

Tridentine Community News

September 2, 2007

The Classic Form of Requiem Mass and Burial

We continue our coverage of the Extraordinary (Tridentine) Forms of the Sacraments with a description of the Funeral Mass and Burial ceremony. Beginning September 14, 2007, any priest of the Latin Rite may employ the Extraordinary Forms of the Sacraments without requiring permission from his bishop.

Many modern Catholic funerals amount to canonizations of the just-deceased, often dismissing the possibility of Hell or even Purgatory. They are presumptively celebratory. Why does the Church celebrate All Souls Day in such a somber manner if good people automatically go to heaven? The time right after a person departs this world are crucial for his soul. Should we who are left on earth not pray for his eternal salvation? Or is "On Eagle's Wings" theologically more reflective of the reality of the moment? The Classic Form leaves no doubt about its viewpoint.

The priest, vested in surplice, black stole, and black cope, meets the body of the deceased at the church entrance. There are no congregational hymns; all of the chanting is done by the (preferably alternating) choir(s). The priest sprinkles the body with Holy Water and reads Psalm 129, *De Profundis*, beginning:

"Out of the depths I have cried to Thee, O Lord!
Lord, hear my voice.
Let Thine ears be attentive to the voice of my supplication.
If Thou, O Lord, shalt observe iniquities,
O Lord, who shall endure it?"

The choir then sings Psalm 50, *Miserere Mei*, which begins:

"Have mercy on me, O God, according to Thy great mercy,
And according to the multitude of Thy tender mercies, blot out my iniquity.
Wash me thoroughly from my offense, and cleanse me from my sin.
For I acknowledge mine iniquity, and my sin is always before me."

The responsory *Subvenite, Sancti Dei* ("Come to his (her) assistance, ye saints of God...") is sung as the body is brought towards the altar. If the deceased is a layman, his feet are towards the altar so that he faces our Lord in the tabernacle. If he is a priest, his head is towards the altar in a "*persona Christi*" acknowledgement of his leadership of his flock surrounding him.

The priest changes into a black chasuble, and Mass begins. As in Passiontide, Psalm 42 (*Júdica me*) is skipped; the Prayers At the Foot Of the Altar go from the *Introibo* directly into the *Confiteor*. There is no *Glória*, as that joyful hymn would be out of place.

The Epistle and Gospel are fixed; there is no choice of readings. Between the readings, the choir chants the best-known part of the Classic Requiem Mass, the Sequence *Dies Irae*, which begins:

Comments? Ideas for a future column? Please e-mail tridnews@stjosaphatchurch.org. Previous columns are available at www.stjosaphatchurch.org

"Day of wrath, O Day of mourning, Lo the world in ashes burning:
Seer and Sibyl gave the warning.

O what fear man's bosom rendeth, When from heaven the Judge descendeth,
On Whose sentence all dependeth!"

A sermon is preached. Mass proceeds with a few differences: The *Credo* and the *Glória Patri* at the *Lavábo* are omitted. At the *Agnus Dei*, "*dona eis réquiem*" (grant them rest) replaces "*miserére nobis*", and "*dona eis requiem sempitérnam*" (grant them eternal rest) takes the place of "*dona nobis pacem*". The prayer for peace that follows the *Agnus Dei* is omitted, as is the Kiss of Peace in Solemn High Masses. At the end of Mass, "*Requiescant in pace*" (May they rest in peace) takes the place of "*Ite, Missa est*". The Final Blessing is omitted.

Following the Last Gospel, the celebrant changes into a black cope, stands at the foot of the body, and recites the Absolution: "Enter not into judgment with Thy servant, Lord..." The choir sings the responsory *Libera me* ("Deliver me, Lord, from everlasting death in that awful day: When the heavens and the earth shall be shaken: When Thou shalt come to judge the world by fire."). The priest recites the *Kyrie* and *Pater Noster* while passing around the body twice, once with Holy Water, and once incensing it, then says a final prayer. The choir sings *In Paradísium* ("May the Angels lead you into paradise...") as the body is carried out of the church.

At the gravesite, the grave is blessed, and the body and grave are sprinkled with Holy Water and incensed. A cantor sings *Benedíctus Dóminus, Deus Israél* ("Blessed be the Lord, the God of Israel, for He hath visited and wrought redemption for His people..."). The priest recites a *Kyrie* and *Pater Noster* while sprinkling the body with Holy Water, as he prays *A porta ínferi / Erue, Dómine, ánimam ejus* ("From the gate of hell / Deliver his soul, O Lord.") and other short prayers. He makes a final Sign of the Cross over the body.

Preparations and Worship Aids

If you want to be sure of a Tridentine Funeral Mass, let your loved ones know, and preferably specify it in your will. Both St. Josaphat and Assumption Churches are prepared for them.

The publisher of the ubiquitous Red Missals, the Coalition in Support of Ecclesia Dei, also publishes a similar Silver Missal for the Requiem Mass and Burial. With this aid, even those unfamiliar with the Extraordinary Form can easily follow along. No additional handouts are required, as the unchanging form of the rite is entirely contained in these booklets. In expectation of a demand for Classic Form Requiem Masses, we already have purchased a box of these Silver Missals; please send an e-mail if you would like to see one.

