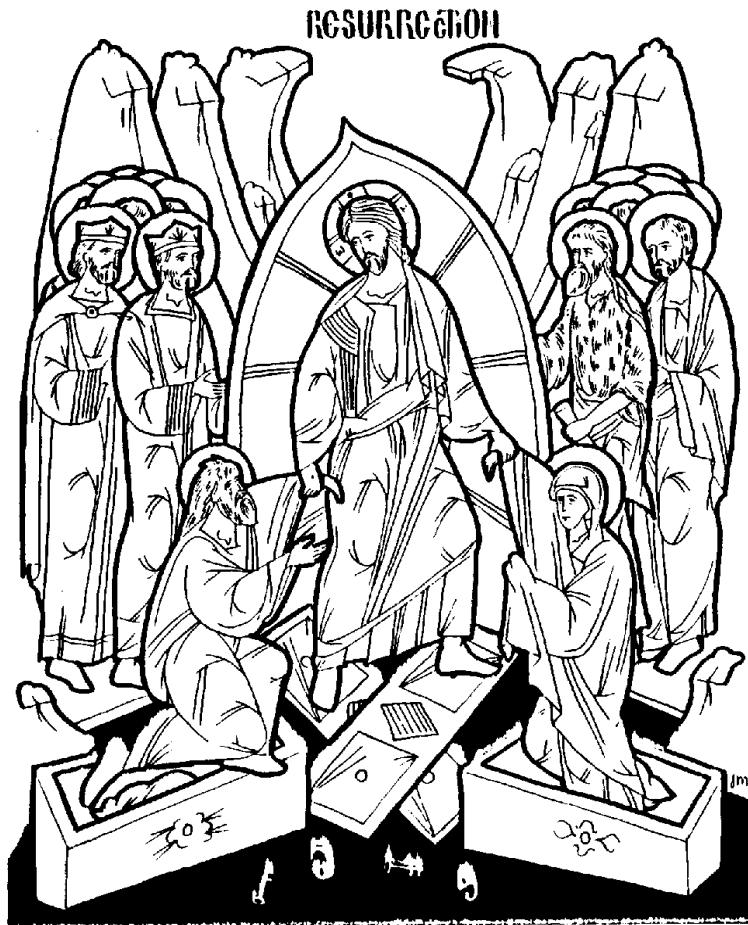


FUNERAL GUIDELINES
ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST
UKRAINIAN CATHOLIC PARISH



“Do not marvel at this; for the hour is coming when all who are in the tombs will hear His voice and come forth, those who have done good, to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil, to the resurrection of judgment. I can do nothing on my own authority; as I listen, I judge; and my judgment is just, because I seek not my own will but the will of Him who sent me.”

Our Lord Jesus, speaking in John 5:28-30

Funeral Guidelines

But I do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning those who have fallen asleep, lest you sorrow as others who have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who sleep in Jesus. For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord will by no means precede those who are asleep. For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be



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Death is something that awaits all of us and yet we often wish to avoid thinking about it. As Christians, we understand earthly death, as a gateway to life eternal. Preparing ourselves spiritually and making practical arrangements in advance for our funeral is very important. This booklet attempts to aid families in making the necessary arrangements according to the current practice of our Holy Church.

Emergencies with those who are suddenly sick or dying

Sometimes there are emergency situations where you are unable to contact our Parish Office in a timely fashion. Be assured that most hospitals and nursing homes have a Catholic chaplain (of the Latin Rite) on call. You may always feel free to walk up to the nursing station and ask for a Catholic priest to visit your loved one. Some institutions even have a Catholic priest on staff, who will automatically administer the Holy Mystery (Sacrament) of Anointing of the

Sick to those who indicate that they are Catholics at the time of their admission.

Preparations before Death

While one can perhaps never be fully prepared to lose a loved one, it is possible to begin making arrangements for a person's death beforehand. Throughout this time, it will be of great help to keep in close contact with Fr. John (Ivan) Chirovsky and the Parish Office. If you request it, the priest will visit the sick person so they may receive the Holy Mysteries (Sacraments) of Confession, Communion and Anointing of the Sick. If a person is no longer conscious before the priest arrives, or if they are about to pass away, there is also a special "Office for the Separation of the Soul from the Body" which you may ask the priest to pray with you. Some families have requested the priest to pray with them or to leave with them a copy of the "**Akathist for the Departed**" which has many beautiful and consoling prayers for use after the person passes away.

