Matthew S. Ernest, The Development of the Vigil for the Deceased in the Order of Christian Funerals (USA), 1969...

Fr. Matthew S Ernest, Ecclesia orans

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As a part of the Church’s official prayer during the period which follows the death of one of her own, the Vigil for the Deceased (Vigilia pro defuncto) in the Ordo essequiarum holds an important place in the post-Conciliar funeral rites. Like all Christian liturgy, the Vigil is a proclamation and celebration of the Paschal Mystery. Notably, the Vigil proclaims that Mystery in the first days after death and thus functions as the initial encounter of many mourners with the Gospel message following the passing of a friend or family member. Indeed, the time, setting, and emotional state of the mourners place unique demands on the rites which constitute the Vigil for the Deceased. For this reason, the Vigil is worthy of study as it pertains to the way in which it serves this significant role in the life of the Church.

Following its promulgation in 1969, the OE was adapted for use in various localities throughout the world. This adaptation was foreseen and encouraged by the OE’s Praenotanda, which observed that funeral customs differ greatly from one country and region to another. In the United States, the first such adaptation of the OE was the 1970 Rite of

1 See Rituale Romanum ex decreto Sacrosancti Oecumenici Concilii Vaticani II instauratum auctoritate Pauli PP. VI promulgatum, Ordo essequiarum, Editio typica, Typis polyglottis Vaticanis, Città del Vaticano 1969 (=OE), 26-29.
2 «Potiora autem momenta, iuxta locorum consuetudines, haec numerari possunt: vigilia in domo defuncti, corporis depositio in feretro et ipsius translatio ad sepulcrum, praemissa tum propinquorum tum, si fieri potest, totius etiam communissimae adoratione ad audiendum in liturgia verbi consolationem spei, ad sacrificium eucharisticum offerendum et ad defunctum ultima valedictione consolationem». OE, 3.
3 See OE, 21.
This ritual book was, by and large, a re-presentation of the OE in English. While it included some instances of adaptation, these were limited in scope and number. As observed by Richard Rutherford, «in the decade following the appearance of the Order of Funerals (1969), pastoral practice and local custom throughout the English-speaking world expressed the need for indigenous funeral rites»⁵. English-speaking bishops’ conferences set out to meet this need, and the principal result of this undertaking was the 1985 Order of Christian Funerals⁶. This text was prepared and published by the International Commission on English in the Liturgy, which was, and still is, entrusted with the preparation of English translations of Latin liturgical texts in accordance with the directives of the Holy See⁷. ICEL’s Order of Christian Funerals was further adapted for use in the United States and published in 1989, also under the title Order of Christian Funerals⁸. In contrast with the 1970 RF, the 1989 OCF constituted a more broad-ranging adaptation of the OE, utilizing portions of the Latin text, other post-conciliar rites, and newly composed prayers to address the specific pastoral circumstances

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⁷ ICEL, which was originally founded by the English-speaking bishops’ conferences, was restructured and established as a mixed commission by the Congregation for Divine Worship and Discipline of the Sacraments in 2003. Since that time, the Congregation has overseen the work of ICEL with the assistance of the Vox Clara Committee, a group erected in 2002 consisting of bishops and consulters from English-speaking areas who advise the Congregation on issues pertaining to English-language liturgical texts. While the history of these developments is beyond the scope of this article, readers can find a comprehensive introduction to the topic (with a listing of key resources and commentaries) in: K.F. Pecklers-G. Ostdiek, «The History of Vernaculars and Role of Translation», in A Commentary on the Order of Mass of the Roman Missal, eds. E. Foley-J. Baldwin-M. Collins et al., Liturgical Press, Collegeville (MN) 2011, 61-69.
⁸ Order of Christian Funerals, Catholic Book Publishing, New York 1989 (= OCF). This book was published simultaneously by several other companies with identical page and paragraph numbering. An amended edition of this work was published in 1998 with an appendix containing rites to be used in the case of cremation.
providing for the theological, sociological, and psychological needs of
the community through euchology, Scripture, song, and ritual? That is
to say, can such rites be both an expression of the community, as well as
a response to the grief experienced by that same group? In light of our
investigation into the process by which the Vigil within the OCF was
formed, it may be proposed that this rite suggests that liturgy should
serve both of these functions. As such, the Vigil can be understood to
be an important development in the post-conciliar liturgical reforms by
way of that rite’s use of various liturgical elements to address the needs
of those who participate in prayer for the deceased.

Abstract

This article studies the development of the Vigil for the Deceased in
the Order of Christian Funerals (USA) through an examination of the
archival documents of the committees entrusted with this work. There
follows a discussion of the theological/pastoral foci of the Vigil in light
of the diachronic presentation and analysis.

Sommario

Questo articolo studia lo sviluppo della Veglia per i defunti nell’Or-
der of Christian Funerals (USA) tramite un esame dei documenti d’ar-
chivio delle commissioni incaricate di questo lavoro. Segue una espo-
sizione sui principali aspetti teologico-pastorali della Vigilia nella luce
della presentazione e delle analisi diacroniche.
Christian funerals, including the different ceremonies and beliefs about death in the Church of England and Catholic Church. Often, the deceased will have left information in his/her will concerning what they want to be included in the funeral service (hymns, prayers) and will also say whether they wanted to be buried or cremated. The funeral is held about a week after death. It can either take place in a church or at a crematorium. It usually takes this form: The Gathering: the priest will open the service with this reading from the scriptures: ‘I am the resurrection and the life,’ saith the Lord; ‘he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: and whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never’ This article studies the development of the Vigil for the Deceased in the Order of Christian Funerals (USA) through an examination of the archival documents of the committees entrusted with this work. There follows a discussion of the more. This article studies the development of the Vigil for the Deceased in the Order of Christian Funerals (USA) through an examination of the archival documents of the committees entrusted with this work. There follows a discussion of the theological/pastoral foci of the Vigil in light of the diachronic presentation and analysis. Save to Library. Download. Easter Vigil, also called the Paschal Vigil or the Great Vigil of Easter, is a service held in traditional Christian churches as the first official celebration of the Resurrection of Jesus. Historically, it is during this service that people are baptized and that adult catechumens are received into full communion with the Church. It is held in the hours of darkness between sunset on Holy Saturday and sunrise on Easter Day and is the first celebration of Easter, days traditionally being considered to begin at sunset. Order Of Christian Funerals book. Read reviews from world’s largest community for readers. This bilingual edition of the Order of Christian Funerals contains the basic texts in English and Spanish for vigil services, funeral liturgies, committal services, prayers and texts for particular circumstances, and Holy Communion outside of Mass. The Order of Christian Funerals includes Vigil for the Deceased,” “Related Rites and Prayers,” “Funeral Mass,” “Funeral Liturgy Outside Mass,” “Rite of Committal,” “Rite of Committal with Final Commendation,” “Funerals for Adults,” “Antiphons and Psalms,” “Prayers and Texts in Particular Circumstances,” and “Holy Communion Outside of Mass.”