

# **GUIDELINES FOR FUNERALS**

## **In Our Orthodox Christian Parishes**

The repose of a loved one is a significant, and often a very difficult, event in our lives. Although our Orthodox Church and Faith provides a solid structure of services and teachings to deal with grief and the reality of death, there is also the practical side of the funeral services that family and friends must address.

The Rector of the parish decides who may have a funeral in the church.

The reposed one's estate or the reposed one's family is financially responsible for organizing every aspect of the funeral: arrangements with the home; the Trisagion service; funeral service; internment at the cemetery; the mercy meal and the cleanup of the church and hall afterward.

The parish does not charge a fee for the services, the use of the church premises or the parish hall, but likewise, there should be no expectation that the church is responsible for the preparations and clean up.

### **At time of death**

As soon as possible, the family should notify the parish priest so that the Trisagion Service may be held immediately. The family should then meet with the parish priest to schedule the services, taking in consideration the priest's schedule and the church calendar.

### **Date of Funeral**

The funeral may be set on any day [except Sunday] to accommodate the making of arrangements and for attendees coming from out of town. If the funeral is held during Bright Week, the Paschal Canon service is performed in place of the funeral service.

The family should notify a funeral home to prepare the reposed for the funeral. After consultation with the priest, the family should advise the funeral director of the dates and times of the Trisagion service; the funeral and the interment.

*The church prohibits cremation because, in the Old Testament, cremating a body was considered a curse. No funeral service or burial rites can be held for a cremated person.*

### **Trisagion Service**

The Trisagion service is a short memorial service held at the church, usually on the evening before the funeral. After this service, it is customary, but not mandatory, for the family to arrange to serve coffee and/or tea and cookies.

### **Funeral**

The family is responsible for the preparation of the church's nave and for the nave's clean up after the service. If the family is unable to perform these duties, they may appoint a parishioner or parishioners to assume these responsibilities.

### **Mercy meal**

The mercy meal (called *Makaríá* in Greek) is a time for mourners to share a somber meal to bless the reposed. It provides an opportunity for the family and friends to refresh themselves and remember their loved one in an informal setting.

The family provides the dinner after the funeral. This is a tradition that is expected, but is not required by the church.

Fish, the symbol of Christianity, is the most traditional entrée and is provided by the family. Parishioners may volunteer or be asked by the family to prepare the side dishes. If the funeral occurs during a Lenten period, the foods prepared will adhere to the Church's fasting rules. Traditionally, parishioners have brought side dishes to the meal, but are not required to do so.

It is the responsibility of the family or their appointee to clean up the church hall after the Mercy meal.

*Prepared by the clergy of St. Nectarios Orthodox Cathedral, Seattle, WA.*