



Can a non-Catholic have a Catholic funeral mass?

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Our inquirer for this month came from Mercy Mallari who sent us two important questions about the Catholic Funeral rites for non-Catholics. Answering her questions is Fr. Kalis who is an expert of the Liturgy and the Sacraments. First of all I would like to apologize for Mercy for the delay of response to her questions (she emailed the ASK Team twice) because our ASK Team (Alliance of Sacred Knowledge) are also busy lately with their respective pastoral works outside the blogosphere. Remember that most of them are not bloggers and are active Men and women of the Church who caters to different ministries. Most of them are volunteers in this online Q&A of OTWOMD. But rest assured (and to all ASK inquirers) that your inquiries and questions are automatically forwarded by the system to the private inboxes of the ASK Team. Just a reminder to those who will ask in the future, please indicate your location and other detail because some of the ASK team are hesitant to answer ambiguous and anonymous emails. Your details may be withheld on the final print if requested otherwise. Here is the question of Mercy Mallari:

Can you kindly explain/elaborate my 2 questions below.

1. Can a non Catholic deceased have a funeral mass. All members of the family are not catholic too., tho she express the desire to become catholic.
2. Can a non Catholic deceased have a funeral mass if all family and in-laws are catholic

thank you.
Mercy Mallari

Dear Mercy,

First I would like to thank you for sending us your questions. It's been a while since we received emails from readers. Secondly, I personally apologize for the delay of my response due to a hectic schedule on my Parish.

I like your name. It's exactly the main context of your question: God's Mercy to all of his children

Before I answer your question, let me first discuss briefly what Catholic Funeral is.

Catholic Funeral specifically refers to the Funeral Rites used by the Catholic Church which is also called Ecclesiastical Funerals. In Catholic funerals, the church seeks to provide spiritual support for the deceased and honor their bodies, as well as try to provide a measure of hope for the family and friends of the deceased. Ecclesiastical Funerals, just like any other Sacraments and Liturgical rites of the Catholic Church are governed primarily by Code of Canon Law (TITLE III.

ECCLESIASTICAL FUNERALS (Cann. 1176 – 1185) and are specified into details by the Order of Christian Funerals, a guideline for every diocese in the Catholic Church in administering the rites. Every diocese has their own set of guidelines but they do not however deviate from the Canon and the Order of Christian Funerals.

According to the Canon Law:

Can. 1176 §1. Deceased members of the Christian faithful must be given ecclesiastical funerals according to the norm of law.

This applies to all Catholics who have lived a life of repentance and communion with the Catholic Church.

§2. Ecclesiastical funerals, by which the Church seeks spiritual support for the deceased, honors their bodies, and at the same time brings the solace of hope to the living, must be celebrated according to the norm of the liturgical laws.

Each funeral are administered according to the existing laws and guidelines set by the Catholic Church

§3. The Church earnestly recommends that the pious custom of burying the bodies of the deceased be observed; nevertheless, the Church does not prohibit cremation unless it was chosen for reasons contrary to Christian doctrine.

All deceased bodies of the faithful must be buried because it is on the earth which God calls the soul to unite with himself: Ashes to ashes, dust to dust. Cremation is allowed except when the purpose is contradictory to the Catholic teaching.

The Celebration Of Funerals

Celebration of Catholic funerals have laws too. These laws are primarily stated in the Canon law:

Can. 1177 §1. A funeral for any deceased member of the faithful must generally be celebrated in his or her parish church.

§2. Any member of the faithful or those competent to take care of the funeral of a deceased member of the faithful are permitted to choose another church for the funeral rite with the consent of the person who governs it and after notification of the proper pastor of the deceased.

§3. If a death occurred outside the person's own parish, and the body was not transferred to it nor another church legitimately chosen for the funeral rite, the funeral is to be celebrated in the church of the parish where the death occurred unless particular law has designated another church.

Can. 1178 The funeral of a diocesan bishop is to be celebrated in his own cathedral church unless he has chosen another church.

Can. 1179 The funerals of religious or members of a society of apostolic life are generally to be celebrated in their own church or oratory by the superior if the institute or society is clerical; otherwise by the chaplain.

Can. 1180 §1. If a parish has its own cemetery, the deceased members of the faithful must be buried in it unless the deceased or those competent to take care of the burial of the deceased have chosen another cemetery legitimately. §2. Everyone, however, is permitted to choose the cemetery of burial unless prohibited by law.

Can. 1181 Regarding offerings on the occasion of funeral rites, the prescripts of ? can. 1264 are to be observed, with the caution, however, that there is to be no favoritism toward persons in funerals and that the poor are not deprived of fitting funerals.

Can. 1182 When the burial has been completed, a record is to be made in the register of deaths according to the norm of particular law.

Who can be granted Catholic Funeral rites?

The canon law specifically states those who can be granted with full Catholic Funeral rites such as stated in:

Can. 1183 §1. When it concerns funerals, catechumens must be counted among the Christian faithful.

This means that aside from Catholics, converts or those who are under catechesis of the doctrines of the Catholic Church may also be granted with Funeral rites

§2. The local ordinary can permit children whom the parents intended to baptize but who died before baptism to be given ecclesiastical funerals.

In the same vein, parents who intends to baptize their children in the Catholic Church, but who suddenly died may also be granted Catholic Funeral rites

§3. In the prudent judgment of the local ordinary, ecclesiastical funerals can be granted to baptized persons who are enrolled in a non-Catholic Church or ecclesial community unless their intention is evidently to the contrary and provided that their own minister is not available.

