

Catholic Funeral Guide

Understanding The Catholic Funeral Process In Singapore

A Catholic funeral carries your loved one through several distinct rites, each rooted in centuries of tradition and each offering its own moment of comfort. This guide walks through what to expect at every stage, from your first call to us through to the memorial Masses that follow in the months ahead, so your family can lean on the Church's rhythm rather than trying to plan it from scratch.

1. Contact Your Funeral Director First

The very first call worth making, alongside registering the death, is to your funeral director — not the parish. Once you engage us, we contact your loved one's parish priest or parish office on your family's behalf, so you are not the one relaying arrangements back and forth during an already overwhelming time. If your family does not currently belong to a parish, we can also connect you with a priest experienced in leading funeral rites.

All we need from you at this stage is a little information — your loved one's full name, age, and which parish they belonged to, if any. We take it from there.

2. Choosing A Venue For The Wake

- **HDB void deck** — A common and affordable choice. Your funeral director applies for the tentage permit, sets up chairs, altar and signage, and tears down after the wake.
- **Funeral parlour** — A private, air-conditioned hall, well suited to longer wakes or larger gatherings.
- **Parish church** — Some parishes allow the wake or Vigil Mass to be held within the church itself, particularly for parishioners who were active members of the community.
- **At home** — Possible for landed properties, though less common today given space and logistics.

3. What Your Funeral Director Coordinates With The Parish

A funeral director experienced with Catholic rites will liaise directly with the parish so your family isn't relaying messages back and forth. On your behalf, we will:

- Reach out to your loved one's parish priest or parish office, sharing their name, age, and parish involvement
- Confirm the priest's availability for the Vigil Mass and the Funeral Mass
- Check the parish's requirements and preferred timing for booking the church
- Coordinate with the parish's music ministry or organist, if hymns will be sung at the Mass
- Confirm whether the parish requires printed booklets, and how many copies are needed
- Arrange for the novena schedule to be communicated to family and friends who wish to join

4. Planning The Wake, Day By Day

Catholic wakes in Singapore typically run for three to five days, structured around the Vigil Mass (or Vigil Service) and the Funeral Mass itself:

- **Setup day** — The wake venue is prepared: casket placed, altar, crucifix and floral tributes arranged.
- **Visitation days** — Family receives visitors, often with the Rosary recited each evening — a familiar and comforting practice for many Catholic families.
- **Vigil Mass or Vigil Service** — Usually held the evening before the funeral, this is typically where personal eulogies and tributes are shared.
- **Funeral day** — The Funeral Mass is celebrated, followed by the Rite of Committal at the crematorium or cemetery.

5. The Vigil Mass Or Vigil Service

The vigil, usually held the evening before the funeral, is a time of prayer, scripture, and shared remembrance. Because Catholic guidelines generally reserve the Funeral Mass itself for the liturgy rather than personal tributes, the vigil is where family members most often deliver eulogies, share stories, and lead the Rosary together.

6. The Funeral (Requiem) Mass

The Funeral Mass follows a set structure rooted in the Catholic liturgy. Your parish priest will guide your family through each part, and will usually shape the homily around your loved one's life:

#	Rite
1	Reception of the body / Entrance procession, often with the casket sprinkled with holy water
2	Opening prayer
3	Liturgy of the Word — scripture readings and a Responsorial Psalm
4	Gospel reading and homily, reflecting on your loved one's life and Christian hope
5	Liturgy of the Eucharist, for parishes celebrating a full Mass
6	Final Commendation — prayers entrusting your loved one to God, often with incense
7	Recessional, as the casket is carried out for the procession

7. Choosing Readings And Hymns

- **Readings** — Wisdom 3:1–9, Romans 8:31–39, John 11:17–27, or a passage your parish priest recommends alongside your family's own choice
- **Hymns** — "Be Not Afraid", "On Eagle's Wings", "How Great Thou Art", "Amazing Grace", or hymns your loved one's parish choir is familiar with

