

The Funeral of the Pope

The funeral Mass of Pope John Paul II will be celebrated on April 8, 2005, the day established by the Congregation of Cardinals, which they also set as the date of the Pope's burial. Following the Mass, the transfer of the Pope to the tomb and his burial take place.

Before the funeral Mass, the body of the Pope is placed in a casket made of cypress wood and the lid is closed in the presence of the Cardinal Camerlengo, the Heads of the 3 Orders of Cardinals (Bishops, Priests and Deacons), the Cardinal Archpriest of the Vatican Basilica, the Cardinal Secretary of State, the Cardinal Vicar for the Diocese of Rome, the Substitute Secretary of State, the Prefect of the Papal Household, Almoner (Alms Giver) of the Holy Father, the vice Camerlengo, a representation of the Canons of the Basilica of St. Peter, and the Secretary of the Holy Father, vested in choir robes.

The Cardinal Camerlengo introduces the rite of the closing of the casket, announcing the reading of the *rogitum*, the scroll which records the life and more important works of the deceased Pontiff. While the Master of Liturgical Celebrations of the Papal Household reads the scroll, which is shown to those present, an antiphon, such as the following, is sung: "My soul is thirsting for God, the living God. When shall I see him face to face?" The Cardinal Camerlengo, after inviting all present to spend a moment in silent prayer, asks God that the Holy Father, "departed from our sight," may "contemplate your beauty, as you gather this shepherd to yourself, Eternal Pastor."

The Master of Pontifical Celebrations and the Secretary of the Supreme Pontiff place a white veil over the face of the deceased. Then the Cardinal Camerlengo sprinkles the body with holy water. The Master puts into the casket the purse with coins made during the Pope's reign and a copy of the Pope's will, in a metal tube, after being sealed with the seal of the Office of Liturgical Celebrations of the Supreme Pontiff. Another copy of the will is placed in the Papal Archives.

While the casket is closed Psalm 41(42) is sung. The funeral Mass, celebrated by the Cardinals and the Patriarchs of the Oriental rites, follows. Presiding in the concelebration is the Dean of the College of Cardinals. Red vestments are used.

The Entrance Antiphon "Eternal rest grant unto him O Lord, and let eternal light shine upon him" is followed by Psalm 64(65). Then the Opening Prayer is said, asking God to "grant that your servant Pope John Paul II, who led your Church in charity, and was a faithful dispenser of grace to the flock, may experience your mercy." The Mass follows in the usual way with a special Prayer over the Gifts and Prayer after Communion. The Final Committal and burial conclude the liturgy. The Cardinal Camerlengo, wearing red vestments, presides. After prayers are said the Litany of the Saints is sung, with all responding to the invocations. The remains of the deceased Pontiff are sprinkled with holy water. Patriarchs of the Oriental rites also sprinkle the body of the deceased Pontiff and offer their prayers. These actions do not occur in the usual Funeral Mass.

The remains of the Holy Father are carried through the Vatican Basilica into the Grotto entering through the gate of Santa Maria. Accompanying the casket are the above-mentioned Cardinals and the family of the deceased Pope. The casket of cypress containing the remains of the Roman Pontiff is tied with red ribbons upon which are "impressed" the seals of the Apostolic Palace, the Prefecture of the Pontifical Household, the Office of Liturgical Celebrations of the Supreme Pontiff and the Chapter of the Canons of the Vatican Basilica. Atop the coffin are placed a cross and the coat of arms of the deceased Pope. While the body is placed in the tomb, the Hail Holy Queen is recited. The notary of the Chapter of the Vatican Basilica records the authentic acts of the burial and reads it to those present.