After a Person Passes Away

Families should contact the Funeral Home first. Then either the Funeral Home or the Family will contact our Parish Office to begin making funeral arrangements. Usually the priest needs to contact a cantor. Then, if the person is to be buried at our Parish Cemetery, either the priest or our Parish Secretary will contact our Parish Landscaper. Cemetery dues may need to be brought up to date with the Parish Secretary. There are landscaping fees for opening and closing a grave, for setting up a tent in bad weather, for de-icing or plowing the snow on the cemetery roads, etc. Thus, it is important for the family, the funeral home, and the Parish Office to be in close communication with one another at this time. Funeral Services are permitted in our Holy Church on any day of the year, except for on Sundays, and on Great and Holy Friday. On Major Holy Days the Funeral Service can take place in conjunction with the Divine Liturgy (this is a permissible exception to the rule). The Parish Office will always attempt to schedule the Funeral Service as the family prefers, also taking into consideration other scheduled Liturgical Services, the schedules of the priest(s) and cantor(s). If the Father is out of town and the Funeral Service must be scheduled before his return, then the Parish Office will seek the assistance of

other area clergy. Normally the responses at the *Parastas* are sung by Mr. Steve Zinski, if that service is held in the evening. Because Mr. Zinski works in the daytime and our parish does not have a full-time salaried position of a church cantor, the priest(s) will suggest whom the family of the departed is able to hire to help with the Funeral Service on the day of burial. Also, please be aware that Father John (Ivan) Chirovsky, the pastor, can both serve and cantor by himself, if necessary.

Additional Clergy

Some families may wish to have additional clergy as part of the Funeral Service (former parish priest, etc.). The family's wishes to have additional clergy should be known to Fr. Pastor as early as possible to allow time for the proper protocol to occur.

Organ Donation

There is nothing in our Church's doctrine prohibiting the donation of needed organs after a person's death. On the contrary, the Lord enthusiastically approves the laying down of one's life for his friends (John 15:13). He would surely welcome the sharing of organs, no longer needed with those whose lives could be prolonged and saved. At the Department of Motor Vehicles, they have special Organ Donor cards which are signed in the presence of witnesses and carried in your wallet or purse.

Non-Communicants (Non-practicing)

Membership in the Body of Christ, His Holy Church, is defined by participating in the Holy Eucharist. Some people refuse to partake of the Divine Body and Blood of Christ during their lifetime (either by not coming to church for the Liturgy; or, by not arranging for someone to bring to them the Eucharist so that they could receive it at their home or at a hospital or at another residence). They have freely chosen for whatever reasons to not be incorporated into the Body of Christ in the normal and usual way. We should not be surprised then if the officiating priest chooses to respect that person's wishes; and thus, the Funeral Service of such a person is from the funeral home, and not from church building. Funeral Services that take place in a church or even a chapel are

normally reserved for “practicing parishioners” (which the Church normally calls: *communicants*) who not only live so as to be able to receive Communion (the Eucharist), but are also current in their spiritual and financial obligations to the parish. Out of fairness to those members of the Body of Christ who struggle to abide by the Church’s laws, it would only seem normal that burials of non-practicing members should be from the funeral home and not from the church building.

The Byzantine Churches do not have such a thing as a “Blessing Service”, although the funeral services can be somewhat shortened for a very serious reason.

Also, it is not normal for us to shortchange someone who was a Catholic in good standing by not having the funeral service on the day of burial in church. Our parish recently had a ramp installed on the inside as well as outside of the church so that even persons in wheelchairs can attend funerals of their loved ones. If there is some other serious reason as to why the funeral should not take place in church, then please do bring it to the attention of the funeral director or the priest.

Suicide

The act of suicide is a profound tragedy for the entire parish. It necessitates prayers for forgiveness for the sake of the departed. Burial from Church and in blessed cemeteries is not denied to such a person; however, factors bearing on the particular case may become known to the parish priest(s) who must share this information with our Eparchial Bishop. The Eparchial Bishop will consider the factors and make a decision concerning the Funeral Services.

