

A Guide to ensuring you have the Traditional Mass at your Funeral

The Latin Mass Society



*A Mass for the Dead celebrated in Reading by the Very Rev. Fr John Berg,
Superior General of the FSSP (for Remembrance Sunday).*

This booklet explains about the right of Catholics to request a Funeral Mass according to the Traditional Catholic liturgy: the 'Extraordinary Form' or *Vetus Ordo*, the Traditional Latin Mass.

If you are considering this and are not a member of the **Latin Mass Society**, joining us will not only show your support for our work but will also make it easier for us to give whatever help is necessary to those organising your funeral. Not only will we already know about you, and (if you tell us), about your detailed wishes, but given our finite resources we naturally give priority to deceased members.

You can join the Latin Mass Society through our website, by phone, or by post: see our details on the back cover.

For details of the photographs in this booklet, please contact the Latin Mass Society.

CONTENTS

Introduction	p5
Do you have an up-to-date Will?	p5
What is a 'Letter of Wishes'?	p6
The Traditional Liturgy: What are the Options?	p7
<i>A note on liturgical options</i>	p7
1. The Mass	p8
A. Low Mass	p9
B. <i>Missa Cantata</i>	p9
<i>Missa Cantata</i> without Incense	p10
<i>Missa Cantata</i> with Incense	p10
C. High (Solemn) Mass	p11
2. Musical Options	p13
<i>A note about the organ</i>	p13
A. Gregorian Chant	p14
B. Polyphony	p15
3. Additional Ceremonies	p17
A. The Reception of the Body	p17
B. The Absolution of the Coffin after Mass	p18
C. The Burial	p18
<i>A note on cremation</i>	p19
D. The Office of the Dead	p21
E. Requiems on Anniversaries	p21
<i>A note on the Reception of Holy Communion</i>	p22
<i>A note on Funerals for Infants</i>	p23
Appendix A: Further information	p24
Wills and Bequests	p24
Mass Stipends and other expenses	p25
The Church's law and the Extraordinary Form	p26
The spirit of the ancient Mass for the Dead	p29
A checklist of liturgical items	p31
Appendix B: A Letter of Wishes	p34

*Lux æterna luceat eis, Domine: cum sanctis tuis
in æternum, quia pius est.*

*May eternal light shine upon them, O Lord, with
thy saints forever, because Thou art merciful.*

Mass for the Dead:
Communion antiphon

Introduction

The Latin Mass Society has produced a form called ‘A Letter of Wishes concerning arrangements for my funeral: Requesting a Traditional Requiem’. This Guide is addressed to those filling out this form, and it will also be helpful to the next of kin seeking to implement wishes for a Traditional Funeral, whether these wishes are written or not. Copies of the Letter of Wishes form are available from the Latin Mass Society, and one is included at the end of this booklet.

We in the Latin Mass Society will do all we can to facilitate the celebration of the traditional liturgy for the dead, in as worthy a way as possible. Your local Representative may be able to advise on options, and recommend priests, servers, and singers; our national office will do the same if necessary. Being clear about what you want, and advance planning, are the keys to the smooth running of everything when the time comes.

Do you have an up-to-date Will?

When considering arrangements for your funeral, it is a good moment to think about the adequacy of your Will: do you have one, and is it up to date with your wishes and circumstances?

Leaving a clear and up-to-date Will makes things simpler for your family and friends, and ensures that your property is distributed in accordance with your wishes.

When doing this, please consider leaving the Latin Mass Society a be-

quest. The Society relies on these gifts, and without them our work would not be possible. We have included some information about this in the Appendix to this booklet.

What is a ‘Letter of Wishes’?

Also known as a ‘side letter’, a ‘Letter of Wishes’ is a statement intended to guide the executors of a person’s will, which does not form part of the will itself. It can be made legally binding, by incorporating it into a ‘Power of Attorney’; even if not, however, it has moral force. Not being part of the Will itself, it should be possible to ensure that it is read *before* arrangements for the funeral begin to be made. Very often, the Will is not read until after the funeral.

The use of such ‘Letters’ is widespread and your Solicitor will be familiar with them. It need not be drawn up by a Solicitor, however: it just needs to be clear, and its existence, and ideally its contents, needs to be drawn to the attention of your **next of kin, executors**, and anyone with **Power of Attorney**, so they know what your wishes are.

The other people who will need to know about your wishes are the **priest** and the **funeral directors**, whether or not you have a pre-paid plan. It is a good idea to let them know in advance what your wishes are, if possible.

