

### Corporal Works of Mercy: Burying the Dead

Please read before the lesson to prepare

Most students will have attended a funeral or known someone who has passed away. Burying/interring the dead is one of the corporal works of mercy, and is a central part of the faith community. Alongside the many charitable activities of feeding and sheltering the poor, visiting the sick and imprisoned, our parishes also celebrate thousands of funerals for the deceased. This session is meant to teach students how families and the Christian community participate in the corporal works of mercy when they bury/inter the dead. Below are some Bible and Catechism quotes that will help you to prepare for this lesson.

#### Bible Quotations

“By the sweat of your brow you shall eat bread, until you return to the ground, from which you were taken; For you are dust, and to dust you shall return.” – *Gen 3:19*

“My son, shed tears for one who is dead, with wailing and bitter lament; As is only proper, prepare the body, and do not absent yourself from the burial.” – *Sirach 38:16*

“Or are you unaware that we who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? We were indeed buried with Him through baptism into death, so that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might live in newness of life.” – *Romans 6:3-4*

“We do not want you to be unaware, brothers, about those who have fallen asleep, so that you may not grieve like the rest, who have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose, so too will God, through Jesus, bring with him those who have fallen asleep.” – *1 Thess 4:13-14*



#### Catechism Quotations

CCC 1690 – “A farewell to the deceased is his final commendation to God by the Church. It is the last farewell by which the Christian community greets one of its members before his body is brought to its tomb. 192 The Byzantine tradition expresses this by the kiss of farewell to the deceased:

By this final greeting we sing for his departure from this life and separation from us, but also because there is a communion and a reunion. For even dead, we are not at all separated from one another, because we all run the same course and we will find one another again in the same place. We shall never be separated, for we live for Christ, and now we are united with Christ as we go toward him . . . we shall all be together in Christ.” 193

CCC 2300 – “The bodies of the dead must be treated with respect and charity, in faith and hope of the Resurrection. The burial of the dead is a corporal work of mercy; 92 it honors the children of God, who are temples of the Holy Spirit.”



The Three Sacred Moments of a Catholic Funeral



**The Vigil.** The rite celebrated by the Christian community in the time following death and before the funeral liturgy. It is a time when loved ones show their respect and greet the family and friends of the deceased. It is also the most ideal time to share their memories of the deceased through a eulogy or video tribute, usually held at the funeral home the day before the Funeral Mass.



**Funeral Mass.** This is the central liturgical celebration held with the deceased's body present at a church. Part of Catholic belief is that those who follow the way of Jesus shall forever be in Heaven, body and soul, in the presence of God. We believe in the bodily resurrection. Also, the Church honors the body because it has been the temple of the Holy Spirit. Therefore, the Church says that the body should be present at the funeral rites. If cremation is selected, the Church prefers that the body be present at the Mass.



**Rite of Committal.** This rite is the final act of our faith community in caring for the body of its deceased member. By our presence at this rite, we help the mourners face the end of one relationship with the deceased and the beginning of a new one based on prayerful remembrance, gratitude and the hope of resurrection and reunion. The celebration, whenever possible, takes place not in a cemetery chapel but at the open grave or place of interment. The act of committal expresses that the grave, once a sign of despair, is now, through Christ's own death and Resurrection, a sign of hope and promise. The Church encourages all Catholics to seek out a Catholic Cemetery that has been blessed and consecrated as a final resting place.



Opening Prayer

(The prayer said at the graveside, modify to suit your use as needed)

Lord Jesus Christ,	Grant that our brothers and sisters may sleep here in peace
by Your own three days in the tomb,	until You awaken them to glory,
You hallowed the graves of all who believe in You	for You are the resurrection and the life.
and so made the grave a sign of hope	Then they will see You face to face
that promises resurrection	and in Your light will see light
even as it claims our mortal bodies.	and know the splendor of God,
	for You live and reign forever and ever. Amen.

1) Proclamation

(From the Order of Christian Funerals) At the death of a Christian, whose life of faith was begun in the waters of baptism and strengthened at the eucharistic table, the Church intercedes on behalf of the deceased because of its confident belief that death is not the end nor does it break the bonds forged in life. The Church also ministers to the sorrowing and consoles them in the funeral rites with the comforting word of God and the sacrament of the eucharist.