Evening before the Burial

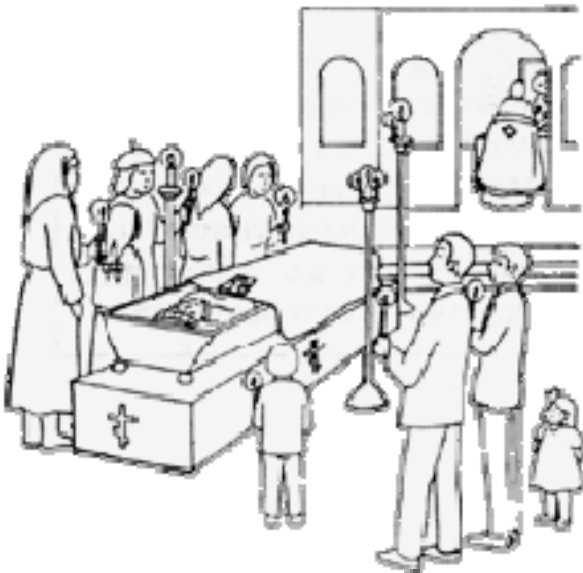
Families typically arrange visitation times for family and friends for the evening before the burial. Traditionally, this used to last for two evenings. But the most recent practice almost always calls for only one evening. During visitation time, the normal Service for the Departed (*Parastas with Panikhida*) will be sung on the eve of the burial. Family and friends are to prayerfully participate in the *Parastas with Panikhida* on the evening before the burial, praying together for the blessed repose of their loved one. In our day, this

service is shortened to forty five minutes. The Byzantine tradition does not have a “Blessing service”.

On the Day of Burial

Because most of the *Parastas* service is identical with the First Part of the Funeral Liturgy, itself, on the day of burial, we are allowed to abbreviate. Thus, on the day of burial, we do not repeat the *Parastas* sections of the Funeral Liturgy. Rather we simply proceed with the remainder, or so-called “second part”, of the Funeral Liturgy. This will last anywhere from sixty to eighty minutes, depending on how it sung and by whom; if certain parts are recited that will of course make it shorter. Unless the Ukrainian language is requested it will be presumed that both services on both days are to be served in English. If any of this is a problem for you, please do not be afraid to contact Father Pastor because certain mitigations might be available depending on the particular circumstances of each family.

For practicing parishioners, the Funeral Liturgy is usually served at the Church. Due to traffic constraints on East Carson Street, our parish priest is no longer able to serve the traditional *Panikhida* Service at the funeral home on the morning of burial. But the Church building itself will be opened approximately one-half hour before the scheduled time of the Funeral Liturgy, so that those who wish to do so may pray for the reposed in church.



According to traditional practice, the casket should be opened from the Service for the Departed (at the Funeral Home) until the conclusion of the Funeral Service (at the Church Building). The departed is made in the image and likeness of God; the physical body as a receptacle of the Holy Eucharist and the Holy Spirit is not to be shunned or rejected. To view the body at the funeral home but to not view it in the Church is illogical. If we believe that death is not victorious over life, then there is no need to cover it up. In Church, the caskets of the departed are positioned so that the feet of the departed are toward the iconostasis

(icon wall). This is to reflect how they served and prayed in church, while with us, standing as it were, facing the Holy Table (Altar).

For the time being, a closed casket is being allowed as an option, if there should be some dire necessity explicitly expressed to the priest by the family.

The Funeral Liturgy: a short catechesis

“The Blessing Service” as practiced by others is a very recent innovation and is - in fact - not a part of our Byzantine Christian heritage.

Rather, from the earliest Christian times, psalms and hymns were sung to our life-giving God when a believer died. The basic parts of the Funeral Service in use today by Byzantines can be traced mainly to the fifth century A.D. With the passage of time the Service was enriched with more psalms and biblically based hymns so that it has become one of the most versatile, dramatic and impassionate services of our Church. Most of the poetic songs were written by Saint John Damascene (676-749), Doctor of the Church. The service is a solemn time of prayer and reflection for those gathered. In the readings, prayers, and hymns of the Funeral Service a dramatic dialogue takes place between the faithful and God and the deceased and God. The Service acknowledges the reality of human existence — the frailty of life and the vanity of worldly things — and directs our minds and hearts to contemplate the incomparable value of the eternal blessings of God’s kingdom. At the same time with a contrite spirit, the priests and people invoke the infinite mercy of the Almighty God for the departed. We should not be surprised to learn that the same poet who wrote many of these funeral hymns, St John Damascene, also knew much of the Holy Scriptures by heart and wrote the hymns used at Matins-Orthros-Morning Prayer on Easter Sunday, to celebrate the Passover (Pascha) of our Lord, God and Savior, Jesus Christ, from death to life.