The Traditional Liturgy: What are the options?

A note on liturgical options with the Extraordinary Form ('EF')

Below a number of different possibilities are discussed; these reflect the Church's provision for those with more, or fewer, liturgical resources: since there aren't always enough clergy, and there aren't always singers, available for the fullest celebration, and sometimes chapels are not big enough, it is possible to have simpler Masses. What the Extraordinary Form (the Traditional liturgy) does not offer, however, is the kind of multiple options many will be familiar with from the Ordinary Form: choice of readings, choice of hymns at Mass, or choice of prayers. In the Extraordinary Form, the readings and other prayers are fixed (and must be read by the clergy, not lay people); if Mass is to be sung, the singers must sing the texts of the Mass (though there is some, limited, opportunity to sing additional chants or motets); the priest is not at liberty to change, substitute, or remove prayers or

Low Mass with one server, Oxford Oratory (for All Souls' Day).



ceremonies.

This has many advantages: priests, singers, funeral directors and congregation can know in advance what they are getting, and this will be something which has grown up in the Church's liturgical tradition and officially approved: there will be nothing inappropriate or jarring in the service. In addition, once the basic decision is made, to have Sung Mass, for example, there is no need for anyone to sift through volumes of liturgical texts and hymn books to make lots of decisions about what should happen, when, or by whom.

A eulogy by a lay person is not allowed during a Traditional Mass, but may be delivered in church immediately after Mass and the blessing of the coffin, or in a gathering afterwards (the wake). A priest (or deacon) can, and normally does, preach; at a Mass for the dead the homily takes place not after the Gospel, but at the end of Mass (but before the blessing of the coffin).

Although laity do not read the readings or prayers of Mass, it may be appropriate to ask some to carry the coffin, as the Letter of Wishes suggests.

1. The Mass

A. Low Mass ('*Missa Lecta*')

In the Extraordinary Form (the Traditional Mass) the Mass for a funeral can be celebrated in a very simple way, with just a priest and a server, without music or incense. This is 'Low Mass', and has a spiritual depth all of its own. A Low Mass is naturally the simplest thing to organise, and also the shortest service: it will probably take between 30 and 40 minutes.



Missa Cantata without incense, in a small chapel in Oxfordshire, with a catafalque.

B. Sung Mass ('*Missa Cantata*')

If singers are available, Mass can be sung. With just one priest, and one or more servers, this is a '*Missa Cantata*': the priest will sing the Gospel (and probably the Epistle), and the Preface, and the singers will sing a series of pieces specific to a Mass for the Dead. More will be said about the options for music below, which also affect the length of the service.



Missa Cantata in St Birinus, Oxfordshire. While the choir sings the chants before the Gospel, the priest must wait for them to finish; he sits on the *sedilia*. This is one reason Sung Masses are longer than Low Mass.

***Missa Cantata* without incense**

Missa Cantata can be celebrated without incense and without additional servers holding ‘torches’ (candlesticks); this is called having ‘Low Mass ceremonies’ (or, less accurately, ‘without ceremonies’) This re-

quires only one server (two servers are also possible, or two plus a Master of Ceremonies (MC)), and for this reason can be easier to arrange; it also takes slightly less time. Some people might prefer the simpler form of the ceremonies, given the likely congregation. The ceremonies make no significant difference to the musical options.

***Missa Cantata* with incense**

More commonly, *Missa Cantata* is celebrated with a larger number of servers, and with incense. The exact number of servers can be between three and six; if the church’s sanctuary is small, that might be a reason to have fewer. However, that decision is usually best left to the Master

of Ceremonies, who can consider both the nature of the church and the people available to serve. One advantage of a larger number is that boys with limited serving experience can more easily be incorporated into the team, to perform the less complex functions.

It should be noted that the ceremonies and the use of incense in a Mass for the Dead is more restricted than on other occasions; the Funeral Mass retains its more sombre and understated character. There is nothing ‘over the top’ about having incense at a funeral; this is the form of the Funeral Mass with which those familiar with the Extraordinary Form will probably be most familiar.

C. High (‘Solemn’) Mass (*Missa Solemnis*)

This is Mass celebrated by a priest assisted by a ‘deacon’ and a ‘subdeacon’ (who may themselves be priests or deacons). They will need an experienced Master of Ceremonies, and a team of servers (at least three, preferably five or more, in addition to the MC) at least some of whom have experienced this form of the Mass before.