2) Explanation

Typically, in the Diocese of Phoenix, this age group will have been introduced to the central tenets of our faith and have received or are preparing for Confirmation and First Eucharist, for this reason a more detailed Catechesis on the corporal works of mercy and the funeral rite are appropriate.

Suggested question prompts:

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| 1) Q. What are some of the things that Jesus asked us to do?   | 2) Q. Does anyone know the corporal works of mercy?  |
| A. He asked us to believe in Him, to live a good and virtuous life, to trust Him, and He also asked us to love Him and one another. He asked us to serve the poor, visit the ill and imprisoned and also to bury the dead. | A. They are feed the hungry, give drink to the thirsty, shelter the homeless, clothe the naked, visit the sick and imprisoned, bury the dead, and give alms to the poor. |



3) Q. How do we honor and bury the dead?

A. That's right. A funeral. A funeral is a special time when we commend the person who has died to the mercy of God and, as Christians, pray for them that through their faith in Jesus Christ they will share in His resurrection.

4) Q. What happens at a funeral?

A. The family gathers to remember the person who died. First, there is a Vigil (also called a wake) the night before the funeral to remember the deceased and share stories. Often a rosary is said, and friends and family gather to console each other. Second, there is the Funeral Mass, where the Church offers up the prayers for the deceased, and is joined by all the saints and the community

of the faithful. Third, there is a committal rite, where the body or the cremated remains are buried or interred.

*Note: Depending on their experience answers may differ widely*

5) Q. When does the Church pray for all of our loved ones who have died?

A. At Mass, during funerals, at cemeteries, and at home or in church, we can pray for our family members and all who have died. On All Saints Day on November 1st, we ask for the prayers of all those saints who are alive with Jesus in Heaven. On All Souls Day we pray for all those who have died, especially our family and friends . . .



## Teaching

### Witness:

- If appropriate, share a story of a funeral you attended, share what happened focusing on the two most important aspects,
  - 1) The dead was commended to the mercy of God.
  - 2) The grieving were consoled and given an opportunity to mourn the loss of their loved one.

### Catechesis (main points to cover):

- The corporal works of mercy are important ways that we honor the dignity of each person created in God's image. Alongside serving the poor, burying or interring of the dead is a very important aspect of our Catholic faith.
- When someone dies, we have a special way of remembering and honoring them called a funeral which prepares the person who has died to enter into new and everlasting life with Jesus and helps the family mourn their loss.

- Cemeteries are permanent resting places for the bodies of the dead. They can be buried in the ground, interred in a mausoleum (an above ground tomb), or their cremated remains can be put in a columbarium (a small niche). It's customary that families visit the burial place of their dead loved ones on special anniversaries and All Souls Day or Día de los Muertos.

- Usually the funeral has three distinct parts.

- 1) The Vigil
- 2) The funeral liturgy
- 3) The Rite of Committal

We pray for our family and friends who have died with firm hope that they will experience the love and mercy of God, and we ask for their prayers and intercession to help us grow in holiness and to love God with all our hearts. We believe that we will be reunited with our family and friends and all those who are in heaven.

## 3) Application

### Guided reflection and discussion

Activity sheet "The Christian Funeral"

- Help students fill in the worksheet.

Key points to reinforce.

- Honoring and burying or interring the dead is a duty of every Catholic.
- The funeral commends the dead to the mercy of God.
- The funeral provides consolation and healing for those who mourn.
- The funeral includes the Vigil, Funeral Mass and Rite of Committal.

- Visiting the gravesite of family members who have passed away is a longstanding custom in the Church.

Recommended video resource: Fr. Mike Schmidt "The Real Purpose of Funerals" [ascensionpresents.com/video/the-real-purpose-of-funerals](http://ascensionpresents.com/video/the-real-purpose-of-funerals)

## 4) Celebration

Finish the lesson by reinforcing any key points and offering a concluding prayer inviting children to pray for any family members and friends who have died

Another option is to pray the Stations of the Cross. See page 26.







# The Stations of the Cross

## Proclamation

Jesus came to die for us so that we could live forever! Jesus conquered death by dying! This is how much God loves us!

## Instructions

Meditate on the Stations of the Cross (either all 14 or select a few). This can be done either by going to church and using the stations there or by using pictures or PowerPoint slides in class.

Keep it simple by using brief meditations for each station (use those provided here or any other age-appropriate ones you like).

End each station-meditation with: “We adore you O Christ and we praise you.”

