

## **Diocese of Erie Policy on Words of Remembrance, or Eulogies, at Funerals**

In the Order of Christian Funerals, the ritual notes for the celebration of the Funeral Mass indicate:

*A member or a friend of the family may speak in remembrance of the deceased before the final commendation begins. (#170) (This means: after the Prayer After Communion)*

A similar note is found in the OCF for the Vigil For The Deceased:

*A member or a friend of the family may speak in remembrance of the deceased. (#80)*

Thus the revised rite of the Christian Funeral foresees the inclusion of Words of Remembrance, or what the secular world would call a eulogy, as part of the burial ritual. These words do not take the place of the homily which is preached after the gospel reading. However, since the revised rite has been in use, a series of problems have been observed about the Words of Remembrance, or a eulogy:

- It is often not prepared, which results in a rambling presentation.
- It is often lengthy, i.e., longer than the homily, longer than the Eucharistic Prayer, and occasionally longer than the Funeral Mass.
- It is sometimes presented by a number of family members or friends.
- It sometimes fails to mention the faith-life of the deceased, and becomes a recital of secular concerns.

Due to these issues, beginning in Advent of 2004, Bishop Donald W. Trautman, established as **particular liturgical law for the diocese of Erie, the requirement that the pastors, the faithful, and the funeral directors abide by the following directives for the inclusion of Words of Remembrance (a eulogy) during the rites of Christian burial.** A dispensation of these directives can be granted for a serious reason in an individual case only by the Diocesan Bishop, the Vicar General, or one of the Regional Episcopal Vicars.

- A. Words of Remembrance might more fittingly be spoken during the Vigil for the Deceased, which sometimes takes the form of a "sharing of memories," or at the conclusion of the Rite of Committal at the cemetery.
- B. These words should be brief, approximately three to five minutes in length, shorter in length than the homily or (at Mass) the Eucharistic Prayer.
- C. At the Funeral Mass, there should be only one speaker for these words.
- D. The speaker should make some reference to the faith-life of the deceased, i.e., the Church, the family, or the personal life of the deceased.
- E. These words should be composed prior to the liturgy and shown to the presiding minister in advance for general approval of content and length.
- F. The preceding five guidelines are to be shared with the members of parish families in order to apprise them of the guidelines before a funeral takes place or is planned. Words of Remembrance are not a necessary part of the funeral, but are permitted when the words will bring hope and comfort to the bereaved as well as honor to the deceased.