



**BLESSED ARE THOSE  
WHO MOURN**  
Choosing Music  
for a Funeral

Archdiocese of Perth  
Liturgical Guidelines

Centre for Liturgy

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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# INTRODUCTION

A Christian Funeral is a liturgical act; it is part of the public worship of the Church. It has a structure that has to be observed. Within this structure, there are places where choices have to be made, particularly with regard to the selection of prayers, readings and music. These choices cannot be determined solely by personal tastes and preferences. The fact that they are part of a liturgical celebration means that they have to satisfy certain criteria.

Music is an integral part of the funeral rites. It expresses our faith in the Paschal Mystery: the Life, Death and Resurrection of Jesus. As the music for the liturgy can evoke strong feelings, it should be chosen with care. It should support and console the mourners and strengthen the faith of the assembly.

The following sections will outline the structure of the funeral liturgies, describe the places where choices can be made, and discuss the restrictions that apply. Working with the music ministers and copyright will also be covered.

## THE THEOLOGY OF THE FUNERAL LITURGIES

The Funeral Rites mark the transition from the earthly life to eternal life. They are not a celebration of the life and achievements of the deceased. The life of the deceased can be commemorated at the Vigil.

## THE STRUCTURE OF THE RITES AND THE PLACE OF MUSIC

The Order of Christian Funerals includes four public rites, the structures of which are given below. The parts of the ceremonies marked with 🎵 are the parts where there can be singing or instrumental music. Optional rites are shown in square brackets. We will consider each of these in the next sections.

Four public rites in the Order of Christian Funerals are:

- (1) The Vigil for the Deceased;
- (2) The Funeral Mass;
- (3) Funeral Liturgy outside Mass;
- (4) The Rite of Committal.

These outlines of the rites describe a typical arrangement. There are a number of variations and additional rites that may also be used. The Vigil for the Deceased may be celebrated in the form of some part of the Office for the Dead, for example, Morning Prayer or Evening Prayer. These involve hymns, psalms and canticles, all of which should be sung. The Funeral Liturgy may take the form of a Funeral Mass or as a Funeral Liturgy Outside Mass. A Funeral Liturgy Outside Mass includes all the parts of the Funeral Mass except the Liturgy of the Eucharist.

## CHOOSING SUITABLE MUSIC FOR THE FUNERAL LITURGIES

It will be necessary to choose songs to be sung at various stages of the rites. The words of the songs that are chosen need to reflect the values and beliefs of the Church, in particular, the belief in life after death and the hope of resurrection.

A list of appropriate songs for the various funeral rites begins on page 15.

Psalms are particularly appropriate in the funeral rites because they “powerfully express the suffering and pain, the hope and the trust of people of every age and culture. Above all the psalms sing of faith in God, of revelation and redemption.” (Order of Christian Funerals #25)

**The Responsorial Psalm and the Gospel Acclamation** should be settings of the texts in the Lectionary or in the Order of Christian Funerals. The Responsorial Psalm should not be replaced by some other song.

A list of appropriate Responsorial Psalm settings begins on page 19. The settings are not difficult to sing and also correspond to the texts in the Lectionary.

“Liturgical services are not private functions, but are celebrations belonging to the Church, which is the Sacrament of unity, namely, the holy people united and ordered under their bishops.” (Vatican II, Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy #26) Therefore, secular music, including but not limited to, renditions of popular songs or pieces from operas is not suitable. The use of recorded music should be avoided.

# MUSIC FOR THE VIGIL

## OUTLINE OF THE VIGIL FOR THE DECEASED

### 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

[Final song 🎵]

The Vigil may be held in the church, at the home of the deceased or in the funeral parlour. It may take the form of a Liturgy of the Word. The parts of the Vigil that may be sung are: (1) the Opening Song; (2) the Responsorial Psalm; (3) the Litany; and (4) the Lord's Prayer. There may also be a song after the final blessing.

- *The Responsorial Psalm* should be sung by a Psalmist with the people joining in the response.
- *The Litany* may be sung by a Cantor with the people joining in the response.
- *The Lord's Prayer* may be sung. The use of the plainchant setting is recommended.
- *The final song* is sung by all and should have a liturgical character.

