

Guidelines for “Words of Remembrance” before the Commendation and Farewell

A member or friend of the family may speak in remembrance of the dead (170). These guidelines apply:

- Only one person should speak at the Funeral Mass or Funeral Liturgy Outside Mass. Others may speak at the Vigil Service or Committal Service. While only one person will speak at the Funeral Mass, the **words of remembrance** could be a summation of thoughts gathered from family members and friends.
- A eulogy (not something permitted by the Order of Christian Funerals) recounts significant events in the life of the deceased. **Words of remembrance** do not attempt to give a biography, but to share insight into the faith and values of the deceased shown in one or two examples from his/her life. A eulogy tends to be lengthy. **Words of remembrance** are brief.
- The **words of remembrance** should be prepared beforehand, and ideally reviewed with the priest or presiding minister. They should be no more than three to five minutes (one typed page). Storytelling, anecdotes, poems, songs, etc. are better used of the Vigil Service, the funeral luncheon, or a home gathering. Speakers should be mindful of outside factors, e.-g., the time involved in traveling from church to cemetery, other services scheduled that day, or the need of some in the assembly to return to work or other responsibilities.
- The **words of remembrance** should be about the deceased person’s faith and human qualities and how these qualities can inspire the hearers. The speaker should reflect compassionately about the life and circumstances of the deceased. It is inappropriate to include remarks about the deceased’s indiscretions, poor habits, or prejudices. This is not the focus of our funeral liturgies.
- An itemized obituary of the deceased person’s life history might be included in the booklet that is prepared for the funeral, rather than read at the Funeral Mass.
- There may be circumstances that would require more than one speaker, for example, a state funeral. In such a case, a protocol of allowing a member of the government or others to speak is to be expected. But normally additional persons should be directed to speak at the Vigil or Rite of Committal.