

Conducting a Funeral

Job Aid

ARCHDIOCESE OF CHICAGO



In conjunction with:

Diocese of Rockford

Diocese of Joliet

Diocese of Peoria

Diocese of Springfield

Diocese of Belleville



Please check with your local Diocese for any changes to this document

These guidelines for conducting a funeral in a Church reflect the updated guidance by government officials, healthcare professionals, and Church authorities.

These guidelines are based on current requirements for groups no greater than 10 in the church at any time. This is exclusive of all ministers and an usher or greeter.

Parishes should adapt only as necessary, *however, being careful not to violate social distancing, face covering, and Disinfecting practices.*

Parishes or pastors may **NOT** alter number of allowed worshippers, social distancing, face covering, or Disinfecting guidelines contained here.

Roles and Responsibilities

The following roles are required to ensure the health and safety of everyone involved in the funeral:

Role	Responsibility
Greeter	<p>All attendees are to be greeted outside of the physical church building by a greeter. This greeter's responsibilities include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Welcoming attendees to the church• Ensuring each attendee has a reservation• Asking each attendee the COVID-19 screening questions• Ensuring all attendees are wearing masks or face covers• Providing masks to attendees who do not already have a mask or face covering• Sending each attendee to a predesignated point where he or she will be queued to be seated by an usher• Managing any issues that may arise from the attendee's lack of a reservation
Usher	<p>Ushers are stationed within the church to assist attendees in finding social-distance appropriate seats and for leading a careful, socially distant exit from the church after the rite has concluded. He or she is responsible for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Disinfecting all attendees' hands prior to entering the church• Escorting each attendee or party to the next appropriate open pew (while following social distancing standards)• Explaining where to sit in the pew to the attendees• Ensuring that social distancing guidelines are being followed throughout the rite• At the end of the rite, coordinating a careful, controlled exit from the church, following all social distancing standards
Cleaner	<p>Cleaners are the people who Disinfect the church and surrounding areas following completion of the funeral.</p>
Priest/Deacon	<p>The Priest/Deacon is the person who conducts the funeral.</p>

Step by Step

Conducting a Funeral

General Notes:

- Notify family/attendees in advance of the funeral, about safety procedures for participating in any Church service during this pandemic. Include request to provide their own masks or face coverings, checking temperatures on the day of the funeral and alerting pastor if someone is ill, etc. Include specific instructions about your parish procedures for entry into the church.
- Participants must wear masks or face coverings for the entire time they are in the church, even when responding to prayers. The sole exception is for reception of Communion when the mask should be lowered but replaced immediately after consumption of the sacred Host. Per IDPH and CDC guidelines, those with breathing difficulties can be exempted from this requirement, but those individuals must observe social distancing from anyone not living in their domicile.
- Entry and exit doors are to be properly labeled and monitored. Entry doors are to be propped or held open before the celebration, and exit doors are to be propped or held open at the end of the celebration to prevent people from touching the door handles, knobs, or push plates.
- Eulogies by friends or family members are not allowed. However, eulogies may be given by the priest or deacon after the Prayer After Communion. Eulogies may be written by family and friends with the following guidelines:
 - they are to be 3–5 minutes in length;
 - they are to reference the life of faith of the deceased; and
 - they should be written beforehand and submitted to the priest to review.
- For the sake of safety, scheduling should leave a minimum of one hour between services. As a parish and ministers become more familiar with the new processes and procedures and the time that is needed to prepare for and Disinfect after each service, they may adjust this time.
- All pews, instruments, and furniture used during the rite must be Disinfected after the service. Any of these items used and Disinfected must be completely clean and dry before reuse.
- After all participants have left the Church the entry and exit church door handles and plates must be cleaned and Disinfected.
- If unlocked and used, church restrooms should be cleaned and Disinfected immediately after all have left the building.
- Those Disinfecting the space should wear masks or face coverings and gloves at all times.
- Please remember that masks or face coverings that may have been distributed to family and guests may not be collected and reused by the parish.
- Greeter or pastor should take an inventory of supplies after the service and replenish accordingly.

Preparing the Church for a Funeral

TASK #1

Setting up the Church

Step 1: Place Social Distancing Markers:
Place tape marks on the floor to designated proper socially distanced markers for:

- Introductory Rites
- Procession into Church
- Communion
- Procession out of Church



If this task has not been completed, please refer to the Physical Space Guide.

