

GATHERING IN THE PRESENCE OF THE BODY
LAY PERSON PRESIDING

The following is a model of prayer that can be used when the family first gathers in the presence of the body, either prior to the start of a wake service or when they first arrive at the church for the funeral before other people start arriving. It may be used at church or at a funeral home. The family members, in assembling in the presence of the body, confront in the most immediate way the fact of their loss and the mystery of death. In prayer and gesture, those present show reverence for the body of the deceased as a temple of the life-giving Spirit, and ask, in the same Spirit, for the eternal life promised to the faithful.

SIGN OF THE CROSS _____

When all have gathered all make the sign of the cross while the leader says:
In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.
All respond: **Amen.**

SCRIPTURE VERSE _____

The following verse or another passage from Scripture may be read by the leader or another family member:

My brothers and sisters, Jesus says: "Come to me, all you who labor and are burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am meek and humble of heart; and you will find rest for yourselves. For my yoke is easy, and my burden light."

~ Matthew 11:28-30

SILENCE _____

There may be a short period of silence to allow for private prayer.

[SPRINKLING WITH HOLY WATER _____]

If holy water is available, the leader may sprinkle the casket or urn while saying the following. If no holy water is available, skip to the next section.

Leader: The Lord God lives in his holy temple yet abides in our midst. Since in baptism, **N.**, became God's temple and the Spirit of God lived in him/her, with reverence, we bless his/her mortal body.

PSALM

The following Psalm (or another Psalm) is said by the leader or another family member.

Our response to each verse is "I will walk in the presence of the Lord, in the land of the living."

Gracious is the Lord and just;
yes our God is merciful.

The Lord keeps the little ones;
I was brought low, and he saved me.

All: I will walk in the presence of the Lord, in the land of the living.

Precious in the eyes of the Lord
is the death of his faithful ones.

O Lord, I am your servant;
I am your servant, the son of your handmaid;
you have loosed my bonds.

All: I will walk in the presence of the Lord, in the land of the living.

LORD'S PRAYER

Leader: With Christ there is mercy and fullness of redemption; let us pray as Jesus taught us.

All: Our Father...

PRAYER

Leader:

Into your hands, O Lord,
we humbly entrust our brother/sister **N**.

In this life you embraced him/her with your tender love;
deliver him/her now from every evil
and bid him/her enter eternal rest.

The old order has passed away:
welcome him/her into paradise,
where there will be no sorrow,
no weeping nor pain,
but fullness of peace and joy
with your Son and the Holy Spirit
forever and ever.

All: Amen

BLESSING

Leader: Blessed are those who have died in the Lord: let them rest from their labors for their good deeds go with them.

The leader - or all those present who wish to do so - may sign the forehead of the deceased with the sign of the cross.

The ritual concludes as follows:

Leader: Eternal rest grant unto him/her, O Lord

All: And let perpetual light shine upon them.

Leader: May he/she rest in peace.

All: Amen.

Leader: May (his/her) soul and the souls of the faithful departed, through the mercy of God, rest in peace. **All:** Amen.

Leader: May the love of God and the peace of the Lord Jesus Christ bless and console us and gently wipe every tear from our eyes: (the leader makes the sign of the cross on him or herself) in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

All: Amen.

Sources:

Catholic Household Blessings & Prayers Revised Edition. United States Conference of Catholic Bishops. 2008.

Order of Christian Funerals. Gathering in the Presence of the Body. Approved by the Bishops' Committee on the Liturgy, National Conference of Catholic Bishops. Catholic Book Publishing 1989.