High Mass is different from *Missa Cantata* in that the readings are sung, not from the altar by the celebrant, but from other parts of the sanctuary by the subdeacon (who sings the Epistle) and the deacon (who sings the Gospel). The deacon and subdeacon wear special vestments (dalmatic and tunicle); their functions are performed by the servers and Master of Ceremonies at a *Missa Cantata*.

High Mass is the normative form of Mass; the *Missa Cantata* is a relatively recent development (it began to develop in the 18th century), to make possible a sung Mass when there were not enough clergy to provide a deacon and subdeacon; it is essentially a cut-down version of High Mass. High Mass, where the Church’s ceremonies are performed in full, is a very beautiful expression of the Church’s ‘law of prayer’,

which always reflects our ‘law of belief’. The ceremonies have not just been thought up to look nice: they are ancient and dramatic expressions of the saving truths which are always at the heart of the Catholic liturgy.

The beauty of High Mass, in conjunction with the music, can also have a special power to communicate, even to those outside the Church.

The practical considerations do, of course, need to be borne in mind. As noted, High Mass requires three clerics, the celebrating priest and someone to perform the function of the deacon (who can be a priest) and the subdeacon (who can be a priest, a deacon, or a seminarian in minor orders). All of them need to have some experience of the ceremonies, particularly if they are not used to celebrating Mass as a team, and have limited opportunity to rehearse before the funeral. The same goes for the servers. As time goes on, more priests, deacons, and servers are gaining experience of the ceremonies of High Mass, but it is still relatively uncommon in England and Wales. If you wish to have a High Mass at your funeral, it is sensible both to have clergy and a Master of Ceremonies in mind whom you know can carry out the ceremonies in a worthy fashion, and also bear in mind that it may turn out to be impossible, if, for example, one of the clergy can’t make it, and cannot be replaced at short notice.

2. Musical Options

A note about the organ

One general point about music at Masses for the Dead in the Extraordinary Form is that the organ should not normally be used. The same is true during the penitential seasons of Advent and Lent, with the notable exceptions of Laetare and Gaudete Sundays. The silence of the organ, like the use of black vestments, is an important symbol of the mourning in which the Church joins in solidarity with the bereaved.



In Missa Cantata with incense, and High Mass (as here, in Ratcliffe College, Leicestershire), incense is not used for the Gospel in Masses for the Dead, but the priest incenses the altar at the Offertory, and is then incensed himself. This adds a few minutes to the length of Mass.



A Chant Schola of FSSP Seminarians at Wigratzbad, Bavaria, during an ordination. An all-male schola, vested like this, can sing from the sanctuary; more often singers use a choir-loft or sing from the back of the church.

A. Gregorian Chant

At *Missa Cantata*, with or without full ceremonies, and at High Mass, singers are essential. At its simplest, it is possible for as few as two singers to sing Gregorian Chant, if the church or chapel is small. More commonly Gregorian Chant groups number between four and eight singers.

Using Chant, the singers must sing the ‘Propers’ as well as the ‘Ordinary’. The Propers are more complex, and include, at Masses for the Dead, the long and very beautiful Sequence *Dies Irae*, which is sung before the Gospel.

Choirs accustomed to sing for the Extraordinary Form, whether professional or amateur, are very likely to be familiar with the chants of

the Requiem Mass, so although these chants are complex, they do not pose a special challenge. On the other hand, it should not be taken for granted that even competent choirs which do not sing regularly for the Extraordinary Form will be able to master the necessary chants at short notice, and if you would like such a choir to sing, this is worth checking.

The Chant settings of the texts to be sung are among the greatest achievements of the Chant tradition, and are in no way to be regarded as a poor relation of a polyphonic setting. They are intimately connected with the Roman liturgical tradition, and are uniquely suited to the Mass for the Dead, artistically and spiritually. They have had such a profound influence on Western music that many non-Catholics will recognise, for example, the Chant setting of the *Dies Irae*, even if they have never heard it in church.

A final point is that a Chant setting provides an opportunity for singing by the congregation of the 'Ordinary': the *Kyrie*, *Sanctus*, and *Agnus Dei*. The Chant settings for these are particularly simple and easy to sing, with the support of a choir. If you think members of the congregation would like to participate by singing, it would be a good idea if someone provided the printed music for them to sing from.

A Sung Requiem Mass with Gregorian Chant will probably take between 40 and 50 minutes; a High Mass with Chant is likely to take between 50 and 65 minutes. (Other factors affecting the length of Mass are the length of the homily and the number of people receiving Holy Communion.)

