



Guidelines for the use of Churches for Reposing of Remains.

In recent months a practice has developed in some parishes around the use of churches for the Reposing of the Remains of those who have died. This is a practice that usually was held in the home, or in recent years in a funeral home, where family and friends could gather, offer sympathy and support.

Some parishes have asked for guidance on the matter, that while every community wishes to support a family at the time of a funeral, others have questioned if a church is the best place for reposing of remains to occur. In the interests of bereaved families in particular, I would like therefore to provide clarity on this issue.

In looking at the instruction around the nature of a Christian Burial it is clear that the tradition of three stations and two processional routes are at the heart of the ritual, as celebrated over the years. Those three places being; the home, the church, and the place of committal. Each hold their particular meaning that the Christian believes in the understanding of death itself. There is the personal element in the home, the community prayer in the church, and the placing in the care of God in the committal. Between each of these there is a procession, which highlights that each of our lives is a pilgrimage to eternal rest. None of these are purely functional, but hold significance, both in the comfort that they bring and in the faith that they profess.

In recent years the station at the home has, quite often taken place in a funeral home, and then from there to the church, and place of committal. However, the use of a church in a manner that makes it like a funeral home breaks this practice and is not faithful to the tradition that we hold.

The element that takes place in the church should always be in the context of faith and worship, as this is the nature and purpose of each church. It is a sign and symbol of the Lord's presence in the community, and the place where the Blessed Sacrament is reserved. This point is important for all those who use a church outside the celebration of the liturgy.

I am directing that in parishes where the practice of remains reposing in the church has not begun, that these parishes do not introduce the practice.

For parishes where it has occurred, I am directing that the practice be discontinued as and from 9 February 2026, and I am requesting the parish communities involved to look at other possibilities within the area for hosting this station of the funeral rites. The use of Parish halls or other parish facilities is perfectly in order.



In a parish church the Reception of Remains to a church should follow the Liturgy designed for this station and following this the community should come forward to offer their condolences. It is imperative that those attending always acknowledge that the Blessed Sacrament is present and that this is a sacred place of worship. Hence the importance that when the remains are placed in front of the Altar, the coffin remains closed.

The way we celebrate the funeral rituals is an important element both in our faith and in our culture. I am requesting that these guidelines be followed, so as to ensure the dignity and respect for both those who have died and the place of worship.

In summary

The churches within the diocese are not to be used for the Reposing of Remains.

When the remains of a member of the faithful are received at the church, the appropriate liturgical text provided in the Funeral Ritual should be used.

When the remains are received in the church, placed before the altar, and kept overnight, the coffin should always be closed.

Funeral Directors.

Funeral Directors play a vital role for families who have been bereaved. The support and direction they offer families is greatly appreciated by all involved. It is important that they keep in close contact with the priest conducting the funeral liturgy and that they are available to give guidance and direction to families and mourners both inside and outside the church in consultation with the priest concerned.

There is no question that the demand for reposing in churches has come about not just because there is a lack of venue available but also because of the perceived high cost of the use of a funeral home by comparison. Many families experience financial pressure in relation to funerals. I respectfully request funeral directors to be conscious of this and accordingly to continue to offer their facilities at reasonable rates to bereaved families, and also to other funeral directors who may not have a funeral home, in a spirit of co-operation and good will.

+ Paul Connell.

Bishop of Ardagh & Clonmacnois.

Feast of St. Angela Merici 2026.