The local ordinary is the Parish Priest. All people who were first baptized in the Catholic Church who changed religion, unless they do not want to, may also be granted Catholic funeral rites. It may also apply to those Baptized Catholics who changed their religion but in circumstance, their own ministers or pastors are not available, may also be granted Catholic Funeral rites.

Who can be denied of the Funeral rites?

The Church is very strict when it comes to denial of the Funeral rites to certain Catholics, not because they are deprived of their rights, but due to circumstances that are grave and scandalous in nature which, in their own free will and volition, has voluntarily broke their relationship with God and the teachings of the Catholic Church. Let me explain each one according to the Canon Law:

Can. 1184 §1. Unless they gave some signs of repentance before death, the following must be deprived of ecclesiastical funerals:

Catholics who fell away from the Church are not deprived of the rites unless they confess their sins and they show true repentance before their death. Now who are the people who can be denied of the Catholic Funeral (including entering the remains in the Catholic Church):

1/ notorious apostates, heretics,
and schismatics;

These are the people who always contradict the teachings of the Catholic Church by various accusations, false claims, promoting different teachings, misleading the faithful, rebelling against Church laws, concocting own revelations, practicing pagan and other religious rites inside the church, and those who voluntarily broke away their communion with the Vatican by establishing their own religions, ecclesiastical communities and churches which directly contradicts the teachings of the Catholic Church, or affiliating oneself to secret societies that are directly or implicitly against the Catholic Church such as the Freemasons and other secret societies. And yes, including those who were excommunicated for various reasons.

2/ those who chose the cremation of their bodies for reasons contrary to Christian faith;

Cremations are now allowed by the Catholic Church except if the dead and the immediate family has their own motive of cremating the remains which is outside the teachings of the Catholic Church like for example, cremating the Body for witchcraft purposes, believing in incarnations and other pagan supernatural beliefs. The body is sacred and thus the Church solidly believes that it will be resurrected on the final judgment.

3/ other manifest sinners who cannot be granted ecclesiastical funerals without public scandal of the faithful.

People who does not repent and continue their lives in sin until their death cannot be granted Catholic funeral rites. Scandals and sins such as participating or practicing Abortions, adultery, divinations, voodoo, fortunetelling astrology, concubinages, live-in partners, having charms and supernatural amulets, homosexual acts (those who are engaged in homosexual acts, except homosexuals only by orientation and not practice), sexual deviants, substance abusers, gamblers and many more. Primarily those people who commit the seven capital sins and violated the ten commandments (Mortal sins) who did not repent before their death.

§2. If any doubt occurs, the local ordinary is to be consulted, and his judgment must be followed.

If in case the nature of the dead is dubious and ambiguous, the judgment of the Parish Priest maybe followed. For example, an active and practicing homosexual repented his sins before he died but no one has heard nor witnessed the repentance, the Parish priest may or may not Grant the Catholic Funeral depending on his judgment. It is said that whatever the Priest loosens on earth, he also

loosens in heaven. So the decision of the Parish Priest or any priest for that matter regarding the case of the deceased is final and binding.

Can. 1185 Any funeral Mass must also be denied a person who is excluded from ecclesiastical funerals.

This covers those who are not included in the list of people that may be granted Catholic Funerals.

Now about your question:

1. Can a non Catholic deceased have a funeral mass. All members of the family are not catholic too., tho she express the desire to become catholic?

This falls on the Canon 1183 (When it concerns funerals, catechumens must be counted among the Christian faithful.) and on Canon 1184 (If any doubt occurs, the local ordinary is to be consulted, and his judgment must be followed.). If any non-catholic who is dying and wishes to be in union with the Catholic Church even in his last breath, but circumstances prevented him or her, a Catholic funeral may be granted BUT depending on the final judgment or decision of the Local ordinary or the Parish priest. It is always the wisdom and judgment of the Parish Priest which will have the final say on such case

2. Can a non Catholic deceased have a funeral mass if all family and in-laws are catholic

Yes. This is specifically stated in the Order of Christian Funerals and let me quote:

To foster and respect family bonds, non-Catholic members of Catholic families may be interred in a Catholic cemetery. Clergy of other communions may conduct the cemetery rites according to their tradition, if the family so desires or if it was the expressed wish of the deceased.

You see Mercy, like your name, God is merciful. A Parish priest may deny a funeral, but it is always God who will determine if the deceased is saved or not. But do not misconstrue, because the judgment of Priests and Bishops are always influenced by the Holy Spirit regardless of the state of their spiritual life or moral standing. God knows everything and he always preceeds mercy before justice.

Denial or Granting of Catholic Funerals is different from salvation. Just because a person is granted a Catholic Funeral rite doesn't mean he is already saved. Don't confuse the two. Salvation always comes from God Because he knows everything even the most secret yearnings of our hearts. Catholic funeral rites, though very important, is a determinant on the life of the deceased in communion with the catholic Church. The Catholic Church gives its final blessing to the deceased as a sign and symbol that he is a member of the Catholic Church, the pilgrim (we), the suffering (those in purgatory) and the triumphant (those in heaven) members of the Catholic Church. All unified and in communion with Christ's passion, death and resurrection.

Thank you for your inquiry and we are glad that we can help you clarify some questions.

Remember always that God is "Mercy"

God Bless,

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