B. Polyphony

Another musical option is polyphony. The chants for the Mass for the Dead has been given polyphonic settings by some of the greatest

Catholic composers, and are among the outstanding works of the Church's musical patrimony. Some famous settings, such as by Verdi, are impractical for liturgical use because of their complexity, length, and operatic style, but those by Giovanni Francesco Anerio and Tomás Luis de Victoria, for example, are very suitable. Recordings of these composers' *Requiems* are widely available.

Usually, when polyphonic music is sung at the Extraordinary Form, it is settings of the Ordinary, but because of the importance of the Requiem Mass, polyphonic composers set the Propers also. Hence we have a setting of the *Dies Irae* by Anerio, as well as the *Kyrie*, in his *Requiem*.

Polyphony requires four or more highly competent singers; with notice, professional singers can usually be found without too much difficulty. Polyphonic treatments of the texts almost invariably take longer to sing than the chant setting, and so polyphony will add somewhat to the time Mass will take; accordingly, *Missa Cantata* is likely to take between 50 and 60 minutes with polyphony, perhaps ten minutes more than a *Missa Cantata* celebrated only with chant; a High Mass with polyphony is likely to take 60 to 75 minutes.

Although instantly recognisable as religious music, most polyphonic settings belong to a musical tradition with which most modern listeners, Catholic or not, are familiar. Partly for this reason it can be more immediately appealing than chant, to a congregation not familiar with liturgical music, to say nothing of the artistic merits of the works.

3. Additional ceremonies.

A. The Reception of the body.

In addition to Mass, the Extraordinary Form includes a special ceremony for receiving the coffin into the church. In its simplest form this is a Psalm with an antiphon, and a blessing of the coffin; if done on the evening before the funeral, Vespers from the Office of the Dead can be added. (For more on the Office of the Dead, see below.) It can be said, or sung.

The ceremony is short but dignified, and musically restrained; even sung with Vespers it is unlikely to take more than 20 minutes. One practical question will be whether it is possible to leave the coffin in the church or chapel overnight; this will depend on the availability of the church and the priest, and arrangements with the undertakers.

Carrying the coffin out of the church, preceded by the priest in cope, a processional cross and thurifer; the choir sings the chant In Paradisum.



For it to be sung in a fitting way it is a good idea to ensure that there are at least two competent chant singers available, and preferably more. With the Office it is customary to sing in alternation, one verse of a psalm being sung by half the group, and the next verse by the other half.

B. The Absolutions over the Coffin after Mass

This ceremony is an integral part of the funeral Mass. After preaching, if there is a homily, the priest, having put on a cope, blesses the coffin, which has six large candlesticks arranged around it, with incense and then with holy water, walking around it each time. This takes place whether the Mass is Low, Sung, or High; in the last case he is assisted by the other Sacred Ministers, but the ceremonies and prayers are the same. If there are singers available parts of it are sung. They also sing a particularly well-loved chant when the coffin is, at the conclusion of this ceremony, carried out of the church: *In Paradisum*. In the absence of singers all the texts can be recited by the priest and server.

If sung, the Absolutions are likely to take no more than ten minutes.

C. Burial.

The Extraordinary Form also includes ceremonies for the burial. As with the preceding ceremonies, if singers are available there are chants to sing; if not, the texts can be recited by the priest and server. The ceremonies are dignified but not lengthy, and the singing can be performed creditably by two or more competent chant singers.



The blessing of the Catafalque for an anniversary Requiem in Oxford (Missa Cantata).

A note on cremation

The Extraordinary Form includes no ceremonies or texts for use at a cremation, since cremation was forbidden for Catholic funerals at the time of the edition of the Roman Missal used in the Extraordinary Form (1962). Since then, the ban on cremations has been lifted, but with the striking exhortation in the current (1983) Code of Canon Law that Catholics not avail themselves of this option (Canon 1176, 3):

The Church earnestly recommends that the pious custom of burying the dead be observed; it does not, however, forbid cremation unless it has been chosen for reasons which are contrary to Christian teaching.

The negative view of cremation is reflected in the fact that the Ordinary Form, like the Extraordinary Form, contains no approved prayers or ceremonies for use at a crematorium, and the texts of the



At the Latin Mass Society's Annual Requiem for deceased members, a catafalque is used: an empty coffin, provided by an undertaker, on trestles, covered with a black pall. Here it is being dismantled after the end of the Mass.

burial service refer to the 'body', not ashes, to be interred. Priests sometimes adapt texts to fit the situation of cremation, but this is not officially approved.

