

The Words of Remembrance

Don't you mean the Eulogy?

What many people do not know is that eulogies are expressly prohibited in Catholic funerals. There are numerous reasons for this. The primary two are:

1. The focus of a eulogy is to speak well of the deceased, which may mean skipping over their all too obvious human frailties. Whatever is said of the deceased should be true and not simply a half truth.
2. The focus of a eulogy is backwards looking. The focus of the funeral liturgy is to look forward to the future, to the hope of heaven.

Nevertheless, the Church does permit that a member of the family or a friend may speak some words of remembrance regarding the deceased.

So, what should the Words of Remembrance sound like?

The clear preference is for only one speaker.

While it may seem like a good idea to have multiple people take turns sharing parts of a common talk, very often this means that large portions become incomprehensible.

If there are numerous people who would like to speak about the deceased, the appropriate place for this is during the refreshments following the funeral service.

The Words of Remembrance should take no more than ten minutes.

It is impossible to capture the whole of a person's life in a talk, no matter how long. What matters is not every deed done and every dish cooked but the qualities of that person in their life of faith and love.

When carefully prepared, an enormous amount of very important qualities of your loved one can be spoken of in this time and will be better remembered by those listening to you than a longer talk.

Preparing the Words of Remembrance

The preparation of these words can be a wonderful time for the family to gather and discuss it together. Individual members of the family can suggest important qualities or details that they would like mentioned and everyone can agree on the general form of the final text. This ensures that when the Words of Remembrance are finally shared that they truly represent the thoughts of everyone.

Important Practicalities for the Funeral

It is essential that the speaker has a strong voice and reads the text at a reasonable pace. The speaker needs to speak clearly into the microphone. There is nothing more disappointing than memories that no one can hear.

Choose the person who is most likely to deliver these words without being overcome with emotion. Have a backup person ready to take over if the original speaker cannot continue.

The Words of Remembrance should be written out in full. Do not rely on just notes: this is both a formal and an emotional moment: a written text will be a big help in allowing you to honour your loved one with dignity and grace.

Make sure that the person delivering it has practised reading it out loud.

Avoid too many details, examples or dates. Do not blur your message with too much information. Be selective of the facts and details you present.

Please ensure that the text contains no vulgarities or inappropriate stories.

It is not appropriate in a formal religious ceremony to ask if anyone else present would like to say a few words. That is best suited to the less formal setting of the Wake.

Please send a copy of the Words of Remembrance, at least the day before the funeral, to parishoffice@inghamcatholic.com