8. Sharing A Eulogy At The Vigil

Because the Funeral Mass centres on the liturgy, most parishes ask that personal eulogies and tributes be shared at the Vigil the evening before, rather than during the Mass itself — sometimes a very brief word of remembrance is permitted at the end of Mass, but this varies by parish. Your funeral director will confirm what

your parish priest allows so your family can plan accordingly. A simple structure for the vigil eulogy:

- Open with how you knew your loved one, and one memory that captures who they were
- Share a few specific stories or qualities, rather than a list of achievements
- Acknowledge the loss honestly, alongside the comfort of faith
- Close with what you hope people will remember, or a final message to your loved one

9. Preparing A Printed Mass Booklet

- A photo of your loved one, with their full name and the years of birth and passing
- The order of the Funeral Mass, including hymn lyrics if the congregation will sing
- The readings chosen, printed in full for those following along
- A note of thanks to those attending, and any acknowledgements your family wishes to include

10. Displaying Memories: Photos And Video Tributes

A simple photo display or slideshow at the wake gives guests something warm to gather around. Most funeral parlours and void deck setups can accommodate a television or projector for a looping photo or video tribute — ask your funeral director whether this is included in your package.

11. Flowers And Tributes

Wreaths and standing floral sprays are a common way for relatives, friends, and colleagues to send their condolences. Your funeral director can arrange these directly, or friends and colleagues may order their own through a florist — either way, it helps to share the wake address and visiting hours so deliveries arrive in good time.

12. Burial, Cremation, And The Rite Of Committal

The Catholic Church has permitted cremation since 1963, though it continues to express a preference for burial where possible, as a sign of respect for the body. If your family chooses cremation, Church teaching asks that the ashes be laid to rest in a sacred place — a columbarium niche or cemetery — rather than kept at home, scattered, or divided among family members. In Singapore, burial plots are leased for a fixed term (currently 15 years) at Choa Chu Kang Cemetery, after which exhumation and cremation follows; many families choose cremation directly, with ashes placed in a columbarium niche at the parish or at Mandai. The Rite of Committal — a short prayer service — is held at the graveside or crematorium to close the funeral rites.

13. The Funeral Day Itself

- The Funeral Mass is celebrated at the parish church, following the structure agreed with your priest
- After Mass, the casket is carried to the hearse in a short procession, often with family walking behind
- The procession travels to the crematorium or Choa Chu Kang Cemetery for the Rite of Committal
- If cremated, ashes are typically ready for collection within a few hours to a couple of days

14. The Novena And Memorial Masses

Many Catholic families in Singapore observe a novena — nine days of prayer for the deceased, often recited at home or as a group in the days following the funeral. Beyond the novena, it is also customary to request memorial Masses at meaningful intervals: one month, 100 days, and the first anniversary are common markers. Your parish office can help you schedule these whenever your family is ready.

15. Common Questions Catholic Families Ask

Can we scatter the ashes or keep them at home?

The Church asks that ashes be laid to rest in a sacred place, such as a columbarium niche, rather than scattered or kept at home. Your funeral director can help arrange a niche at the parish or at Mandai.

Why can't we give a eulogy during the Mass?

Catholic liturgical guidelines generally reserve the Funeral Mass for scripture and prayer rather than personal tribute, which is why the vigil the evening before is where families usually share eulogies and stories. Some parishes allow a brief word at the end of Mass — your funeral director will confirm what your particular parish permits.

What if our family isn't part of a parish?

We can connect your family with a priest experienced in leading funeral rites, even without an existing parish connection, so your loved one can still receive a full Catholic funeral.

16. A Simple Checklist To Guide You

- Contact your funeral director — they will notify your parish priest on your behalf
- Choose a wake venue and confirm dates with your funeral director
- Confirm the Vigil Mass and Funeral Mass timing with your parish
- Decide who will share the eulogy at the vigil, and begin writing it
- Choose readings and hymns for the Funeral Mass
- Confirm burial or cremation, and the columbarium or cemetery for committal
- Arrange transport for the funeral day procession
- Discuss the novena schedule with your parish and family
- Consider when to request memorial Masses in the months ahead

One director will walk alongside your family from the very first call through to the final farewell, and coordinate directly with your parish so nothing is left for you to chase.

Call us any time: [+65 9169 1859](tel:+6591691859)