While recognising the financial reasons which often favour cremation over burial, we can only reiterate the official view of the Church on the matter: that the custom of burial has always reflected the Catholic doctrine of the Resurrection of the Body, and this teaching needs to be emphasised today more than ever, when so many see no hope beyond death.

D. The Office of the Dead

In addition to the Vespers of the Dead, which may be sung at the reception of the body the evening before the funeral Mass, there is also a

Matins and Lauds of the Dead, sung in the morning. It is worthy and appropriate to celebrate these ‘Offices’ in honour of the deceased, particularly on the day of the reception of the body in the church, or the day of the burial, but it can be done on any day. Public celebrations can only take place when there is not an important feast day, in accordance with normal liturgical rules, but it can also be said privately. It can be said or sung. The Offices of the Dead are shorter and easier to sing than those of other days, and can be sung without difficulty by a small number of competent chant singers.

E. Requiems on Anniversaries.

In addition to the funeral, it is a commendable custom to have additional Masses said for the deceased on other occasions. Any Mass can be said for the intention of a deceased person, and priests will gladly offer Masses for the intention of a loved one (see the note on ‘Mass Offerings’ below). It is also possible to ask for the Mass for the Dead to be said, which has the most appropriate prayers; this may need to be scheduled specially.

Specifically, the Church makes special provision for Masses for the Dead said on 3rd, 7th, and 30th day, or the anniversary, of either death or burial. These are ‘3rd Class Requiems’, and can be said on any day of 3rd or 4th Class rank, which in practice excludes only the more important feast days.

On any other day, such Masses are of ‘4th Class’ rank, which means they can be celebrated on 4th Class days, which are days when there is no saint to be celebrated in the calendar (‘ferial’ days), outside Lent.

Masses for the Dead celebrated in the chapels of cemeteries are also regarded as ‘3rd Class’.

These Masses are subject to the options discussed above: they may be

Low, Sung, or High. In place of a coffin, to be blessed at the end of the Mass, a ‘catafalque’ can be used: this may be an empty coffin, or just a coffin stand, covered with a black pall. The priest blesses this in the same way as the coffin at a funeral Mass. This is optional.

It is worth considering making explicit provision for such additional Masses in your Will, particularly if they will involve significant expenses, such as the cost of professional singers. A request for such Requiems can be included in giving a bequest to the Latin Mass Society: see the discussion of Bequests below.

A Note on the Reception of Holy Communion

As with weddings, funerals are often attended by many non-Catholics, or baptized Catholics who have long lapsed from the practice of the Faith. While making them feel welcome, it is important to ensure that they understand that Holy Communion should only be received by Catholics in a state of Grace.

At the Extraordinary Form there is an additional issue, that under the liturgical law proper to it communion should be received kneeling (unless the communicant is unable to kneel), and on the tongue.

To avoid any awkwardness at the communion rail, it is advisable for someone to make a brief announcement before the beginning of Mass.

A Note on Funerals for Infants

Baptised children under the ‘age of reason’ (seven years) are assumed not to have committed actual (personal) sin; it is therefore not neces-



*Communion at a Solemn Mass in St Mary Magdalen's, Wandsworth, London
(for Remembrance Sunday).*

sary to pray for their release from Purgatory. The Requiem Mass is not said for them; instead, either the Mass of the day, or a votive Mass (usually, the Mass of the Angels), is said for a suitable intention, such as to beg consolation for the family. There are different psalms, prayers, and ceremonies for the reception of the body, the blessing of the coffin at the end of Mass, and the burial, and the celebrant wears a white stole for these parts of the service.

The options of Low, Sung, and High Mass, Gregorian Chant and Polyphony, are all applicable; the texts to be sung will be those of the Mass to be said and the Ordinary, including the Gloria; the psalms at the reception of the body, the graveside and so on can also be sung as noted above (pp17-18).

Wills and Bequests

As noted in the Introduction, when considering arrangements for your funeral it may be a good time to check that you have a Will, and that this takes into account any changes to your wishes or circumstances.

When doing this, please consider leaving the Latin Mass Society a bequest: a donation provided for out of your estate.

Many of our members leave us bequests, and this source of income has been the key to the Society's development: taking on paid staff, expanding our work, and improving the services we provide.

We are the only organization able to give expert advice and support on matters relating to the Traditional Mass throughout England and Wales, and internationally we are one of the very oldest, and the largest, national organisations doing this work.

Bequests in a Will can take different forms:

'Pecuniary': A gift expressed as a sum of money, eg £5,000.

