

Adult Catechism for September 21, 2015

Funeral Services in the Ukrainian Catholic Tradition

Part 1: Scripture Readings:

John 11:21-27: Martha said to Jesus, "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died. But even now I know that God will give you whatever you ask of him." Jesus said to her, "Your brother will rise again." Martha said to him, "I know that he will rise again in the resurrection on the last day." Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. Those who believe in me, even though they die, will live, and everyone who lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?" She said to him, "Yes, Lord, I believe that you are the Messiah, the Son of God, the one coming into the world."

John 6:37-40: Everything that the Father gives me will come to me, and anyone who comes to me I will never drive away; for I have come down from heaven, not to do my own will, but the will of him who sent me. And this is the will of him who sent me, that I should lose nothing of all that he has given me, but raise it up on the last day. This is indeed the will of my Father, that all who see the Son and believe in him may have eternal life; and I will raise them up on the last day."

John 5:24-29: Very truly, I tell you, anyone who hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life, and does not come under judgment, but has passed from death to life. "Very truly, I tell you, the hour is coming, and is now here, when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God, and those who hear will live. For just as the Father has life in himself, so he has granted the Son also to have life in himself; and he has given him authority to execute judgment, because he is the Son of Man. Do not be astonished at this; for the hour is coming good, to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil, to the resurrection of condemnation.

Part 2: Common Terms and Definitions for Ukrainian Catholic Funerals

The sacrament of the sick (an anointing with holy oil) is recommended for any baptized person who is seriously ill. This ritual invites God to bless the individual, forgive their sins, purify their souls, and return them to good health, should this be God's will. You should not hesitate to call a priest at any hour. The hospital chaplain will make arrangements for another priest (Ukrainian or Roman Catholic) should you not be able to contact your own pastor. The sacrament may still be administered for a short time after someone has passed away.

Death As you experience the grief associated with death you may be overwhelmed by a variety of emotions, thoughts and questions. In these difficult moments of life Christians are encouraged to embrace the principals of faith, which most of us have acquired since childhood, namely: that God who called us to life, will also call us home to live eternally; our human body is the vessel given to us for life in this world; our real identity is tied up with our soul—that invisible yet essential part of us, which continues to exist long after we have shed our bodies;

whoever believes in Jesus as their Lord and Saviour will not die but live with God forever (John 3:16); eternal life with God, although difficult to define with human language, will be complete and utter perfection, joy, love and holiness; the love we shared with others in life, may continue to extend into the realm of eternity in the form of prayer.

Parastas (Prayer Service) The prayer service usually takes place on the evening before the funeral service. The vigil is a long-standing custom that enables the bereaved to pray for the deceased and to reflect on the Christian meaning of life as God created it. The service may be held in the church or funeral home. The service typically ends with a viewing of the body. The family may invite those in attendance for coffee and sweets following the service.

Requiem Divine Liturgy (Funeral) The Requiem Divine Liturgy begins with the reception of the funeral procession at the entrance of the church. The clergy incenses the body and reads a passage from one of the four gospels. The clergy then leads the pallbearers and family with the casket into the church. The casket is placed at the foot of the sanctuary. The family and pallbearers are seated in the front pews. The Requiem Divine Liturgy includes psalms and scripture readings that draw attention to God's work and the importance of the Divine Eucharist as spiritual nourishment. The entire service is usually sung. Incense is commonly used as a symbol of prayers rising to God.

Rite of Interment (Burial) Following the Requiem Divine Liturgy, the funeral procession of cars proceeds to the cemetery for the final service and burial. At the ceremony, a Panakhyda (prayer service of committal) is offered. The priest then casts earth and ashes upon the casket as a reminder that we are all earth, dust and ashes and that, according to the will of God, we will return to the earth once again. The priest then makes the sign of the cross at the head, feet and both sides of the casket, thus symbolically sealing the grave until the second coming of the Lord, Jesus Christ. The family often chooses to host a luncheon following interment.

Eulogy The priest normally offers a Christian reflection in the form of a sermon or homily at the prayer service and Requiem Divine Liturgy. A friend or family member of the deceased may be called upon to offer a brief eulogy. As parish customs differ, the eulogy should be discussed with the officiating priest beforehand.

Cremation Burial is still the Church's preference, however, cremation is permitted provided that it does not demonstrate a denial of faith in the resurrection of the body. Cremation normally takes place only after the completion of the funeral services. The cremated remains are placed in an urn and should be buried in a grave, or placed in a niche or columbarium at a cemetery.

Condolences As an expression of sympathy, you may make a donation to the church and request that a Divine Liturgy be offered by a priest in memory of the deceased. The family will receive a Divine Liturgy card letting them know a Divine Liturgy has been requested and indicating the donor's name. It is also common for families and friends of the deceased to

gather in church for a memorial Divine Liturgy on the 40th day following the date of death. Flowers, memorial donations, sympathy cards, and your attendance at the services are acceptable means of expressing your condolences and providing support.

