

FUNERALS & TRIASAGION & MEMORIALS

Information & Guidelines

Trisagion

The Trisagion service is roughly ten minutes in length and is offered the evening before the funeral service at the funeral home, though on some occasions it may take place in the Church. It is customary for the family to offer light refreshments following the service at the funeral home. Two hours are typically allocated by the funeral home for the family to have loved ones and friends attend the viewing and visit.

The Trisagion service is usually conducted at the beginning of the second hour. For example, if the viewing is from 6 – 8 p.m. the Trisagion service will occur at 7 o'clock. If the family so chooses, they may set up pictures of their loved one in an area designated by the funeral home. The family may also invite anyone of their choosing to say a few words about the departed, but only after the Trisagion service is completed.

It is also customary for the family to offer refreshments at the Trisagion service. The ladies Philotochos of St. Katherine has a standing offer to provide these refreshments if the family so desires. If so, please contact the Church office to inform us that this is what you wish.

Funeral

The Funeral service is roughly forty-five minutes in length and is comprised of various hymns and readings. At the end of the service those in attendance have the opportunity to pay their respects to the departed as well as offer their condolences to the family. Funeral services are typically scheduled for either 10:00 or 11:00 a.m. At the funeral service the family traditionally sits in the front row on the right side before the icon of Christ on the iconostasion.

While it cannot be said that there is an Orthodox requirement that the casket be open, we can say unequivocally that it is the long-standing tradition of the Church. Exceptions are made in the event where there has been significant visible trauma to the body or there is a danger of communicable disease transmission. The open casket is arranged so that (symbolically) the eyes of the deceased look east towards the holy Altar, the direction from which Christ will return.

The funeral service concludes as the priest invites those in attendance to come forward to pay their final respects to the departed as the final hymn *Let us offer a farewell kiss* is chanted. After all have passed by and the family has said their last farewell, the priest pours oil and ash (*or sand*) on the body in the form of a cross, quoting from Psalm 50, *Wash me with hyssop and I shall be pure, cleanse me and I shall be whiter than snow.* and Psalm 24 *The earth is the Lord's and the fullness therein. From ashes you came and to ashes you shall return.* Funeral services are **not permitted** on Sundays, nor on Holy Friday unless permission is granted by the Bishop.

Interment

The interment at the cemetery traditionally takes place immediately following the funeral service where the Trisagion service is once again offered at the gravesite. In cases where it's anticipated that there will be many in attendance, a motorcycle escort is usually offered.

Mercy Meal

The Mercy Meal (*or Makaria*) is a luncheon offered by the family, either privately or publicly after the funeral and interment. The meal is a symbol of the Resurrection of Christ in that it displays the belief in the power of God who triumphed over death. This meal is typically held at the Church Hall or Community Center, though it is sometimes hosted at a local restaurant or in a home. The decision belongs exclusively to the family of the departed.

Traditionally fish is served at the Mercy Meal, remembering that the first food of which the Risen Lord ate was broiled fish (Lk. 24:42). Greek brandy, *Metaxa* along with *paximadia* (biscotti) are also traditionally offered at the Mercy Meal. The family may also bring pictures of the deceased and a vase of flowers to put on display. Slideshows, videos or other displays are also appropriate at this gathering.

How St. Katherine's Can Help

It is important to contact the Church office at St. Katherine's when your loved one is ill so the priest can visit and offer prayers and the holy mysteries. Both the priest and the Church administrator can answer any question you may have regarding days and times for the funeral to be conducted as well suggestions for a funeral home if necessary. Once services are scheduled, the church will assume the responsibility of receiving flowers on the day of the funeral and send a notice to the parishioners of St. Katherine's regarding the passing of your loved one and the schedule of services.

Cost

There are no fees associated for the use of the Church, nor for the priest to perform the service. However, it is appreciated if the family would offer a suggested honorarium of \$100 to the chanter who usually has a daytime job and needs to arrange time off work. The family may also make a free-will donation to the church in memory of their departed loved one. There are many ministries at St. Katherine's that one can choose to donate to. These are all listed on the Church's website under the "donate" option.

Cremation

Cremation is not condoned in the Orthodox Church. By assuming human flesh Jesus Christ wholly sanctified our bodies. Through Baptism we "put on Christ" and through Chrismation, we became a temple of the Holy Spirit. Our body, therefore, became the instrument through which we partook of God and His energies. We consumed His Flesh and Blood into our body through Holy Communion. We received healing and grace in our body through the anointing of Unction. And with our body we worshiped and served God. If the departed had expressed their desire to be cremated, the traditional funeral service and burial rites cannot be conducted, the Church is only able to offer the Trisagion service on their behalf.

Suicide

Although not explicitly stated in Scripture, the taking of one's own life, is considered self-murder and as such, a sin in the Orthodox Church as possible evidence of one's lack of faith in our loving, forgiving, sustaining God. Also, if a person has committed suicide because of an unrepentant belief that such an action is rationally or ethically defensible, the Orthodox Church can deny that person a Church funeral, because such beliefs and actions separate a person from the community of faith. The Church, however, shows *οικονομία* (compassion) by allowing an Orthodox funeral for those who have taken their own life because of mental illness, severe emotional stress, or when a physician can verify a condition of impaired rationality.

Memorial Services

Memorial services are traditionally conducted on Saturdays before Great Vespers, since Saturday is the day the Orthodox Church remembers those who have passed on from this world. Though it has become the custom today, Memorials were never offered on Sunday since it is the Day of Resurrection. At this time at St. Katherine's memorial services are offered both on Saturdays 10 minutes prior to the start of before Great Vespers (5:50 p.m.) and on Sundays following the Divine Liturgy.

Memorials are also conducted on the 40th day after the individual reposed, as well as on the 3rd and 6th month, and then 1 year from the time of their repose. After this, a memorial is offered annually on the anniversary date of the passing of the individual.

Memorial services are **not permitted** from the Saturday of Lazarus through the Sunday of Thomas, on any Feastday of the Lord or Feastday of the Theotokos, nor will they be conducted on a Sunday following a Saturday of the Souls service.

Memorial Services are also offered during each Saturday of the Souls which is four times per year. These general memorial services are observed the two Saturdays preceding the start of Great Lent, the Saturday following the First Sunday of Great Lent (Sunday of Orthodoxy), and the Saturday before the Sunday of Pentecost.

Kollyva (Boiled Wheat)

All Memorial Services must be accompanied with Kollyva (boiled wheat.) This is another powerful symbol of the Resurrection. (*“Most assuredly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it produces much fruit.”* John 12:24 also see 1 Corinthians 15:35-38.)

At St. Katherine’s, kollyva is typically prepared by Philoptochos upon request of the family. If this is your desire, please contact the parish administrator so this can be arranged. If the family wishes to prepare kollyva they may do so.