'Residuary': A gift of a share/percentage of your estate, after other items or sums have been distributed.

'Specific': Items such as vestments, liturgical items or books relating to the Traditional liturgy.

The Society will be very happy to receive bequests whatever form they take.

Furthermore, we will be happy to arrange Requiem Masses as requested by a Will in the context of a Bequest, and we do this regularly.

We cannot accept a bequest for an unlimited series of Requiems (for

example, an annual Requiem to be said every year forever), or Requiems to be said privately: as a Charity the Masses we pay for must be open to the public.

Wills can be drawn up very simply from a pre-prepared form, but it may be better to discuss the matter with your Solicitor.

Mass stipends and other expenses

If you ask a priest to say one of his regular Masses for a particular intention, such as for a deceased loved one, it is customary to make a 'Mass Offering': currently the usual sum is £10.

By contrast, those organising a funeral Mass, or a Requiem Mass for an anniversary, are asking a priest to put on a Mass which would not



A Solemn Mass in St James', Spanish Place, London: the celebrant listens as the deacon sings the Gospel, which is being held for him by the subdeacon.

otherwise take place. This being so, it is customary to pay the priest a ‘stipend’, currently set (in England and Wales) at £35 for a Mass. If there are other sacred ministers, as at a High Mass, they should receive stipends also. If there are additional ceremonies, such as the reception of the body or a burial, this should be reflected in the stipend. If unpaid singers or servers have travelled far to help at a Mass, it is good practice to offer to repay them their travelling expenses.

All funeral expenses can be paid by the estate of the deceased, and this would include stipends, and anything which needs to be paid to organists and singers, as well as the cost of undertakers.

The Church’s Law and the Extraordinary Form

It may be useful to be absolutely clear about the rights of Catholics in relation to the Extraordinary Form—the Traditional Mass—as it relates to Funeral Masses and Requiems, since confusion on this point can still exist.

The appropriateness of allowing the use of the ‘Old Mass’ for the funerals of those who express the desire for it has always been officially recognised. The situation was made much clearer, however, in 2007 when Pope Benedict XVI issued an Apostolic Letter ‘*Motu Proprio*’ (‘of his own initiative’), *Summorum Pontificum*. This is an act of legislation by the highest authority in the Church, the Holy Father, and it is binding on all Catholics, priests and bishops included.

The first point this document makes (in Article 1) is that the Roman Missal of 1962, before permission was given to use English in the Mass or the major changes which started to come in in 1965, was ‘never abrogated’. That means that it is still in force, as an alternative to the Missal promulgated in 1970. The Holy Father explains that this

means that any priest of the Latin Rite (any Catholic priest, excluding only those who only celebrate the Greek, Ukrainian, or other Rites), is allowed to use the old Missal, and does not need permission to do so. No one can stop him.

It remains true that any public Mass in a public church or chapel must be said with the permission of the Rector (who is the Parish Priest, shrine Custodian, or Cathe-



A Solemn Requiem celebrated in the traditional Dominican Rite, in the Oxford Blackfriars.

dral Administrator or Dean). The Holy Father goes on, therefore, to explain that it is incumbent upon Rectors to give permission for Masses to be said in the Extraordinary Form (according to the 1962 Missal). This comes up in two ways: when a group of the Faithful ask for a regular Mass (such as a Mass every Sunday); and when someone organising a funeral, wedding, pilgrimage, or other one-off celebration, asks for that. In both cases the Rector is directed to allow it (Article 5).

In 2011 a further document was issued, an Instruction of the *Pontifical Council Ecclesia Dei*, called *Universae Ecclesiae*. This was given the approval of the Holy Father and is also a binding legal document. It was issued to clear up certain confusions about how *Summorum Pontificum* should be implemented. In relation to funerals it reiterated the position summarised above: those who ask for one-off celebrations of Mass should be accommodated; in accordance with common sense these extra Masses have to be fitted into the time available in the church's schedule (Articles 16 and 17). It also clarified the point that any priest able to pronounce the words is allowed to say the Extraordinary Form: there is no justification for requiring him to pass special tests or be selected specially for the task (Article 20).

In summary, Catholics have a right to ask for the Extraordinary Form for a funeral, or a subsequent Requiem. While practical considerations may come into play—the availability of the church at a particular time,

Solemn Mass: the deacon and subdeacon line up behind the celebrant at certain points.



the availability of a priest able to say the Mass, of servers and singers and so forth—the priest may not refuse permission for a Mass because it is to be in the Extraordinary Form.