The Funeral Service is not only an opportunity to express our love for our loved one who has fallen asleep; it is also a sacred time, a marvelous opportunity for reflection and inner meditation on our own relationship with God and on the orientation of our lives. When we reflect on the sublime thoughts of the Funeral Service our souls becomes contrite, our hearts are softened, and we pray fervently for the forgiveness and the repose of the person who has been transferred to the life beyond the grave. Also, we who are still

alive are beckoned to live the rest of our lives in repentance and in full dedication to Christ, being reminded so starkly that we are also but a breath away from lying down in the same fashion as our departed loved ones.

After the Funeral Liturgy

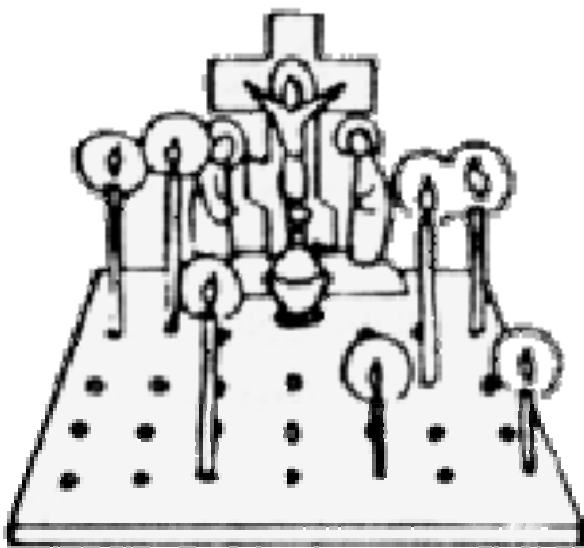
Following the direction of the Funeral Home personnel, the congregation will proceed to a cemetery for the burial. Our Parish Cemetery is located in Baldwin, PA., at the corner of Churchview Avenue and Glass Run Road (Mellott Road). At the burial site, the officiating priest will offer a memorial service (*Panikhida*) before the body is committed to the grave. **Following the burial, it is customary for the family of the deceased to offer a light meal to all who have attended the Funeral Service. This can be offered by renting our Church hall, or at a local restaurant.** For example, there is a restaurant conveniently located across the street from the entranceway to our Parish Cemetery. For availability of the Church hall, please make sure to contact the Parish Office as early as possible. If the hall is to be rented, the family must provide for a caterer. If the caterer does not do hall set-up and hall clean-up, our parish has a custodial staff but the family would need to pay them for these services. **Based on the Priest's schedule, he should also attend the meal. It is proper to seat the Priest with, or near, the immediate family, and to ask the Priest to call upon the Lord to bless the food before eating and to thank the Lord before people depart after the meal is concluded. Please make sure to notify the Priest a day or two in advance, so that he will not be surprised by the luncheon.**

Memorials

The prayers for the departed are as ancient as the Christian Church. Prayers for a merciful Judgment at the Last Day, have the sanction of the early Liturgies, of which the first is that of Saint James, the Lord's brother. Although we read in the Bible that there are sins for which "there is no forgiveness, either in this world or in the world to come" (Matt. 12:32); it is our duty and obligation to pray for the forgiveness of the departed as a personal act of faith.

It is often customary to offer a memorial service on or near the 40th day after a death, and also yearly, on or near the anniversary of the death. In most cases this is done by commemorating them by name at a Parastas Liturgy or at a Divine Liturgy (Mass). We kindly ask the persons(s) making the funeral arrangements to call our Parish Secretary, Cathy Sawczak, during her office hours (Mondays and Fridays, from 8:30 am to 1:00 pm). These Divine Liturgies are not automatically scheduled by our Parish Office. For the convenience of family members and friends who would be willing to attend them, these liturgies may be scheduled in the evening, for example 7:00 pm, if they should fall upon a weekday.

Our Holy Church also offers many additional opportunities to pray for the departed. They are remembered collectively during every Divine Liturgy, as well as at many other General Services (Parastas or Panikhida) for the Departed. Additionally, the Church sets aside five “All Souls Saturdays” every year, especially dedicated to remembering our departed loved ones. On other occasions, such as birthday or other remembrances, we kindly ask that families schedule all memorial services through the Parish Office as far in advance as possible, for example six to nine months or even a year. Let us remember that our prayers for the souls of the departed are expressions of the brotherly unity of the living and the dead, aiming to match the All-Merciful God’s desire that they receive His mercy.



