

Christian Burial of a Cleric (2016)

There are many traditions which are attached to the death of a cleric (bishop, priest or Deacon), and many of these are not necessary well known. The Bishop's Office through the Doctrine and Worship Committee has complied these instructions for those occasions when a cleric has died and the funeral traditions might need to be spelled out.

1. As soon as a priest has died, after the family has been notified and as they begin to plan, it is requested that the Bishop's office be notified as soon as possible. As the Pastor to the Pastors, it is the Bishop's responsibility to (at the very least) be present to comfort the family of the priest, and usually, in consultation with the Rector of the parish, assist or preside at the funeral, as the family wishes.
2. If it is possible, clerical funerals are generally Eucharistic. Unless previous planning or requests have been made by the deceased or by family, the Eucharist should be celebrated, according to the rites of the *Book of Common Prayer* or the *Book of Alternative Services*.
3. The Bishop's participation is negotiated with the Rector and the family. In most cases, the Bishop would celebrate the Eucharist, do the Commendation and pronounce the final blessing. In the case of the death of a cleric, some representation from the Bishop's office should be assumed to be part of the Funeral, visitation or prayers in some way.
4. In cases where there will be a visitation and the body will be viewed, Clerics may be buried in Clerical Dress, or vested in Cassock, surplice and stole, or in some cases (as directed by the family) in Eucharistic vestments. Funeral Directors should be encouraged to consult with the local clergy or Bishop's Office to see that the vesting of the body as requested by the family or the deceased is carried out correctly.
5. In cases where the body will be present in the church, the Casket enters the church HEAD FIRST for clerics, as opposed to feet first for laity. It remains in this position for the entirety of the time it is present in the Church. This is a symbol of the priest facing the people even in death. The casket is not open for the liturgy, but remains closed with a funeral pall (or in the case of a veteran or serving member of the Canadian Forces - a flag) covering it.
6. A "lying-in-state" in the parish church the night before, or in the hour or two before the funeral is also appropriate. The Casket may be open for a visitation in a church, but is normally closed and covered with the pall for a "lying-in-state". As the body is moved at the conclusion of the funeral liturgy, an "honour guard" of fellow clerics, outside the church lining the way to the hearse is also a tradition which may be carried out. This honour guard of clerics will be organized by the Rector or Priest in Charge of the Funeral.
7. On the death of Clergy spouse, some of the above (participation of local clergy or Bishop/Bishop's representative) may apply at the discretion of the family. At the very least, the Bishops' office should be notified as soon as possible on the death of a Clergy Spouse.