In case of any confusion, the Latin Mass Society will be more than willing to help not only with practical difficulties but with any issues surrounding the interpretation of the Church's law and the attitude of the hierarchy.

The spirit of the ancient Mass for the Dead

On a related subject, it is sometimes claimed that the Traditional liturgy for the dead is gloomy and lacking in hope, and it may be useful to note briefly how such concerns can be addressed.

The simplest answer is that the Mass for the Dead, as it appears in the 1962 Missal and as celebrated as the 'Extraordinary Form', has been regarded as theologically appropriate, and pastorally helpful, over many centuries and in many different cultural contexts. This liturgy has been given to us by the Church, and is fully approved for use today by the *Motu Proprio Summorum Pontificum* issued by Pope Benedict XVI in 2007.

To address the substantive issue, the Traditional liturgy for funerals does include many texts which speak of hope: the epigraph of this booklet is an example (on p4). It is true, however, that it also uses black vestments; the organ is silent; no 'alleluia' is sung; in these and other ways the Church uses the symbolism, still very much recognised in popular culture, of mourning. Grief is the natural reaction to the death of a person one loves, and in the traditional liturgy the Church acknowledges the feelings of the bereaved. These feelings should not be regarded as improper: on the one hand, the bereaved have indeed

lost their loved one, in the sense that he or she is no longer in the ordinary world with us; on the other hand, death is truly a fearful thing, because at the moment of death we face the judgment of God. The ancient liturgy understands both aspects of grief, and gives us a sublime artistic expression of these feelings in its texts and chants. Such an expression is itself a valuable means to come to terms with these feelings.

Above all, however, the liturgy of the Dead is for the benefit of the deceased, and as such is a work of charity carried out by the living for the dead. This is itself helpful to the bereaved, whose love for the deceased seeks a way of doing something positive. What we can do for the dead is pray for them, and above all, offer the Sacrifice of the Mass for them. It is for this reason that the texts of the Mass express a fervent desire for, and hope of, the mercy of God for the deceased.

It is unnatural to separate this supernatural hope from the natural grief which we feel, and the Church does not demand this of us. As the

A bishop celebrating a Requiem Mass for the LMS in Westminster Cathedral.



philosopher Dietrich von Hildebrand wrote, responding to criticisms of the traditional liturgy of the Dead:

It is a regrettable sophism to say (as it was sometimes said in sermons) that the death of a father or mother, husband or wife, or of a child, is no reason for sadness as long as they have died well, after receiving the last sacraments, as long as we can hope that they are with God. Of course the eternal happiness of one whom we truly love is the most important thing, but separation from the beloved, even if only for a time, remains a terrible cross. Whoever does not feel this cross, whoever just happily goes his way with the consolation that the beloved has found eternal happiness, is not directed to eternity in a special way—he is simply insensitive and does not want to be disturbed in the normal rhythm of his daily life. He is simply making a comfortable excuse when he emphasises that the eternal salvation of the other is the most important thing. He has forgotten that even Jesus Christ, the God-man, prayed in Gethsemane: ‘Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me.’ He does not understand that a cross which has been imposed on us should be suffered under as a cross. Only then can we attain to the true consolation which lies in the perspective of eternity, to the true hope of eternal blessedness.

Dietrich von Hildebrand,
The Devastated Vineyard (1973) p130

A Checklist of Liturgical Items

When a Mass in the Extraordinary Form is to be celebrated in a church where it does not happen regularly, those organising it need to check that the church has certain items necessary for such a celebration, or

else make sure that they are brought to the church in good time. With reasonable notice all such items can be borrowed, either from a nearby church or from the Latin Mass Society. The Society will always be willing to lend necessary liturgical items for funerals whenever possible.

The following is a non-exhaustive list of things needed for a funeral in the Extraordinary Form which should not be assumed to be in a Catholic church where this Form is not regularly celebrated.

Tall candlesticks, and candles (unbleached, if possible) to go in them (two for Low Mass, four for *Missa Cantata*, six for High Mass)

Crucifix to stand on the Altar

Altar Missal and stand

Altar cards

‘Small linens’: purificator, lavabo towel, corporal. (Often it is best for a priest saying a Mass in a church not his own to bring these with him and take them away again.)

Communion plate

Black vestments, including maniple

Thurible, incense, and charcoal (if incense is to be used)

Cassocks and cottas for the servers

For the Blessing of the Coffin:

Six floor-standing candlesticks and candles (unbleached, if possible)

Coffin stand (and ideally an empty coffin, for a Requiem)

Processional cross

Holy water bucket and sprinkler (‘aspergilium’).