It is customary in Australia to recite the Rosary as part of the Vigil Prayers for the person who has died. To this end, the Centre for Liturgy has published two templates. The first is one which is led by a priest or deacon. In case a priest or

deacon is not available for these Vigil Prayers a template has been prepared so that a lay person can lead the Vigil Prayers (which include the recitation of the rosary).



# MUSIC FOR THE FUNERAL MASS

## OUTLINE OF THE FUNERAL MASS

### The Introductory Rites:

Greeting

Sprinkling with Holy Water

[Placing of the Pall]

Entrance Procession 

[Placing of Christian Symbols]

The Collect

### The Liturgy of the Word:

First Reading

Responsorial Psalm 

Second Reading

Gospel Acclamation 

Gospel

Homily

Universal Prayer

### The Liturgy of the Eucharist

### Final Commendation:

Invitation to Prayer

Silence

[Signs of Farewell]

Song of Farewell 

Prayer of Commendation

### Procession to the Place of Committal



The Funeral Mass is normally held in the parish church. The parts of the Funeral Mass that may be sung are:

- (1) the Entrance Song;
- (2) the Responsorial Psalm;
- (3) the Gospel Acclamation;
- (4) the Holy, Holy, Holy;
- (5) the Memorial Acclamation;
- (6) the Great Amen;
- (7) the Lord's Prayer;
- (8) the Lamb of God;
- (9) the Communion Song; and
- (10) the Song of Farewell.

There may also be songs during the Procession with the Gifts, during the procession out of the church and/or during the Procession to the Place of Committal.

*The Entrance Song* is sung by all while the coffin moves from the door of the church to the sanctuary. A song with verses sung by the Cantor or choir and a response sung by all may be chosen to make it easier for the assembly to join in.

*The Responsorial Psalm* should be sung by a Psalmist with the people joining in the response.

*The Gospel Acclamation* should be sung.

*Instrumental music* or a song may accompany the procession with the gifts.

*The Acclamations* during the Eucharistic Prayer (Holy, Holy, Holy; Memorial Acclamation; Great Amen) should be sung. There are many Mass settings that can be used for these acclamations. It is recommended that all the acclamations be taken from the same Mass setting, preferably one that is familiar to the assembly.

*The Lord's Prayer* may be sung. The use of the plainchant setting is recommended.

*The Lamb of God* may be sung. It can be taken from the same Mass setting as the acclamations during the Eucharistic Prayer.

*The Communion Song* is sung while people are going to Communion. The use of a song with a simple response is recommended.

*The Communion Song* begins when the celebrant takes communion and continues while communion is distributed. It is an expression the unity and the joy of the

community as it shares the Body and Blood of Christ. The use of a song with a simple response is recommended.

(Hymns to Mary should not be sung during Communion. Whilst it is very common to have Schubert's *Ave Maria* sung at funerals, it is appropriate and liturgically correct to sing this motet during the Presentation and Preparation of the Gifts, not during the distribution of Holy Communion.)

*The Song of Farewell* is the climax of the final commendation. It is sung by all before, during or after the incensing of the coffin and the sprinkling with holy water. A song with a simple response or a well-known hymn may be used. Music suggestions for this part of the rite are given on page 18.

A *song* may be sung while the coffin is moved out of the church. The words of this song should reflect the themes of hope and consolation that are emphasized in the funeral liturgy.

# MUSIC FOR THE FUNERAL LITURGY OUTSIDE MASS

## OUTLINE OF THE FUNERAL LITURGY OUTSIDE MASS

### The Introductory Rites:

Greeting

Sprinkling with Holy Water

[Placing of the Pall]

Entrance Procession 

[Placing of Christian Symbols]

The Collect

### The Liturgy of the Word:

First Reading

Responsorial Psalm 

Second Reading

Gospel Acclamation 

Gospel

Homily

Universal Prayer

Lord's Prayer

### Final Commendation:

Invitation to Prayer

Silence

[Signs of Farewell]

Song of Farewell 

Prayer of Commendation

Procession to the Place of Committal 

The Funeral Liturgy outside Mass is normally held in the parish church. The parts of this liturgy that may be sung are:

- (1) the Entrance Song;
- (2) the Responsorial Psalm;
- (3) the Gospel Acclamation;
- (4) the Lord's Prayer; and
- (5) the Song of Farewell.

There may also be songs during the procession out of the church and/or during the Procession to the Place of Committal.

