

The roman catholic funeral rite vs. the jewish funeral rite

[Religion](#), [Catholic](#)



The Roman Catholic Funeral Rite vs. the Jewish Funeral Rite Funeral services in the 1990's are more complex that they have ever been before. The modern funeral director must not only be aware of and comply with their own state and local rules and regulations, but also with the Federal Trade Commission's Funeral Rule and a variety of Occupational Safety and Health Act (OSHA) rules. Add to this the fact that the so-called "traditional funeral" has become less and less traditional.

While the religious aspects still play a major role in the majority of the funerals held in the United States, changes in the attitude of the clergy and the families, changes in funeral home structuring and pricing, and changes in the funeral home facilities and services that they render have caused a great change in the funeral itself. There are several religions that practice funeral rites, however, in this paper I will attempt to compare/contrast the Roman Catholic Funeral Rite vs. the Jewish Funeral Rite. Introduction to the Roman Catholic Church

Of all the Christian religions in the world, the Roman Catholic Church is the largest, claiming approximately one billion members worldwide. In the United States there are about 55 million members. Roman Catholics believe that since Jesus Christ brought salvation into the world, He was the founder of their Church. They also believe that the Church has preserved the teachings of Christ and that the Holy Spirit guides the Church through its ministry. In regard to funeral rites, the Roman Catholic Church believes that all Catholics should be buried from the Church with a Mass.

There is no actual charge for being buried from the Church. The funeral director should be able to guide the family as to the practices if an honorarium is customarily given to the celebrant. Clergy Notification The practice of notifying the deceased's clergyman when a death occurs was at one time a common as well as sensible practice. However, today, this practice can in no way be considered the usual. Factors such as time of death, place where death occurred, and the relationship between the family and the clergy, each play a role in the family's decision as to the appropriate time to notify the clergy of the death.

Many families would be hesitant to call the clergy in the middle of the night and may determine that more can be accomplished by waiting until morning. This may be especially true in cases where the death was expected or where the Sacrament of the Sick had been administered. Since many priests want to participate in the decision making process for the date, time, and location of the funeral service, the funeral directors may want to determine whether or not the family had contacted the priest, who is to celebrate the Funeral Mass, prior to entering into discussions concerning the scheduling of the Mass.

Removal of the Remains There are generally no church restrictions that would prohibit the removal of the remains at the time of death. In cases where the deceased was a clergy or a member of a religious order, there may be delays in the removal should there be a desire for special prayers by members of the order before removal. Preparing the Remains There are no specific restrictions as to the preparation of the remains of the body.

Religious articles worn by the deceased should be removed, recorded, and replaced after the preparation of the body.

The family should be asked if the religious articles should remain on the body or removed and returned to them. If the deceased is a clergyman or a member of a religious order, there may be restrictions as to how the remains are prepared. Some groups may request that the embalming be done in the convent, monastery, or rectory rather than in the funeral home. In this case, the funeral home should check with the individual within the church, monastery, or convent to obtain proper instructions and authorization to prepare the remains. Dressing and Casketing the Remains

The deceased should be dressed in clothing selected by the family. Members of the clergy will be dressed in the robes of the station of their priesthood, while members of religious orders should be dressed in the robes of their affiliated position. Religious objects may be placed in the hands of the deceased by family or church officials. Rosary beads are most commonly used, and usually placed in the hands. A crucifix, sacred heart, or other religiously significant objects may be placed in the head or foot panel, on or near the casket. The Wake

A Rosary Service or Wake will usually be held in the funeral or family home, or church the evening before the funeral Mass. This is to provide friends and family of the deceased an opportunity to share a series of prayers with the family. It is meant to offer a time of reflection on the meaning of life, death, and eternal life. The service may be led by a priest, layperson, family

member, or the funeral director. This is usually scheduled by the family and approved by the church during the funeral arrangements. The Funeral Mass and Recessional

The funeral Mass actually begins when the casket is moved into the vestibule of the church. The casket bearers and family members accompany the casket to await the celebrant and the altar attendants. The procession to meet the body is led by the crucifer and two altar attendants, one who carries the Holy Water and one who carries the incense. The celebrant is last in the procession. Following the greeting and invocation, the celebrant conducts the blessing of the casket with Holy Water. Casket pieces are removed at this time (if applicable) and set aside, and the casket is covered with a pall. In the case that an American flag is covering the casket, prior arrangements would be made as to remove the flag and use a pall. If removed, it will be properly folded and set aside.) The procession down the aisle is led by the crucifer, followed by the altar attendants and the priest. The family will follow the casket down the aisle. When the procession reaches the foot of the altar, the celebrant will proceed up the steps while the funeral director seats the family and casket bearers. The casket should be placed at right angles to the altar. Laypersons and nuns are placed with their feet toward the altar, while priests are placed with their heads towards the altar. After the funeral directors exit the church, the celebrant will conduct several Bible readings, consisting of the Psalms and the Gospel. Family eulogies are then read and Communion is offered to all. After this, the celebrant will say the final commendation and bless the casket again with

incense and Holy Water. After this, the funeral directors will return to the church for the recessional. In the recessional, the celebrant moves toward the cross bearer and the funeral directors return to each end of the casket.

