minister says one of the following prayers or one of those provided in nos. 580-581, p. 407.

A Lord our God,
the death of our brother/sister **N.**
recalls our human condition
and the brevity of our lives on earth.
But for those who believe in your love
death is not the end,
nor does it destroy the bonds
that you forge in our lives.
We share the faith of your Son's disciples
and the hope of the children of God.
Bring the light of Christ's resurrection
to this time of testing and pain
as we pray for **N.** and for those who love him/her,
through Christ our Lord.

R. Amen.

B O God,
glory of believers and life of the just,
by the death and resurrection of your Son, we are redeemed:
have mercy on your servant **N.**,
and make him/her worthy to share the joys of paradise,
for he/she believed in the resurrection of the dead.

We ask this through Christ our Lord.

R. Amen.

LITURGY OF THE WORD

91 The celebration continues with the liturgy of the word. Other readings, psalms, and gospel readings are found in the Lectionary, Volume III.

FIRST READING

92 A reader proclaims the first reading.

A reading from the second letter of Saint Paul
to the Corinthians 5:1, 6-10

We have an everlasting home in heaven.

We know that when the tent that we live in on earth is folded up, there is a house built by God for us, an everlasting home not made by human hands, in the heavens.

We are always full of confidence, then, when we remember that to live in the body means to be exiled from the Lord, going as we do by faith and not by sight—we are full of confidence, I say, and actually want to be exiled from the body and make our home with the Lord.

Whether we are living in the body or exiled from it, we are intent on pleasing him. For all the truth about us will be brought out in the law court of Christ, and each of us will get what he deserves for the things he did in the body, good or bad.

This is the Word of the Lord.

RESPONSORIAL PSALM

93 The following or another suitable psalm is sung or said.

R. The Lord is my light and my help.

Or:

R. I am sure I shall see the Lord's goodness in the land of the living.

Psalm 26 (27)

110

The Lord is my light and my help;
whom shall I fear?
The Lord is the stronghold of my life;
before whom shall I shrink? R.

There is one thing I ask of the Lord,
for this I long,
to live in the house of the Lord,
all the days of my life,
to savour the sweetness of the Lord,
to behold his temple. R.

O Lord, hear my voice when I call;
have mercy and answer.
It is your face, O Lord, that I seek;
hide not your face. R.

I am sure I shall see the Lord's goodness
in the land of the living.
Hope in him, hold firm and take heart.
Hope in the Lord! R.

GOSPEL

94 The gospel reading is then proclaimed.

A reading from the holy gospel according to Luke 12:35-40

134

Be prepared.

Jesus said to his disciples:

'See that you are dressed for action and have your lamps lit. Be like men waiting for their master to return from the wedding feast, ready to open the door as soon as he comes and knocks.

'Happy those servants whom the master finds awake when he comes. I tell you solemnly, he will put on an apron, sit them down at table and wait on them. It may be in the second watch he comes, or in the third, but happy those servants if he finds them ready.

'You may be quite sure of this, that if the householder had known at what hour the burglar would come, he would not have let anyone break through the wall of his house.

'You too must stand ready, because the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect.'

This is the Gospel of the Lord.

HOMILY

95 A brief homily on the readings is then given.

PRAYER OF INTERCESSION

LITANY

96 The minister leads those present in the following litany.

Let us turn to Christ Jesus with confidence and faith in the power of his cross and resurrection:

A reader or the minister then continues:

Risen Lord, pattern of our life for ever:

Lord, have mercy.

R. Lord, have mercy.

Promise and image of what we shall be:

Lord, have mercy.

R. Lord, have mercy.

Son of God who came to destroy sin and death:

Lord, have mercy.

R. Lord, have mercy.

Word of God who delivered us from the fear of death:

Lord, have mercy.

R. Lord, have mercy.

Crucified Lord, forsaken in death, raised in glory:

Lord, have mercy.

R. Lord, have mercy.

Lord Jesus, gentle Shepherd who bring rest to our souls, give peace to N. for ever:

Lord, have mercy.

R. Lord, have mercy.

Lord Jesus, you bless those who mourn and are in pain. Bless N.'s family and friends who gather around him/her today:

Lord, have mercy.

R. Lord, have mercy.

THE LORD'S PRAYER

97 Using one of the following invitations, or in similar words, the minister invites those present to pray the Lord's Prayer.

A [Friends/Brothers and sisters], our true home is heaven. Therefore let us pray to our heavenly Father as Jesus taught us:

B With God there is mercy and fullness of redemption; let us pray as Jesus taught us:

C Let us pray for the coming of the kingdom as Jesus taught us:

All:

Our Father . . .

CONCLUDING PRAYER

98 The minister says one of the following prayers or one of those provided in nos. 580-581, p. 407.

A Lord Jesus, our Redeemer,
you willingly gave yourself up to death,
so that all might be saved and pass from death to life.
We humbly ask you to comfort your servants in their grief
and to receive N. into the arms of your mercy.
You alone are the Holy One,
you are mercy itself;
by dying you unlocked the gates of life
for those who believe in you.
Forgive N. his/her sins,
and grant him/her a place of happiness, light, and peace
in the kingdom of your glory for ever.
R. Amen.

B Lord God,
you are attentive to the voice of our pleading.
Let us find in your Son
comfort in our sadness,
certainty in our doubt,
and courage to live through this hour.
Make our faith strong
through Christ our Lord.

R. Amen.

A member or a friend of the family may speak in remembrance
of the deceased.

CONCLUDING RITE

BLESSING

99 The minister says:

Blessed are those who have died in the Lord;
let them rest from their labours for their good deeds
go with them.

A gesture, for example, signing the forehead of the deceased with
the sign of the cross, may accompany the following words.

Eternal rest grant unto him/her, O Lord.

R. And let perpetual light shine upon him/her.

May he/she rest in peace.

R. Amen.

May his/her soul and the souls of all the faithful departed,
through the mercy of God, rest in peace.

R. Amen.

A A minister who is a priest or deacon says:

May the peace of God,
which is beyond all understanding,
keep your hearts and minds
in the knowledge and love of God
and of his Son, our Lord Jesus Christ.

R. Amen.

May almighty God bless you,
the Father, and the Son, ✠ and the Holy Spirit.

R. Amen.

B A minister who is a priest or deacon says:

May the love of God and the peace of the Lord Jesus Christ
console you
and gently wipe every tear from your eyes.

R. Amen.

May almighty God bless you,
the Father, and the Son, ✠ and the Holy Spirit.

R. Amen.

C A lay minister invokes God's blessing and signs himself or her-
self with the sign of the cross, saying:

May the love of God and the peace of the Lord Jesus Christ
bless and console us
and gently wipe every tear from our eyes:
in the name of the Father,
and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

R. Amen.

The vigil may conclude with a song or a few moments of silent
prayer or both.