



# The Diocese of Wichita and Mid-America

Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese of North America

## Procedures to be Followed upon the Death of a Clergyman [1]

1. Upon the death of a priest or deacon, the Diocesan Bishop must be informed immediately so that the brother clergy may be notified and the appropriate funeral rites arranged. The Diocesan Bishop will then inform the Metropolitan Archbishop in Englewood, NJ, the members of the Diocesan Council of Presbyters and Clergy Brotherhood. With the blessing of the Diocesan Bishop, local Orthodox Christian clergy of all other jurisdictions ought also to be notified.

2. After the nearest priest is called in and says the *Trisagion Prayers of Mercy for the Departed* at the place of death, the departed may be removed to the mortuary where the mortician prepares and clothes the departed as far as his undergarments. No cosmetics should be used on the departed unless absolutely necessary.

3. Upon arriving at the mortuary all of the clergy appointed to vest the departed will themselves vest - **PRIESTS** vest in cassocks, exorassa and epitrachelia, and **DEACONS** vests in cassocks, exorassa and oraria. After the priests lightly wipe the body with a sponge soaked in oil, the clergy clothe him in his clerical attire (shirt, trousers, socks, shoes and cassock). The *Vesting Prayers* are slowly intoned as the clergy, assisted by the mortician as necessary, vest the departed in full sacerdotal vestments:

**IF THE DEPARTED IS A BISHOP** the deacons cense him, as usual, while he is vested with sticharion, epitrachelion, zone, epimanikia, epigonation, sakkos, great omophorion, pectoral cross, engolpion and miter.

**IF THE DEPARTED IS A PRIEST** he is vested with sticharion, epitrachelion, zone, epimanikia, phelonion and, if he has the privileges, with the epigonation, pectoral cross, epanokallymavkon, etc. [2]

**IF THE DEPARTED IS A DEACON** he is vested with sticharion, epimanikia and orarion.

**IF THE DEPARTED IS TO BE BURIED AS A MONASTIC** the preparation of the body is done differently from that listed here.

4. After the vesting, the departed is laid in his casket which ought to be simple and unadorned and, if possible, of the kind with a totally removal top.

**IF THE DEPARTED IS A BISHOP OR A PRIEST** an open aer is placed over his face, a closed book of the holy gospels is placed upon his breast, and a blessing cross is placed in his right hand which, along with his left, is laid upon the bottom edge of the holy gospels.

**IF THE DEPARTED IS A DEACON** a cold censer is placed in the right hand of a departed deacon and laid along his right side, and the orarion is placed over his left wrist and his left hand placed upon his breast.

5. The *Trisagion Prayers of Mercy* are offered by the assembled clergy at the mortuary.

6. The casket is then borne out of the mortuary (to the hearse) and into the church temple by the priests and deacons.

7. The open casket is situated lengthwise in the center of the solea before the holy doors with the departed facing the holy table (the foot of the casket nearest the iconostasis). A tall candlestand is placed at the head and at the foot of the casket, and the candles are lighted and remain burning until the time of burial.

**IF THE DEPARTED IS A BISHOP** his staff (pateritsa) is affixed to stand upright at the head of the casket, the mantia is draped over the casket to cover the departed from his loins down and over the foot of the casket, the unlighted trikirion and dikirion are placed on stands near his shoulders (trikirion on his right and dikirion on his left), and the exapteryga (liturgical fans) are affixed to stand upright (and slightly angled in towards each other) on each side of the casket near the departed's head.

8. After all of the above has been arranged the *Trisagion Prayers of Mercy* are offered by the assembled clergy in the church temple.

9. At the conclusion of the *Trisagion Prayers of Mercy* the clergy (assisted by pious lay people, if necessary) begin the watch, reading, for a bishop or priest, the four gospels, or, for a deacon, the Psalter. This reading is interrupted only during divine services from this time until the departure of the departed from the church temple for burial.

**IF THE DEPARTED IS A BISHOP OR A PRIEST** the aer may be removed from his face during divine services, but at all other times his face remains covered with the open aer. (A deacon's face is not covered with the aer at any time.)

10. The *Trisagion Prayers of Mercy* may be offered at the church temple at any time, but most especially upon the first arrival of a bishop or priest. They should also be offered at publicly announced times during the mornings, afternoons and evenings.

11. In the evening before the day of burial, the funeral service is celebrated in the church temple.

**IF THE DEPARTED IS A BISHOP OR A PRIEST** the special *Funeral of a Bishop or a Priest* is used.

**IF THE DEPARTED IS A DEACON** the usual *Funeral Service* (as for a layman) is used.

12. On the morning of the day of burial the Divine Liturgy is celebrated in the church temple followed by the *Trisagion Prayers of Mercy*. If the departed is a bishop or priest a second *Funeral Service* (using the usual order as for a layman) is celebrated. The last kiss is given to the chanting of the hymns appointed for this in the Euchologion. Then oil from the sleepless lamp then ashes from a cold censer are poured upon the departed in the sign of the cross as usual, and the casket is closed and sealed.

**IF THE DEPARTED IS A BISHOP OR PRIEST** the aer remains over his face and the blessing cross and book of holy gospels remain in the casket.

**IF THE DEPARTED IS A DEACON** the censer remains in the casket.

13. The casket is then borne out of the church temple [3] (to the hearse) and to the place of burial by the priests and deacons.

14. The *Trisagion Prayers of Mercy* are offered at the place of burial and then the casket is lowered into the ground and covered with earth.

15. It is usual that a *Meal of Mercy* be hosted for all of the mourners after the burial.

16. It is traditional that the Divine Liturgy and the *Trisagion Prayers of Mercy* be offered daily for the repose of the soul of the departed for forty consecutive days following his death (the day of death being counted as day number one) at the church temple from which he was buried. At minimum the Divine Liturgy and *Trisagion Prayers of Mercy* are to be offered for the repose of the soul of the departed on the third, ninth and fortieth days after his death, with the *kollyva* being prepared only for the fortieth day prayers. Divine Liturgy and the *Trisagion Prayers of Mercy* are also to be offered for the repose of the soul of the departed on the sixth month and yearly anniversaries of his death.

17. It is traditional that the departed be commemorated perpetually at the proskomide in the church temple(s) where he served and, most especially, in the one from which he was buried.

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[1] It should be noted that cremation is not permitted to Orthodox Christians.

[2] It is customary for a priest to be buried in the vestments in which he was ordained.

[3] If the departed is a bishop or a priest, the casket is borne in procession once around the exterior of the church temple before being taken to the place of burial. It is traditional that, if the departed is a bishop, the litany for the departed be intoned on each side of the church temple.