



revised Summer 2024

## **WORDS OF REMEMBRANCE**

*A guide for speakers at the Funeral Mass*

The option to offer Words of Remembrance at the Funeral Mass of a loved one is a great honor and responsibility. Please note that this opportunity takes place in the context of Divine Worship – a sacred time and place where our primary purpose is to commend our beloved to the mercy and love of our Lord Jesus Christ. Any shared words must both respect and reflect this sacred character.

The primary focus during the days immediately following death is on the family; making funeral preparations and dealing with their own feelings and needs. The visitation is a time to focus on the deceased; a time to tell the stories that gave meaning to the many relationships that have been a part of that person's life.

When you arrive at the church for the Funeral Mass, the focus shifts to what Jesus has done for us and how our faith in the resurrected life offers us hope. This time marks the end of an earthly journey that began in the context of faith at baptism, and continues with a new life in God. It is within this context that you are asked to prepare your Words of Remembrance; to remember the ways a person was faithful to their Baptism call by loving God and loving their neighbor.

Rather than summarizing the deceased's life story and listing his/her accomplishments, if you share a single blessed memory that indicates the deceased faith and character, the hearers can recognize the gifts of the deceased as God-given and how they shared that gift with others while living.

The words you share should reflect the virtue and goodness of the person. It is not the time to speak of bad habits or less than honorable experiences, even if they seem humorous. While humor is fine, it should be done in good taste and dignity. Other times and places – such as the Visitation/Wake or a luncheon - may be more suited to telling stories and jokes about a person.

The following guide is intended to help you plan your remembrance and to deliver it well.



*Begin by praying that you will honor the person you are speaking about and that your words will be a witness to his or her faith and a blessing to family and friends.*

- Words of Remembrance cannot exceed three to four minutes, delivered by one person. This is roughly one typed page, prepared in advance. It is very important that you respect this policy.
- You may share common memories of the person – specifically if they capture the virtue and character of the person - but it is not the place to speak for every person’s memories or give a chronology of the person’s life.
- Speak sincerely and respectfully, reflecting your experience. The language and context should be appropriate for this sacred setting.
- Avoid using “inside jokes” or forms of humor, which may be misunderstood, or sharing incidents not widely known, which may cause confusion or hurt.
- Choose one trusted advisor who also knew the deceased well and use this person as a “sounding board” when you prepare your remembrance.
- Pray that you will do honor to your loved one’s memory and that your words will be a witness to faith and a blessing to family and friends.