

## **Guidelines for Military Funerals in Civilian Parishes.**

This resource document has been prepared in order to help pastors celebrate a military funeral or memorial service when it is to occur in their home parish. It is meant to provide some direction for appropriate adaptations to the liturgy celebrated for a fallen soldier in the service of his or her country, either in action, or as a result of an accident or of natural causes.

The place of the funeral is left to the discretion of the surviving family members. They may choose to celebrate the funeral in the chapel of the military base where the member was currently serving, at their parish of origin, or home parish. The ECL (Episcopal Commission for the Liturgy) and the CELS (Commission Épiscopale de Liturgie et des Sacrements) of the CCCB wish to offer the following suggestions in order to assist in the planning and celebration of such a military funeral when it occurs in a civilian parish<sup>1</sup>. A military chaplain is always assigned to the family of the deceased and may assist in the above-mentioned planning and celebration. He or she will ordinarily be in contact with the parish community involved. The parish priest may also take the initiative to contact the nearest base in order to obtain information, asking to speak to a chaplain (RC). If there are any concerns or need of assistance from the onset, the chancellor of the Roman Catholic Military Diocese is also at your disposal<sup>2</sup>.

A number of options at the time of death of a military member are offered to the family of the deceased, ranging from a full military funeral with very careful protocol to be followed, to a memorial service in a public venue, to a Catholic (or Protestant) funeral service in a parish setting. All due discretion is left to the family of the deceased. When celebrated in a civilian church or parish, they may even choose not to have any military involvement or formal military protocol. Most however, will desire and welcome military honors and participation of military chaplains.

### **The Military Chaplain:**

The Roman Catholic chaplain in the Canadian Forces is a military officer and a member of the Military Diocese of Canada and is mandated by the Military Ordinary, whether a priest, a deacon or a lay Pastoral Associate.

A military chaplain<sup>3</sup> will be assigned to provide pastoral care to the family of a soldier killed in action or accident in the service of his/her country. The chaplain will also be expected to assist with his or her funeral, either in a military or in a civilian church or chapel, and will help to assure that due military honors are accorded.

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<sup>1</sup> Both National Liturgy Offices of the CCCB have been involved in compiling a series of texts to assist individuals, parishes and dioceses when there are occasions to offer prayer and spiritual support for those serving in the Canadian Armed Forces and in security and peacekeeping missions – <http://www.cccb.ca/site/content/view/2418/1226/lang.eng/>.

<sup>2</sup> Via email at: [sarazin.s@forces.gc.ca](mailto:sarazin.s@forces.gc.ca) or Tel.: 613-998-8747

<sup>3</sup> The military chaplain assigned to the family could be from another religious denomination and serve as a helpful advisor to all involved.

The military chaplain assigned to assist in a civilian funeral will likely be personally known to the serving member or at least be able to provide relevant information to the pastor with whom he is to collaborate for the military funeral. He/she will participate in the funeral rite as appropriate.

The military chaplain is likely the one who has made the notification of next of kin, or if unavailable a Reservist chaplain. A local parish priest (perhaps the one who is reading this document) may be asked, for various reasons, to do such a notification of the next-of-kin (in person) and to provide immediate pastoral care.

In the case of a funeral without Eucharist a fully trained lay pastoral minister (man or woman) may be assigned to assist locally to provide pastoral care to family members and to assist with the funeral of the military member. The chaplain's knowledge of military protocol and his/her understanding of Catholic ritual requirements can be an invaluable source of correct information and a facilitator for the liturgy.

### **The Military "Family":**

The bond felt among military personnel is a very sacred one. The expression "military family" is widely used to refer to this unique bond, not unlike that of the police force or firefighters.

At the time of death, as they bury one of their own, this bond needs expression, usually in a religious context for the expression of their grief, and for comfort in their loss. Members may be asked to participate as liturgical ministers, as bearers of flags or medals, as lectors, musicians, as members of the honor guard, as spokespersons in Words of Remembrance, or as ushers and servers. Such exercise of ministries and involvement in the ritual may help greatly to alleviate their own grief, as well as that of the family of the deceased.