Step 2: Prepare the Pews

The first or second row of pews should be marked for parents, spouses, children, and other guests. Marks should be placed at least 6–8 feet apart for these guests indicating where they should sit. Further, there needs to be 6–8 feet distance in front and behind guests if multiple pews need to be used.



If this task has not been completed, please refer to the Physical Space Guide.

Step 3: Place Holy water and the pall at the entrance of the church, near where the coffin will be stationed for the Introductory Rites.

If there is no server, the Holy Water and pall should be accessible by the priest at the appropriate times. If there is a server, it is to be an adult. The funeral director can assist with the pall if needed.

Entering the Building

TASK #1

Greeting Attendees (Outside of Church)

Step 1: Respectfully welcome attendees to church

Step 2: Check attendee list

- Check the attendee list to validate they are part of the expected funeral worshippers

Note: If anyone is an unexpected attendee refer to the De-escalation worksheet if needed.

Step 3: Once attendees are reminded of symptoms by the greeter, direct attendees to predesignated, socially distanced areas of the vestibule to await instructions from the Usher.

Preparing to Enter the Church

TASK #1

Greeting Attendees in the Vestibule

Step 1: Respectfully welcome attendees to church

Step 2: Disinfect the hands of all attendees

- Explain to each attendee the need to Disinfect everyone's hands
- Spray each attendee's hands with hand disinfectant



Step 3: Direct attendees to stay at their designated space until the Usher directs them to their designated seat, following their procession to the front behind the coffin.

Introductory Rites

TASK #1

Conducted at the Back of the Church

Step 1: Sprinkle coffin and place it on the pall

As the coffin is brought in, attendees should be positioned around it, following prescribed social distancing guidelines.

After the sprinkling of the coffin and placing of the pall take place, the procession begins.

Procession to the Front

TASK #1

Procession to the Front

Step 1: Priest reminds attendees of social distancing guidelines and asks them to follow those throughout the service.

Step 2: Process funeral bier to the front of the Church

Note: The funeral bier can be processed to the front by the funeral director and one other person who is participating (one at the front of the bier, one at the back).

Step 3: Usher instructs participants to join the processional, emphasizing the use of social distancing markers in the aisle.

Step 4: As participants complete the processional, usher directs them to the appropriate socially distanced seat—as designated by pew markings.



Conducting the Funeral: Only elements or tasks adjusted for safe practices are outlined here. All other elements of the rite are performed as already known.

TASK #1

Conduct the Funeral

Step 1: Liturgy of the Word

Priest may remove his mask for the Liturgy of the Word.

Step 2: Offertory – Priest (or Deacon if present) may transfer gifts from side table to altar.

Note: If the funeral is with the celebration of Mass, the procession with the gifts is omitted.

Step 3: Priest/Deacon Disinfects hands and puts on face shield in preparation for the Giving of the Eucharist.

Step 4: Holy Communion

Note: To protect the safety of both the priest and the attendees, the giving and receiving of the Eucharist must strictly adhere to the process outlined in the Receiving the Eucharist Job Aid.



Step 5: Final Commendation

After distribution of communion the priest removes face shield in preparation for final commendation.

Step 6: Priest prepares incense censer (if used) for Rite of Commendation

Step 7: Priest conducts Rite of Commendation

Step 8: Priest concludes service

Note: Priest instructs attendees to remain in their seats until the usher instructs them to join the procession out of the church.

Step 9: Begin procession out of the church

The funeral bier is processed out of the church by the funeral director and one other person who is participating (one at the front of the bier, one at the back).

Step 10: Usher instructs attendees to join the procession out of the church while maintaining appropriate social distancing.

Disinfecting the Church after a Funeral

TASK #1

Disinfecting the Church after a Funeral

Step 1: Remove any debris left behind by attendees (including used masks or face coverings which cannot be reused) and dispose of properly.

Step 2: All pews and kneelers must be Disinfected using the procedures in the Disinfecting Job Aid.

Step 3: Church door handles and plates must be Disinfected using the procedures in the Disinfecting Job Aid.

Step 4: Once all attendees have left the building, all church restrooms if opened must be Disinfected using the procedures in the Disinfecting Job Aid.

Disinfecting Instruments, Furniture, and Materials

TASK #1

Disinfecting the instruments, furniture, and materials used during the funeral

Step 1: Disinfect all vessels and instruments used during the funeral using the procedures in the Disinfecting Job Aid

Step 2: The outside covers and bindings of all ritual books should be Disinfected following the procedures from the Disinfecting Job Aid.