*The Entrance Song* is sung by all while the coffin moves from the door of the church to the sanctuary. A song with verses sung by the Cantor or choir and a response sung by all may be chosen to make it easier for the assembly to join in.

*The Responsorial Psalm* should be sung by a Psalmist with the people joining in the response.

*The Gospel Acclamation* should be sung.

*The Lord's Prayer* may be sung. The use of the plainchant setting is recommended.

*The Song of Farewell* is the climax of the final commendation. It is sung by all before, during or after the incensing of the coffin and the sprinkling with holy water. A song with a simple response or a well-known hymn may be used. Music suggestions for this part of the rite are given on page 18.

*A song* may be sung while the coffin is moved out of the church. The words of this song should reflect the themes of hope and consolation that are emphasized in the funeral liturgy.

# MUSIC FOR THE RITE OF COMMITTAL

## OUTLINE OF THE RITE OF COMMITTAL

Invitation  
Scripture verse  
Prayer over the Place of Committal  
Committal  
Intercessions  
The Lord's Prayer 🎵  
Concluding Prayer  
Prayer over the People  
[Final song 🎵]

A song may be sung at the end of the rite, after the prayer over the people.

If there is to be a cremation instead of a burial, some of the rites can take place at the crematorium. If there is a Funeral Liturgy in church, then the Rite of Committal may take place in the crematorium. Otherwise, the Funeral Liturgy Outside Mass described in the section above may take place at the crematorium. Rites celebrated at the crematorium are liturgical acts and the songs chosen should reflect Christian beliefs in the same way as songs chosen for rites that take place in church.

## WORKING WITH THE MUSIC MINISTERS

There is a range of possibilities regarding the music ministers. They can range from a solo organist to an organist and cantor to a full choir. You will need to meet with the organist, cantor or choir director before the funeral to choose the music. If necessary, they will be able to make suggestions regarding appropriate pieces of music and give you a selection to choose from. They will also be able to advise you on copyright matters.

## COPYRIGHT

If you decide to produce a funeral booklet or a PowerPoint presentation, you need to observe the requirements of the law regarding copyright. The texts of the Mass and funeral rites are copyright, and this should be acknowledged in the booklet. If you want to reproduce the words of the songs, you may need to obtain a license to do so. The music ministers will advise you on where and how to apply for a copyright license. The licensing agency for songs is OneLicense ([www.onelicense.net](http://www.onelicense.net)).

# MUSIC SUGGESTIONS FOR FUNERALS

Listed below are the abbreviations for the hymnal and Responsorial Psalm resources which give music suggestions for the funeral liturgy.

## ABBREVIATIONS

**AOV1** - *As One Voice Volume 1*. (1992). Sydney: Willow Connection.  
[www.asonevoice.com.au](http://www.asonevoice.com.au)

**AOV2** - *As One Voice Volume 2*. (1996). Sydney: Willow Connection.  
[www.asonevoice.com.au](http://www.asonevoice.com.au)

**CWB** - *Catholic Worship Book*. (1985). Melbourne: Collins/ E. J. Dwyer. (Out of print)

**CWB II** - *Catholic Worship Book II*. (2016). Melbourne: Morning Star Publishing.  
[www.morningstar.net.au](http://www.morningstar.net.au)

**GA**- *Gather Australia*. (1995). Melbourne: NLMC Publications. (Out of print).

**G3** - *Gather (Third Edition)*. (2011). Chicago: GIA Publications.

**PF** - O'Brien, J. (2014). *Psalms For The Easter Triduum and Other Major Feasts*. Adelaide: Jennifer O'Brien.

**PFAT1** - Mason, P. (2016). *Psalms for All Time (Volume 1)*. Wollongong: Liturgical Song.  
<http://www.liturgicalsong.com/>

**PFAT2** - Mason, P. (2007). *Psalms for All Time (Volume 2)*. Wollongong: Liturgical Song.  
<http://www.liturgicalsong.com/>

**PTLMS** – Connolly, R. (2015). *Praise The Lord My Soul: 35 Psalm Settings for Sundays, Seasons, Feasts and Australian Occasions*. Sydney: Willow Connection.  
[www.asonevoice.com.au](http://www.asonevoice.com.au)