Whenever you enter our Holy Church to attend Divine Services remember to light a candle in memory of your loved ones who have departed from us. Beeswax candles are available in the Church vestibule. Paraffin candles are located in stands on either side in front of the iconostasis (icon wall). Thanks to a donation from the Hoskowitz family in memory of their mother Ann, we now have the proper and special *Panikhidnik* or *Memorial Table* in our parish. Here pure

beeswax candle(s) may be lit in memory of our departed loved ones. Blessed Simeon of Thessalonica (15th century), commentator on the Divine Liturgy, states that pure wax symbolizes the purity and chastity of those who offer it. It is offered as a sign of our having repented of stubbornness and self-will. The softness and pliability of wax speaks of our readiness to obey God. The burning of the candle represents man's deification, his becoming a new creature through the fire of God's love.

Frequently, family and friends wish to offer a donation to our parish family as a tribute in memory of the deceased and to help cover electrical and heating or air conditioning costs. This memorial donation, ranging between 50 and 100 dollars will be deposited as part of the general fund of the parish. Acknowledgment of this memorial donation will be published in the parish bulletin. Should the family of the deceased wish to direct their memorial donation towards a specific parish need or parish project, the family should instruct donors to clearly mark their contributions as such.



Every one of us who desires to manifest his love for the dead and give them real help, can do this best of all through prayer for them, and in particular by commemorating them at the Liturgy, when the particles which are cut out for the living and the dead are let fall into the Blood of the Lord with the words: "Wash away, O Lord, the sins of those here commemorated by Thy Precious Blood, by the prayers of Thy saints." We can do nothing better or greater for the dead than to pray for them, offering commemoration for them at the Liturgy. Of this they are always in need, and especially during those forty days when the soul of the deceased is proceeding on its path to the eternal habitations. The body feels nothing then: it



does not see its close ones who have assembled, does not smell the fragrance of the flowers, does not hear the funeral orations. But the soul senses the prayers offered for it and is grateful to those who make them and is spiritually close to them.

-Fr. Seraphim Rose

When we pray for the reposed and do charitable works in their name, it is necessary, Brethren, to reflect on our own death while there is still time. We should prepare now so that we will not pass into the future life of torture, bound by bonds of sin. No matter how short or how long the Lord has determined that we will live on earth, there is no doubt that our entire present life is a road leading to death and to the threshold of eternity. There is nothing better or of more value for us to acquire than a peaceful, blameless, repentant, and Christian end to our life. He who has lived piously will repose piously. He who has lived with the Lord will die with the Lord. He who zealously serves the Lord before death will be with the Lord after his repose. *“Where I am, there shall also My servant be. (John 14:3)”* *“For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also who sleep in Jesus will God bring with Him. (1 Thessalonians 4:14)”*

-Holy Hieromartyr John of Riga



“With the spirits of the righteous made perfect in the faith, give rest to the soul of Your servant, O Savior, and preserve it in that life of blessedness which is with You, O You Who loves mankind.”

“With the Saints give rest, O Christ, to the soul of Your servant where there is no pain, nor sorrow, nor suffering, but only life everlasting.”

What about CREMATION ?

Burial is the preferred and traditional Christian funeral practice for both the Latin and the Byzantine Rites of the Catholic Church.

In our Ukrainian Catholic Church, although highly discouraged, cremation is permitted for economic reasons, especially if it is NOT being done for anti-Christian reasons. In previous centuries, cremation was practiced by those who rejected faith in the bodily Resurrection of our Lord.

Thus, to safeguard any scandal to the faithful, if cremation is chosen, then it should occur **after** the normal Funeral Services have been held in Church. **The presence of ashes in the church building is discouraged in the strongest of terms.** Obviously the burial cannot follow directly after the services in Church. The body goes to the Funeral Home or to the Crematorium and the people may gather for the customary meal. At a later date, when the ashes are ready to be buried in the ground, the pastor, or a delegated priest, or deacon, is supposed to perform the usual rite of interment, including the *Pannikhida* at the grave (some Latin Rite Catholic cemeteries have provisions for the placing ashes in urns behind glass panels in above ground mausoleums). In any case, the ashes cannot be stored at home, or disposed of in any other way.



St. John the Baptist Ukrainian Catholic Church
109 S. 7th Street, Pittsburgh, PA. 15203-1028
(412) 431-2531 (office and fax)
press “nine” to leave a message
in emergencies, press “one” to connect with priest’s cell phone