With room permitting, the casket is turned making the sign of a cross and it once again placed in the center of the aisle. The recessional makes its way out of the church the same order it entered. Variations of the funeral mass are common, but it is the responsibility of the funeral director to maintain constant contact with the clergy. Introduction to Judaism Judaism, thought to date back to the 16th century B. C. , was the first monotheistic religion. Founded by Abraham, Judaism was the foundation for Christianity and Islam. It is based in the doctrine of one God, ancient scriptures (Old Testament) and Talmud (oral teachings of the Torah).

There are three religious Jewish groupings in the United States: the Orthodox, who continue the ancient traditions and beliefs; the Reform, who allow greater flexibility and have adapted to modern practices; and the Conservative, who fit in between the Orthodox and Reform. The Conservative still follow ancient traditions, but have accepted gradual changes as a natural growth of the religion. (For the sake of this paper, I will be using mostly the Conservative and Reform position to compare to the Roman Catholic.) Notification of Death/Clergy

It is of up most importance that upon receiving the initial call of the death, that the funeral home request verbal permission to remove the body from the place of death. Upon meeting with the family, written permission of often

received. It is also necessary to inform the family that embalming is not required by law, but is desired due to natural biological changes that occur after death. There are often times, whether it be for personal or religious reasons, that the neither the family nor the Rabbi want the body embalmed. It is usually not necessary to contact the Rabbi at the time of death unless the family so chooses to do so.

The Rabbi is usually contacted after the funeral arrangements are completed and advised of the time and place of service. Dressing and Casketing The deceased may be dressed in any clothing desired by the family and Rabbi. The family will sometimes request that a shroud be used under the regular clothing or in place of the deceased's clothing. The casket is the choice of the family and there are no restrictions as to the material it is made from or the type. Most will choose the traditional orthodox wooden casket, but metals or other materials normally used to make caskets are permitted also.

The Funeral

No funeral services, whether it is Orthodox, Reform, or Conservative, are to be held on the Jewish Shabbat, which is from sundown on Friday until sundown on Saturday. The funerals may be held in the funeral home, the residence of the deceased, the temple, or the grave site. The Rabbi, often accompanied by a Cantor, will lead and direct the service. The Cantor will often chant and sing the readings. If the funeral is held somewhere other than the temple, the cortege will not normally stop at the temple on the way to the cemetery. In most cases the funeral home will provide transportation for the Rabbi and the Cantor.

The Committal Service Burial may take place in any cemetery the family chooses. During the procession, the Rabbi may stop seven times to pray. Upon arrival to the cemetery, the casket is placed in wooden planks over the newly dug grave. The site around the grave is usually plain with no artificial grass, but if using artificial grass, a tent and mechanical lowering device is used. During the service, the Rabbi will say special prayers and led the mourners in the recitation of the Kaddish (a prayer recited for the deceased by parents, siblings, spouses, and children). The children will recite the Kaddish at every service for their parents for 11 months. Upon leaving the gravesite, mourners should wash their hands three times by pouring water on them, beginning with the right hand. The hands are then air-dried. As one can see there are numerous differences in the Roman Catholic and the Jewish funeral rites. However, these religions are only two of the thousands practiced in our world. While some may consider their religion healthier than others, everyone has the right to apply whatever religion they choose as well as participate in their own funeral practices.

With all the available options, choices, and changes, the “ traditional” funeral is basically no longer. Works Cited Curley, Terrance, P. Planning the Catholic Funeral. Liturgical Press, July 2005. Funeral Etiquette. Google. com. 13 April 2008. http://www.mountcastle.net/funeral.htm#Funeral_Etiquette_. Gambrel, Leslie. Personal Interview. 12 April 2008. Greenberg, Blu. How to Run a Traditional Jewish Household. Simon & Schuster, September 1985. Conservative Judaism. Google. com. 13 April 2008. <http://uscj.org/index1>.

html. Watson, Ron. A Time to Mourn, a Time to Comfort. Jewish Lights Publishing, New York. November 1995.