Preparing to Celebrate the Funeral Mass

at



ST. ROBERT CATHOLIC CHURCH

San Bruno, California

Revised: Jan 2026

A Message to the Family:

Dear Bereaved Friend,

Please accept our heartfelt condolences on the loss of your loved one. In this time of grief, may our God of comfort hold you in His loving embrace and strengthen you with the hope of the Resurrection. Jesus Christ, our Way, Truth, and Life, assures us that those who have gone before us now share in His eternal peace and joy.

To help you prepare for the funeral liturgy, we have provided guidelines in the following pages. We hope these will assist you in planning a prayerful and meaningful celebration of your loved one's life. We also encourage you to meet with the priest presiding at the funeral Mass a day or two beforehand to review the liturgy.

If you have any questions, please call the parish office at (650) 589-2800. Be assured of our prayers for your loved one and for all who are mourning. May the Lord bless you with comfort, strength, and peace.

Fr Arnold Zamora
Pastor, St Robert Church

Planning the Funeral Rites of the Church

Most funerals celebrated at St. Robert's are arranged with the assistance of the Funeral Directors (e.g. Chapel of the Highlands, Duggans - Serra Mortuary, Garden Chapel Funeral Homes, etc.). The staff of these funeral homes are aware of the funeral practices indicated here and will be very willing, in conjunction with the Parish clergy and staff, to make appropriate arrangements for the celebration of the Funeral Rites of the Church.

The information provided here is for the funeral of an adult. If the deceased is a child, other options may be available and should be discussed personally with the parish clergy who is assisting you in the funeral planning.

Steps in Planning a Funeral at St. Robert

We understand that planning a funeral can be overwhelming during a time of grief. Please know that the parish staff and clergy of St. Robert are here to support and guide you through each step with care and compassion.

1. **Coordination with the Funeral Home**
   If you are working with a funeral home, they may assist you in coordinating with St. Robert Parish to request and secure a date for the Funeral Mass or service.
2. **Funeral Information Form**
   Before requesting a service date, please provide the necessary information to the parish office by completing the *Funeral Information Form*, which is available at the Parish Office.
3. **Selecting a Date and Time**
   You may propose a preferred date and time for the funeral service. The date will be confirmed once:
   - the church is available, and
   - an officiating priest is availableParish staff will then provide guidance on preparation, family requests, and any applicable fees or offerings.
4. **Contact from the Priest**
   Once the date is confirmed, the priest will contact the next of kin or the designated family representative to confirm details and schedule a meeting at the church.
5. **Meeting with the Priest**
   The family or designated representative will meet with the priest to review the funeral liturgy, discuss expectations, answer questions, and select Scripture readings for the Mass or service.
6. **Music Selection**
   The Parish Music Director or a designated representative will contact you to assist with the selection of appropriate music for the service.
7. **Offerings and Final Arrangements**
   Offerings and donations are collected prior to the service. Any remaining questions, special requests, or concerns may also be addressed at this time with the parish office staff.

ITEMS TO BE DETERMINED IN FUNERAL PLANNING

The following are the major items which must be determined, in consultation with the parish clergy assisting in the funeral arrangements, for the celebration of the Funeral Rites of the Church.

□ Does the family want a Vigil Service? If so…

At the Vigil Service:

□ Does the family wish to provide an opportunity for sharing remembrances during the Vigil Service?
□ Have one or more individuals already agreed to speak at this time?

At the Funeral Mass:

 Who will place the pall on the casket during the reception of the body?
 What object to symbolize the Christian life will be placed on the casket and by whom? (optional)
 Who will do the readings at Mass?
 Are one or two individual(s)identified who will bring forward the gifts to the priest during the preparation of the gifts?
 Will there be a Eulogy? This is done after the communion, before the blessing of the body.
(Please note, kindly limit the eulogy to a maximum of 2 people with no more than 5 mins each. We encourage to do these remembrance speeches done during the wake, if there is one.)