If the fallen soldier and/or his/her family are Roman Catholic, they are under the Military Diocese's jurisdiction and the Roman Catholic chaplains represent the Military Ordinary. All military chaplains (RC and P) represent both the Military Chaplaincy and the Military Establishment. Interdiocesan cooperation should be in evidence to all in attendance.

### **The Funeral Service (or the Funeral Liturgy):**

- Usually a memorial service will precede or follow a funeral liturgy. Such a memorial service is more of an in-house service, ecumenical or multi-faith in nature and occurring within a military environment – Chapel, Parade Square, or a large public space as circumstances demand. This service gives due honor to a fellow soldier and to grieve his/her loss within the military family (unit, base, regiment, squadron).
- The funeral liturgy may be conducted at the chapel on a Canadian military base and be presided by one of the military chaplains. It may also be conducted at the

soldier's home parish, and may be presided by the pastor or the assigned military chaplain<sup>4</sup>.

- The military establishment is prepared to facilitate such a funeral in a civilian parish church and will do everything to assist the local parish priest or minister.
- A military chaplain, usually of the same denomination as the deceased, will be assigned to help and assist in the planning, preparation and celebration in order to assure that all due military acknowledgements and honor are provided according to established military protocols and traditions without interfering with the Funeral Rite itself of the local parish. Some accommodations may be included in the Funeral Rite according to the family's wishes, in partnership with the parish priest.
- When a military funeral occurs, military protocols apply mainly at the time when the remains of the deceased enters and exits the church. These apply mostly at the cemetery. Care will be taken by all military personnel not to interfere with the established funeral rite of the parish with its own ministers and choir unless invited to do so.
- Military personnel in attendance will be dressed in appropriate military uniforms, wearing a black armband.
- Ordained Roman Catholic Military chaplains may be invited to concelebrate, proclaim the Word of God or preach the homily. Catholic Military lay pastoral associate, who may be unit chaplains and well known by the deceased member in life, may be invited to share in the various liturgical ministries of the funeral liturgy. Protestants Military Chaplains may also be invited in the same venue.

### **The Words of Remembrance (Eulogies) in Military Funerals:**

The term "eulogy" today is dissuaded. "**Words of remembrance and praise**" or "**Christian Words of Remembrance**" is encouraged instead.

CCCB guidelines<sup>5</sup> are clear on such interjections: *The Words of remembrance do not have a proper place in the Funeral Mass because "the funeral liturgy is, as is all liturgy, an act of praise and thanksgiving for Christ's victory over sin and death, a proclamation of the paschal mystery. This act of worship belongs to the whole community, to the whole Church, and not to any individual or group. Any elements that do not give expression to this act of worship do not have a place."*

The ***Words of remembrance*** in military memorials and funerals are a well-established tradition. However, it can be accommodated according to the CCCB guidelines. For example, once the remains have entered the church, and before the procession such a testimony may be offered, or again, they may be included as part of the introductory rites.

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<sup>4</sup> A standard seating plan is already in the military protocol. See annex: Chapel seating plan figure 12-1 of the military ceremonies protocol.

<sup>5</sup> *Catholic Funerals and Eulogies, The Pall and the Flag*, edited by the National Liturgy Office, and published by Publications Service, Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2500 Don Reid Drive Ottawa, ON K1H 2J2 Canada. Copyright © Concacan Inc. 1998, 2003.

The number, the length and content of such testimonies may be regulated by the Presider, according to local custom.

Suggestion: Length, 3-5 min by One or Two persons at most! A written text may be included in the funeral program.

### **The Canadian Flag:**

The flag is an important symbol for all of us, but especially for the families of those who die in the service of their country. In Canada, the use of the pall is encouraged.