The Resurrection of the Dead Because of Christ's death on the Cross, and His victory over death by His Resurrection, we need no longer see death as the absolute end to our existence. Rather, death, in the light of Christ's glorious resurrection, is viewed as a time of repose ("resting") in the Lord.

Why pray for the dead? From the time of the Apostles, Christians have offered prayers for the dead. They are offered because the Church is one, consisting of members both on earth (called the "Church Militant") and in heaven (the "Church Triumphant").

The Open Casket The remains of the deceased are to be blessed with holy water, the absolution prayer is read, and at the end of the service all the faithful are to proceed forward to give a final kiss to the departed. These are all powerful statements of our Ukrainian Catholic beliefs.

The Psalms Integral to the funeral service is the chanting of Psalms, hymns found in the Old Testament. Three sets of verses with refrains from Psalm 118 (119) speak of God's great goodness and our utter dependence upon Him and His Law, which guides us through all the days of our life. Psalm 50 (51), a prayer of repentance, appeals to God's steadfast love, compassion and gracious mercy for cleansing and forgiveness.

The Saints As well as praying to the Lord directly, we petition His Saints to intercede for our departed loved ones, entreating the loving kindness of Christ, who seeks us out and saves us. We ask God to grant rest to the soul of the departed "among the saints, where there is no more pain, sorrow or suffering."

The Absolution This is a prayer that the priest reads over the deceased in church, asking God to forgive every sin which the person has committed in his/her life, known and unknown, whether committed out of malice or weakness.

Braided Bread and Fruit Jesus said, "I am the bread of life" [John 6:35]. We express this reality by the use of bread during the funeral service. This bread is made in the form of a circle, which symbolizes eternity. A candle is placed in the loaf (the top loaf, if there are three) as another symbol of Christ, the Light of the world.

Kolyvo - boiled wheat and honey Wheat is used as an expression of death and resurrection. The honey or candies that are mixed into the Kolyvo are reminders of the sweetness and blessing of eternal life that will follow our resurrection.

Memory Eternal (Vichnaya Pamyiat) This hymn is taken from the Gospel accounts of Jesus' crucifixion. As we sing "Memory Eternal" for our loved ones, we are saying, "Remember them, Lord, when You come in Your Kingdom".

The Last Farewell Also known as the "Last Kiss", this is the time for the people to say farewell to the mortal remains of the departed. Again, not denying the reality of death, the funeral rite invites everyone present to come and personally say farewell to the deceased.

Part 3: Ukrainian Catholic Theology about Praying for the Dead

Through the Resurrection of Christ, and the promised resurrection of all the departed, death is not viewed as an ending, but as a time of repose — a time to rest from the struggles and temptations of our fallen world. Death, then, is understood by our church as a "dormition", a time of sleeping. Indeed, the very word "cemetery" comes from a Greek term meaning "a place to sleep." At the funeral service, two things are understood to happen. First, the Saints teach us that our prayers for the departed bring him/her great comfort and joy. Second, through prayers, hymns and music, those who are left behind have a medium through which to express their grief and articulate their faith in everlasting life through Christ Jesus. The funeral ends by the Faithful taking the departed to rest, looking forward to the day when the Lord will wake him/her up from his/her repose.

So these are the reasons we pray for the deceased. According to Dr. Alexander Roman, an Orthodox theologian, "As we know from the New Testament, those who are enlivened by faith in Christ as members of His Body that is the Church are not destroyed by death but live in Christ in the next life as they and we await Christ's joyful Second Coming when He will give us His final judgment when our souls and bodies will be united and reunited. The Communion of the Saints which is the Church is a true Communion. If we may assist others in this life with our prayers, may we not assist them after death when they continue to live in Christ? Certainly the Church from the very beginning has always thought so and prayed for the dead and continues to do so at the Liturgy, and many other times. We also know that nothing impure or sinful can enter into full Communion with God and Christ in the next life. Does that mean that there can only be hell for souls who have not "sinned unto death" with heavy, unrepented sins? Not at all – and how could a merciful God ever allow this? We pray that people in this life may grow closer to God and we pray that souls in the next may come closer to God and that their sins may be loosed. And those souls that we pray for can also pray for us – the Church is a true Communion of love and prayer! Finally, the Church's own practice of praying for those who have reposed in the Lord comes from her own Communion with the Holy Spirit that leads and guides her in all things as the Body of Christ that she is. Scripture and Tradition, which together expresses the Word of God, comes from within the Church's heart as it announces that same Word, which is Jesus Christ, to the world for its salvation and Theosis."