At the cemetery:

 Will it be a gravesite service or a Chapel Service?
 Will the casket be lowered during the committal service?

THE LOCATION OF THE VISITATION AND THE VIGIL SERVICE

The visitation and the vigil service may be held at the funeral home or if a large group of people are expected, at the church schedule permitting. The availability of the church may obviously be affected by the Mass schedule or other liturgies already scheduled, e.g., a wedding, solemn vespers, a penance service, adoration, etc. If you wish to hold the visitation and Vigil Service in the church, you should make this known early in the funeral planning process.

THE VIGIL SERVICE OR A ROSARY

The liturgical rite which is celebrated in conjunction with the visitation is the Vigil Service. This is a scripture-based service with:

- an opening hymn (optional)
- an opening prayer
- scripture readings and a brief homily
- the Lord's Prayer
- a closing prayer
- a blessing
- Closing hymn (optional)

(A recitation of the Rosary may be integrated into the Vigil Service and may be scheduled before, during, or after the Vigil Service, as appropriate.)

This rite provides an opportunity for family members or close friends of the deceased to share remembrances and stories of the deceased. This is not, however, a time for thank-you's on behalf of the deceased or his or her family. This is intended to be a time to share stories from the life of the deceased which reveal how he or she lived a life of Gospel values.

Observing this opportunity to share remembrances is not always done in the Vigil Service. If you wish to do this, it is necessary before the Vigil Service to arrange for a few people to share their stories at this time. Immediate family members of the deceased may choose not to speak, as it may be too difficult or too emotional for them to do so. Discuss this matter with the priest or deacon who will be presiding at the Vigil Service in advance of the service, so that he will know whether to announce the sharing of remembrances during the Vigil Service.

The visitation and Vigil Service are ordinarily held at the funeral home. The Vigil Service may be held at the church only in special instances – such as when a large number of attendees is expected – or in other rare cases requiring a special arrangement with the parish, and only if the church is available and the schedule permits. Please note that church availability may be affected by the parish Mass schedule and other previously scheduled liturgies or parish events, such as weddings, solemn vespers, penance services, Eucharistic adoration, or similar celebrations. If the family wishes to request that the visitation and Vigil Service take place in the church, this must be communicated as early as possible during the funeral planning process. Please be advised that additional parish service-related fees may apply when the Vigil Service is held in the church, including fees associated with the use of the church and the support of parish ministries, such as altar servers, sacristans, music ministry, and other liturgical support as needed.

THE FUNERAL SERVICE OR THE FUNERAL MASS

The Funeral Mass is the principal Parish celebration following the death of a Catholic Christian.

In some cases, particularly those in which the deceased had not been faithfully practicing the Catholic faith, or cases in which there are very few Catholic members of the deceased's family, it may be preferable to celebrate a funeral service rather than a Funeral Mass. The priest or deacon who is working with you in the funeral planning will assist in determining whether a funeral service or Funeral Mass will be celebrated.

The priest or deacon will also discuss the proper sequences of events involved in the actual celebration of the Funeral Mass and all that is involved when a funeral service is held either at the church or the funeral home.

DAYS ON WHICH THERE IS NO FUNERAL MASS

Due to the special character of the following days, St. Robert's does not permit a Funeral Mass to be celebrated on:

- Holy Thursday
- Good Friday
- Holy Saturday
- Sundays
- Solemnities which are Holy Days of Obligation.

If necessary, a funeral service could be celebrated on some of these days, with a Memorial Mass to be scheduled at a later date.

THE RITE OF COMMITTAL

If there are to be military or other rites celebrated at the cemetery, these should be celebrated last, with the rite of the Church to be celebrated first. The proper procedure for committal will be discussed by the parish clergy.

THE CATHOLIC AND CREMATION

The Church has a preference for intact burial of the human body of the deceased; however, if cremation is chosen by the deceased's loved ones and the reasons are not contrary to the faith, the Church allows ecclesiastical funeral rites to be celebrated.

