



## FUNERALS AT SAINT JOHN CHURCH

*"Blessed ever be the way, the way on which you walk this day, for there is prepared for you a place of everlasting rest."* ~ Hymn from the Orthodox funeral service

### WHEN SOMEONE YOU LOVE DIES

✝ When a loved one dies, please immediately contact Fr Allan Boyd on his cell 408-375-8998 ✝

In preparation for the funeral:

#### ☐ **Mortuary/Funeral Director**

Choose the mortuary/funeral director you will be using and contact them.

#### **NOTE:**

**Cremation is not an option if one wishes to have an Orthodox Funeral Service.**

Our tradition as Orthodox Christians is to bury the dead. Out of deep respect and reverence, the body of the deceased is placed in a casket and set in a grave. This deep respect is given because Saint Paul describes every Christian's body as "*a temple of the Holy Spirit*" (1 Corinthians 6:19). Thus, it is returned to the earth from which it was taken (Genesis 2:7).

#### ☐ **Cemetery**

Choose and contact the cemetery where you wish your loved one to be buried to make the necessary arrangements: the choosing and purchasing of a burial plot, headstone, etc.

#### ☐ **Burial Clothes**

Bring a set of clothes (suit/dress and underclothes) for your loved one to the mortuary for them to be buried in. Sometimes a recent photo of the deceased will be requested by the mortuary to be used in their preparation of the body for the funeral.

#### ☐ **Casket**

Choose a casket. (FYI: Our tradition as Orthodox Christians is that the casket normally be

open during services at the Church. Consult with the clergy regarding the open casket.)

☐ **Memorial Cards**

If it is your wish, choose icon memorial cards and a guest book for those attending services. These are usually provided by the Mortuary/Funeral Director.

☐ **Obituary Info**

Be prepared to offer the Mortuary the information they'll need for obituary notices both in print and online.

☐ **Death Certificates**

The Mortuary will ask about the number of death certificates that need to be ordered from the State for legal and financial purposes such as insurance policies, veterans and social security benefits, etc. Normally, you will need 5-10 death certificates.

☐ **Pallbearers**

Choose six strong people to serve as pallbearers in processing the casket from the Church to the coach and then from the coach to the graveside.

☐ **Florist**

Choose a florist. (NOTE: In times past, thousands of dollars might be spent on flowers for a funeral. As Orthodox Christians, we believe it is far more consistent with our values to choose a charity for memorial donations to be made. Some people choose to offer donations to Saint John Church in memory of their loved one.)

☐ **Set Service Times**

In conjunction with the Church and mortuary, set the days and times for:

**The Trisagion**

The Trisagion the night before the funeral service is usually held in the Church at 7 or 7:30PM; the Trisagion is a brief memorial service, no more than 10-15 minutes in length. Aside from offering prayers of love and respect for the departed, the time surrounding this service offers friends and loved ones an extended opportunity to view the deceased.

After the Trisagion service, our Church's custom is to allow the departed to remain upon the solea "lying in state" throughout the night, facing the altar, in the ever-loving embrace of the Theotokos until the funeral the next morning.

Often times people will plan for a small reception after the Trisagion of Coffee, Brandy, Koulourakia (the Greek twisted cookies that are typically associated with the resurrection) and Paximadia (Greek Biscotti) in the parish hall. At this point, respects are paid to the family of the deceased by saying (often in a toast with the brandy) "Life to us! May his/her memory be eternal. "

## The Funeral

The Orthodox Funeral Service is held the next day at Saint John Church (usually 10:30 or 11AM) and is approximately an hour long, or less.

### ❑ The Makaria, or Meal of Blessing

Following a funeral service at Saint John Church, it is customary to invite the funeral attendees to a "Meal of Blessing." If it is appropriate for the size of the crowd, the meal can take place in the parish hall. Otherwise, the family will sometimes consider booking a reception room in a nearby restaurant or a hotel.

(FYI: The Orthodox Christian tradition is for the main dish at this "Meal of Blessing" to be some kind of fish. This is because the first meal that the Lord Jesus ate with His disciples following His resurrection from the dead consisted of broiled fish and bread, as recorded in the Gospel of John 21:12-13. This meal is a reminder of Christ's resurrection and His closeness to those who believe in Him. It is not appropriate to serve meat at a Makaria.)

### ❑ The Internment

Following the Funeral Service held at the Church, the deceased is taken to the cemetery where another Trisagion is prayed at the graveside. The deceased is then lowered into his/her grave to await the Second Coming of Christ and, as we confess in the Creed at every celebration of the Liturgy, "the resurrection of the dead and the life of the age to come."

The Church Fathers suggest that there is no greater freedom than to live life with a healthy relationship with death. The more we embrace the mystery of our own mortality, the more we see the need to avail ourselves of becoming ever more united with God through His Son. We begin to look deeper into things: our lives, our relationships, and the mystery of Jesus Christ. We value these things more, and are moved toward mindful, wholehearted living.

An Orthodox Christian funeral conveys a person's entire life and death in the context of our faith in the Crucified and Risen Christ. It also enables family and friends to gather together to begin the process of accepting the painful reality of death and express their love, grief and support for one another.



*"Remember your own last days and set hostility aside. Remember death and decay and cease from sin!" ~ The Wisdom of Sirach 28:6*

*"... death is the destiny of everyone; thus, the living should take this to heart." ~ Ecclesiastes 7:2*

[Click here to download a printable PDF of the above information to assist you in this process.](#)