(Children respond): “Because by your Holy Cross you have redeemed the world.”

### 1. Jesus is condemned to death.

Witnesses lied to get Jesus condemned to death. Jesus was innocent. He could have proved it. Instead, He freely accepted to die like a criminal so that we could be saved.

### 2. Jesus accepts His cross.

The Romans made condemned criminals carry their own cross. Jesus accepted the heavy cross. He knew that the cross was the way He would redeem the whole world.

### 3. Jesus falls the first time.

Jesus was very weak because the soldiers had scourged (whipped) Him. He had already lost a lot of blood. He could hardly carry the cross. He fell many times.

### 4. Jesus meets His mother.

Jesus' mother Mary did not run away and hide when Jesus was in trouble. She stayed right there with Him through it all. As He was carrying His cross through the streets, He stopped to look at His mother. Their hearts were so very sorrowful. Even so, they accepted that this was the way we would all be saved.

### 5. Simon of Cyrene helps Jesus.

Jesus was so weak that the Roman soldiers were afraid He would die on the way, before they crucified Him. So they made a man named Simon help Jesus carry the cross.

### 6. Veronica wipes Jesus' face.

Veronica was a very brave woman. Even though it was dangerous because of the Roman soldiers, she went right up to Jesus and wiped His face with her own veil. This comforted Jesus very much because He knew someone cared.

### 7. Jesus falls a second time.

Jesus fell many times. Even so, He always got back up again and continued to carry His cross. He was determined to die so that our sins could be forgiven.

### 8. Jesus meets the women of Jerusalem.

Some women came to be with Jesus. They knew He was innocent. They wept for Him when they saw His suffering.

### 9. Jesus falls a third time.

Jesus was almost at the end of His strength. Even so, He got up again. He wanted to show us how to never give up. He wanted to complete His mission.

### 10. Jesus is stripped of his clothes.

They took Jesus' clothes off before they nailed Him to the cross. Jesus knows what it's like to feel ashamed. He bore it because He wanted to redeem us. Jesus would go through anything to save us.

### 11. Jesus is crucified.

They drove nails into Jesus' hands and feet, nailing Him to the cross. The pain He felt was so great. But the love in His heart for us was greater. Jesus accepted death so that we might live.

### 12. Jesus dies on the cross.

Before Jesus drew His last breath, He gave us His last words. It was painful for Him to speak while nailed to a cross. In one of Jesus' last words, He forgave those who had crucified Him. Jesus is willing to forgive any sin, no matter how terrible.

### 13. Jesus body is taken down from the cross.

After Jesus had died, they took His body down and laid it in His mother's arms. Mary wept for all that Jesus, her Son, had suffered. Yet she accepted it all and offered His death so that all our sins could be forgiven. Mary is our spiritual mother.

### 14. Jesus is laid in the tomb.

There was no tomb ready for Jesus. A brave and generous man named Joseph of Arimathea got permission from Pontius Pilate to take the body of Jesus and lay it in His own new tomb. They wrapped Jesus' body in a burial cloth and rolled a heavy stone over the front of the tomb. We know that three days later Jesus would rise from the dead.

## Closing Prayer

“Christ became obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. Because of this, God greatly exalted Him and bestowed on Him the name which is above every other name.” (Phil 2:8-9) Lord we thank You so much for becoming man to save us. We thank You for suffering and even dying for us so that we could live forever. We know that for a Christian, when we die, “life is changed not ended.” We offer up to You the moment of our death. We ask You to send St. Joseph to help us at that moment. May our Guardian Angel also help us. Take away our fear and give us confidence in the heavenly joys that last forever. Amen.





## The Christian Funeral

Jesus said “In my Father’s house there are many dwelling places . . . I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back again and take you to Myself, so that where I am you also may be” — *John 14:2,3*

### Directions

Match the descriptions with the part of the funeral that best fits.

Add to description of what happens during each part of the funeral.

### Parts of the Funeral

#### 1) The Vigil



#### 2) The Funeral Mass



#### 3) The Committal Rite



### Descriptions

A) The Church offers their prayers for the dead and celebrates the Mass.

---



---



---



---



---

B) The family gathers before the Funeral Mass to share memories, say goodbye to their loved one, and offer prayers.

---



---



---



---



---

C) The family goes to the cemetery for the burial or interment of their deceased loved one.

---



---



---



---



---