Pall to cover the coffin

Altar cards and a **Missal** specially for the Mass for the Dead exist, and can be purchased (or borrowed) from the Latin Mass Society, but standard cards and an ordinary Altar Missal for the Extraordinary Form suffice.

Similarly, if **booklets** are provided for the Faithful, there are special booklets containing the Mass for the Dead, and these are available on loan from the Latin Mass Society.

A final point to note is that occasionally it is difficult for Mass to be celebrated *ad orientem* (facing away from the nave, towards the crucifix), if the Altar is close to a step. If this is really impossible then an extension to the step can be improvised, or Mass said on a side Altar is that is possible.

Missa Cantata in the Little Oratory at the London Oratory, with MC and two servers; the schola are in the gallery above the Altar. It is Passiontide, so the crucifix is veiled.



LETTER OF WISHES:

I would like a Funeral in the Extraordinary
Form (the Traditional Latin Mass).

Full Name:.....

Address:.....

.....

.....

Latin Mass Society membership number (if a member):

PRELIMINARY MATTERS

1. **My next of kin** is (name, address, phone number and email)

.....

.....

2. **Either: My power of attorney** is held by

.....

Or: The friend(s) or relative(s) I would like to be mainly responsible
for arranging my funeral is/are:

.....

3. **Either:** I have a **pre-paid funeral plan**, the details of which are held in the following place:

.....

Or: I do not have a pre-paid funeral plan.

Option a) I would like a funeral director to assist in arranging my funeral (you can specify which one you would like).

Option b) I would not like a funeral director to assist in arranging my funeral. I would instead prefer my funeral to be arranged by

.....

4. **Either: I would like my death announced** in the following

publication(s):

Or: I would not like my death announced in a publication.

5. I wish to be buried

Either: I have a burial place in mind, the details of which are:

.....

Or: I do not have a burial place in mind and would like

..... to arrange one.

LITURGY

The ceremonies should be in accordance with the *Extraordinary Form* (also known as the Traditional Mass, the Tridentine Mass, the *Vetus Ordo*, the Missal of 1962).

1. **Either:** I would like my funeral to be celebrated if possible by a **particular priest:**

Fror Fr.....

Or: I don't mind who the celebrant is.

2. **Vigil - Reception** of the deceased into church:

I would like to be brought into Church the evening before: yes / no

If 'yes', I would like to be Sung or Said:

Reception of the Body/ Vespers/ Lauds/ Matins of the Dead.

3. **Coffin-bearers.**

Either: For the Reception and the Funeral, I would ideally like.....to be the bearers of my coffin.

Or: I don't mind who the coffin bearers are.

4. **The Requiem Mass:** I would like it to be

Option a) High (Sung, with Priest, Deacon, Sub-deacon, and servers),
if possible (or, failing that, *Missa Cantata*)

Option b) *Missa Cantata* (Sung, with Priest and servers)

Option c) Low (Said, not Sung, with Priest and server).

5. **Music:** If the Mass is to be High or Sung, I would like:

Option a) Gregorian Chant (Plainsong)

Option b) Another setting (polyphony):

Specifically (composer)

I would like a particular choir or choir director, if possible:

.....

6. **Additional Requiems.**

a) I would like Mass in the Extraordinary Form to be celebrated on the
7th Day/ 30th day/ Year anniversary of my death or burial,

or

b) I have made the following financial arrangements for Mass stipends
and other associated expenses for this as follows:

.....

RELATED ISSUES

1. **Guests.**

I see my funeral, ideally, as one of the following:

A small family affair / Family and friends / All comers welcome /

Other:

In the blank space at the end of this form I list some of those I would like invited who might otherwise be overlooked .

2. **Flowers:** I would like one of the following:

Either: Flowers brought to my funeral / One flower per person /No flowers / Donation instead to a chosen charity,

which is

Or: Family flowers and a donation by others to a chosen charity, which is

Or: Other

3. **Gathering (Wake)** after funeral

Either: I would like a gathering after the funeral.

Or: I would not like a gathering after the funeral.

The form I would like this gathering to take is as follows:

.....

(Think about whether you would like it indoors or outdoors; the location; food and drink etc.)

4 **Commemorations**

Either: I would ideally like the following memorial or commemoration:

headstone (you could suggest the wording for this)

entry in memorial book

Or: I would not like a memorial



Signature.....

Dated.....



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