The further preference of the church is that cremation follows the customary Funeral Mass or funeral service. After cremation, the cremains would be honored with burial in a blessed grave.

It is not permitted to scatter the ashes.

MASS OFFERINGS

Guests at the visitation may choose to make monetary offerings for the celebration of Holy Masses for the intention of the deceased. Please see the Parish Secretary to offer Masses.

DESIGNATION OF RECIPIENT FOR MEMORIAL GIFTS

Guests at the visitation may wish to make a donation in memory of the deceased to an appropriate charity. It would be helpful for guests who come for visitation if the family specifies an appropriate charity as the designated memorial for the deceased. Sometimes, the family identifies an organization which the deceased supported or to which the deceased belonged.

St. Robert's and School would be pleased to be identified as a beneficiary of memorial gifts. Please contact the Parish Secretary for assistance.

CHURCH OFFERING

An offering for the use of the Church is customary. This offering goes directly to the general parish fund for the maintenance of the Church and is not an offering to the priest; therefore, the check should be made out to St. Robert's Church.

As a suggestion we recommend that you consider:

$400 Funeral Service/Mass or Memorial Service/Mass
$700 Vigil Service (in the church) in addition to the Funeral/Memorial Service/Mass

OFFERING TO THE CELEBRANT (& OTHER LITURGICAL SUPPORT)

An additional offering to the clergy for the Vigil and Funeral Mass must be so designated on an envelope marked with the priest's/deacon's name. We recommend:

$50 for burial service or blessing of gravesite only
$75 for the clergy for the vigil service only
$150 for funeral mass or memorial service only
$200 for the clergy for both the funeral service/mass and burial (committal)
$275 for the clergy for all 3 services, vigil, funeral service/mass, and burial

When altar servers assist at the liturgy, families may also choose to offer a customary token of appreciation in recognition of their service (customary amount: $20 per server).

If the funeral is scheduled on a weekend or holiday, the services of a sacristan may be required to ensure proper preparation and coordination of the liturgy; an offering for this ministry is appreciated (customary amount: $50).

St. Robert Parish also offers livestreaming for funeral services held in the church when requested. If livestreaming is requested, an offering for the livestream minister is also appreciated (customary amount: $50).

MUSIC RESOURCES

The parish clergy will, in view of their responsibility to safeguard the sacred liturgy, approve or disapprove of the music suggested for the Funeral Mass. Suggested music can be found in the Breaking Bread Book for the appropriate year.

All arrangement for music must be made with the Parish Director of Music, who will assist you in choosing music and songs. The parish Director of Music has the first right of refusal for all funerals. Outside musicians and recorded music may not be permitted. Be sure to contact the parish Music Director as soon as possible. He will answer any of your questions and help you plan the mass. The Music Director can also arrange for a cantor.

ON STIPENDS AND DONATIONS

Most funeral homes itemize all costs within their billings. Included should be the stipends and donations for the church, musicians' (organist and cantor) checks. We prefer that all the stipend arrangements be completed by the funeral home rather than the family taking care of the stipends on their own.

If this is a Memorial Mass and not handled by the funeral home, unless other arrangements have been made, it is preferred that the stipend be paid prior to the Mass to the musicians at the church or left with the parish secretary in the rectory office.

USE OF FACILITIES FOR A RECEPTION

Unfortunately, St. Robert's is not able to offer a facility for any reception due to space availability and insurance liability.



When you pass through the waters, I will be with you;
and when you pass through the rivers, they will not sweep over you.
When you walk through the fire, you will not be burned;
the flames will not set you ablaze.

Isaiah 43:2

CONTACT PERSONS

1. Parish Staff	Lisa Gonzalez or Ricky Inting (650) 589-2800
2. Parish Priests & Deacon	Rev. Arnold Zamora (pastorofstroberts@gmail.com) Rev. Bonifacio Espeleta, Jr. Deacon Michael Smith (650) 589-2800
3. Director of Music	Gianpaolo Eleria (857)-204-9547

Rectory Office Hours:

8:00 AM to 4:00 PM
Monday to Friday

1380 Crystal Springs Road



GRIEF MINISTRY INFORMATION:

Saint Robert's Grief and Consolation Ministry is comprised of a small group of dedicated parishioners who work and pray with anyone who is grieving. One may be grieving the loss of a child, a spouse, a sibling, a parent, a friend.

