

# Leading the FLOCK

BY BISHOP DANIEL E. THOMAS



## ‘Eternal Rest Grant Unto Them O Lord’

“*Memento Mori!*” It is a Latin phrase which literally means “Remember to die.” But since no one ever has to be reminded to die, it is most often translated “Remember that you will die.”

As the month of November concludes, we recall a longstanding custom that as Catholics, following All Souls Day, we remember and honor our beloved dead. While secular society is already gearing up for the all-consuming “Holiday” consumerism, we are praying for the souls in purgatory, for our deceased family members, and for all those who have no one to remember them. Praying for the dead is a sign of our love, our care for and our communion with those who have gone before us from this earthly life. For years I’ve combatted the onslaught of Christmas music in November by listening to *Requiem* Masses by great composers, a way of focusing my attention on the reality of death and of confronting my own certain eventual death.

As the days become darker and nature dies off, as the liturgical year draws to a close, it focuses us on the end: the end of the world, the end times and our own end. We remember that one day we will



die. Many of the great saints exhort us regularly to meditate on our death: not to frighten ourselves or live in fear of death, but that we might live each day in such a way that we might be prepared for death when it comes. To “remember that you will die” is a way to remember how to live. Throughout November and beyond each of us is called to prepare for death by examining how we live the Gospel, striving to be ready to meet the Lord when He comes.

To be prepared for death involves not only spiritual preparation, but of course practical preparation. It is wise and prudent to prepare by assisting loved ones in making known your final wishes through a written Will. Often folks will “pre-plan” their funerals, making the hard choices

well before death, even choosing the readings and music beforehand. How important it is to have your wishes written down, as many of us have heard of the sad stories of lifelong faithful Catholics not having the benefit of a Funeral Mass because their children making the plans had fallen away from the faith. Planning for our death has a practical aspect in that we help those left behind to grieve our loss by lessening the burden of

having to attend to so many necessary practicalities.

Over the past few years I have been asked by parishioners, by laity who serve in parish ministry, by deacons and priests, and by undertakers, if the diocese could provide assistance by having guidelines for what a Catholic Funeral looks like. Many of the faithful have requested a resource in order to celebrate worthily and appropriately the Funeral Rites, given frequent uncertainty of what is correct and in light of the increasingly unique secular practices which do not reflect what we believe. Many of the families and parish families of our priests and deacons have requested such a resource in order to celebrate in a worthy and appropriate manner the Funeral

*It is my sincere hope that with these new resources, guidance for and answers to many practical questions people have will be readily available in this simple format. These resources will be available on our [diocesan web site](#), and it is envisioned that our local parishes will make these resources readily available to all the faithful and to funeral home staffs; that they will be made available by undertakers to those whom they serve; and that they will be kept in parishes for helpful reference at the passing of a priest or deacon.*

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Rites for our clergy. So after consultation with a number of pastors, lay faithful and local undertakers, we have prepared just such resources: two trifolds for use by all Catholics and anyone involved in planning their funerals, entitled "[Funeral Mass for Catholic Faithful](#)" and "[Funerals for Catholic Clergy](#)." In addition, to assist all those who serve in our parishes, we have also developed a more detailed booklet entitled "[Policy for the Celebration of the Order of Christian Funerals for Deceased Clergy](#)."

"The care with which we bury the dead expresses our faith in the victory over everlasting death which Our Lord Jesus Christ has won in our human nature by his own Death and Resurrection." These new resources describe our Christian understanding of death and the Funeral Rites, covering each aspect of the Funeral, including pre-planning, the obituary, the vigil, rosary and other devotionals, the use of the Christian symbol, sacred music, words of remembrance, family and friends as liturgical ministers, the homily, cremation and the disposition of ashes.

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"*Memento Mori!*" We remember our beloved dead, we remember that we ourselves will one day die, and we provide for others the assistance to prepare for and celebrate the Funeral Rites in a manner worthy of the deceased, worthy of our Catholic faith and worthy of the Lord.



Most Rev. Daniel E. Thomas  
Bishop of Toledo  
November 21, 2018

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