## Hymns for use within the Funeral Mass or Funeral Liturgy of the Word

Title	AOV1	AOV2	CWB	CWBII	GA	G3
Abide with me		128				
Amazing Grace	29			450	337	645
Be Not Afraid	114			653	449	683
Be still my soul				142		
Come to Me	37		660		228	
Do not be afraid/ The Lord is my light- Psalm 27 (26)		73	593/594	481	28	
Dwellers in the Holy City						976
Eye Has Not Seen	146				466	728
Farewell, we come to send you on your way				141	237	
God gives his people strength			691			
Go, silent friend				143		
How Great Thou Art ( <i>O Lord my God, when I in awesome wonder</i> )	94			577		578
How rich are the depths of God ( <i>The Hound of Heaven</i> )		79	795	505	81	
I Am the Bread of Life	49		718	509	204	945
I heard the voice of Jesus say	54			512	468	724
I know that my Redeemer lives (Winchester New)				144		
I know that my Redeemer lives (Scott Soper)		34		145		
I shall dwell in the Lord's House		69				
In faith and hope and love			722	520	442	



Keep in Mind	180		730	530	391	646
Title	AOV1	AOV2	CWB	CWBII	GA	G3
Lord of all hopefulness			738	541		
Lord of the living				440		
May God bless and keep you	177				441	
My soul is longing for your peace			751	559	519	
Nearer, My God, To Thee		154				
Now the Green Blade Rises		131	756	363	364	534
O God our help in ages past	175		767	568	459	688
O Lord, You died that all might live				146		
On Eagle's Wings	151			654	452	691
Remember those, O Lord				441		
Restless is the heart				239		
Shepherd me, O God*	33			597	24	35
Sing with all the saints in glory					147	
Soul of My Saviour				811	164	
The Clouds' Veil						710
The Lord is My Shepherd*	26		830	619	506	
The Lord's My Shepherd, I'll Not Want ( <i>Crimond</i> )	144		833	620	473	
There is a place (Bell)				148		
There is a place (Lawton)						979
We walk by faith	63			641	447	680
We shall rise again						871
When human voices cannot sing				149	236	
You are near	112				451	695

\* Indicates that these hymns are suitable to sing during the Funeral Mass or the Funeral Liturgy outside of Mass, but not as the Responsorial Psalm within those rites.

### Final Commendation and Farewell

Title	AOV1	AOV2	CWB	CWBII	GA
Come to his/her aid				150	
O come to meet him/her, saints of God				151	
Saints of God (Duffy)			162a	153	240
Saints of God (O'Brien)				152	

### Procession to the Place of Committal (Recessional Hymn)

Title	AOV1	AOV2	CWB	CWBII	GA
May Flights of Angels			164b	154	241
May Saints and Angels				155	
May songs of the angels				156	
May the choirs of angels				157	238

## Responsorial Psalms

### Psalm 22 (23)

R. The Lord is my Shepherd, there is nothing I shall want

- CWB #590
- GA #25
- PFAT1 p. 18
- PFAT2 p. 7
- PF p. 56

### Psalm 24 (25)

R. To you, O Lord, I lift my soul.

- CWB #158a

### Psalm 26 (27)

R. The Lord is my light and my salvation.

- CWB #469/470
- PTLMS p. 16
- PF p. 72

### Psalm 26 (27)

R. I believe that I shall see the good things of the Lord in the land of the living.

- CWB #470

### Psalm 41 (42)

R. My soul is thirsting for the living God: when shall I see him face to face?

- GA #37 (Gelineau) Verses 1, 2 and 3

### Psalm 62 (63)

R. My soul is thirsting for you, O Lord my God.

- CWB #442
- GA #42 (Willcock)
- PFAT1 p. 48
- PTLMS p. 31

### Psalm 102

**R. The Lord is kind and merciful.**

-CWB #152b

**Psalm 114 and 115 (116)**

**R. I will walk in the presence of the Lord in the land of the living.**

-CWB #152a

-PF p. 42

**Psalm 121 (122)**

**R. Let us go rejoicing to the house of the Lord.**

-CWB #338 (Willcock)

-CWBII #536 (Willcock)

-GA #72 (Willcock)

-PFAT1 p. 96 (Mason)

-PTLMS p. 74 (Connolly)

**Psalm 129 (130)**

**R. Out of the depths, I cry to you, Lord.**

-CWB #152c/ 152d





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