The Consolation Ministry hosts a session for anyone who is grieving in the Convent Chapel every other Saturday from September through June at 3:00 - 4:15 p.m. This gives time for prayer and sharing and learning the steps needed to cope with a loss. The group is usually small enough to give time for everyone to share and be heard.

For additional information contact: Judy Kerrigan at srconsolationmin@att.net.

GLOSSARY

Funeral Services Provided by the Catholic Church

*The Catholic Church typically offers **three main rites**, which together form the traditional Catholic funeral journey. Families may choose some or all of these based on circumstances.*

A. Vigil (Wake) – "Vigil for the Deceased"

- *Held the evening before the funeral (at a church, funeral home, or family home).*
- *Includes Scripture readings, prayers, rosary, and time for remembrance.*
- *Offers comfort to the family and a chance for community support.*

B. Funeral Mass – "Mass of Christian Burial"

- *The central and most important funeral rite.*
- *Celebrated in the church, with the body or cremated remains present.*
- *Includes prayers, readings, homily, the Eucharist, and the Final Commendation.*
- *Focuses on Christ's promise of resurrection and eternal life.*

C. Committal – "Rite of Committal"

- *Takes place at the cemetery or columbarium.*
- *Includes prayers as the body or cremated remains are laid to rest.*
- *A final farewell, entrusting the loved one to God's care.*

Additional Funeral-Related Services offered:

- ***Memorial Mass -** A Mass celebrated without the body present, often held after burial or on anniversaries.*
- ***Celebration of Life (with Catholic elements) -** Some families combine a more personal remembrance event alongside the Holy Mass.*
- ***Rosary Service -** A dedicated rosary prayer service, usually held during the vigil.*
- ***Novena for the Dead -** Nine days of prayer for the soul of the deceased, usually prayed by families at home or funeral home.*
- ***Blessing of the Body -** A prayer service done when the priest first arrives at the home or funeral home.*
- ***Funeral Liturgy Outside of Mass -** Used when a full Mass is not possible (e.g., pastoral circumstances or when many attendees are not Catholic).*

Types of Ceremonies and Practices During the Loss of a Loved One

Catholics practice a variety of spiritual traditions to honor the dead and support the grieving:

***A. Prayers for the Dead** (priest are optional)*

- *Rosaries*
- *Chaplet of Divine Mercy*
- *Litany for the Faithful Departed*
- *Personal or family prayer gatherings*

***B. Viewing or Wake** (priest are optional)*

An opportunity for visitation, storytelling, support, and prayer.

***C. Reception or Gathering** (priest are optional)*

A family or parish-hosted gathering for fellowship after the funeral.

D. Forty Days or Month's Mind

In some cultures (Filipino, Irish, etc.), a special Mass or prayer is offered around 30–40 days after death.

E. Anniversary Masses

Masses offered on the 1-year death anniversary or yearly thereafter.

F. Blessing of Graves

Common during All Souls' Day or cemetery visits.

FUNERAL INFORMATION

Name of Deceased: _____

Date of Death: _____ Age: _____

Address: _____

_____

Parishioner of St Robert? Yes _____ No _____

Name (s) and their relationship of Immediate Family (Living):

_____

_____

Contact Information: Name: _____Relationship: _____

Telephone Number: _____ Email: _____

Planned Schedule:

Vigil Service Date: _____ Time: _____

[ ] Church or [ ] Mortuary: _____

Funeral Mass Date:_____ Time:_____

Committal Date:_____ Time: _____

Other comments or notes:

_____

_____

_____

*Please be advised: The date and time indicated on this form are not confirmed until you have been contacted by the parish office for verification.