The ECL of the CCCB suggests<sup>6</sup> that: “*When persons who are or were in the military die, family and friends often wish to display the (national) flag as a symbol of national service. They want to drape the flag over the coffin, as is the custom at a "military" funeral. For Catholics, however, baptism remains the fundamental identity. Other emblems should not displace Christian symbols (pall see James 2:1-9) reminding the community of the person's baptism...The flag, which represents service to county, may be placed on the coffin, EXCEPT during the Funeral Mass. The flag may be placed on a standard near the coffin*”.

The flag then may be respectfully removed and replaced at the entrance to the church by the Pall. A protocol does exist in the military for the removal of the Flag. It can be done with great decorum and adds significance to the funeral. The flag may be carried in procession and placed on a special table at the front of the church, in the sanctuary or near the coffin, as long as it does not obstruct the altar, ambo or chair. Other significant symbols (medals or service headdress) can be placed on the table near the flag.

### **At the Gravesite (the military protocol):**

It is at the gravesite within the cemetery confines that funeral honors<sup>7</sup> are particularly in evidence. These can be easily integrated with the rite of committal.

#### **A) Arrival at the Gravesite: (from the Canadian Forces Manual of Drill and Ceremonial):**

1. Upon arrival at the gravesite, the guard, band and officiating chaplain take up their positions. The gun carriage/hearse halts and the bearer party removes the casket. The guard present arms (i.e. a formal salute with military weapons). All other military personnel not under command, salute.
2. After the casket has been placed on the stretchers over the grave, the guard shall be ordered to rest on their arms reversed or, in certain cases where time does not allow a rehearsal, to shoulder and order arms. The bearer party, on its commander's command, move off by the foot of the grave to the right flank of the guard. The headdress bearers return the headdress to each member of the bearer

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<sup>6</sup> Ibid, *Catholic Funerals and Eulogies, The Pall and the Flag*, CCCB, 1998, 2003.

<sup>7</sup> Section 2: *Funerals: A-AD-200-000/AG-000-* Canadian Forces Manual of Drill and Ceremonial, DND publication.

party. The insignia bearer places the cushion with medals on the casket and joins the chief mourners or military mourners. The chief mourners and honorary pallbearers take up their positions upon arrival, followed by the military and civilian mourners. The rear detachment takes up their position immediately to the rear of the guard. When all the parties have taken up their positions at the gravesite the officer commanding the funeral parade shall give the order, "Parade, Stand at Ease".

3. The officiating chaplain<sup>8</sup> then shall step forward to commence the service.

B) **The service:**

1. As the officiating chaplain steps forward, the parade commander will order, "Parade, Remove Headdress". All military personnel, except the guard and band, shall remove headdress.

2. Upon the completion of the service the officiating chaplain shall step back. This is the signal for the parade commander to order "Parade Replace Headdress", the guard to present arms and the bugler to sound Last Post, observe a 10-second pause and then sound Reveille. On the sounding of the Last Post all officers and those personnel not under command shall salute and the salute shall be held until the Reveille is completed.

3. A formal procedure for the removal and folding of the flag by the honour guard will then take place. Afterwards the flag will be presented to the next-of-kin.

4. Following the service those present may pay their respect in accordance with the protocol established by the Canadian Forces Director of Ceremonial **commencing with the officiating clergy**<sup>9</sup>. If volleys (i.e. rifles) are to be fired following the conclusion of the service the procedure for firing shall be as detailed by the Director of Ceremonial.

**Conclusion:**

It is hoped that those who will be involved in military funerals or memorial services will find in this resource a helpful aid that will facilitate the prayer of the gathered community for the deceased and their family members. It is a strength and a gift to all participants of the Church's liturgy that it can be adapted to our cultures, customs and traditions.

*<< Zeal for the promotion and restoration of the liturgy is rightly held to be a sign of the providential dispositions of God in our time, as a movement of the Holy Spirit in His Church. It is today a distinguishing mark of the Church's life, indeed of the whole tenor of contemporary religious thought and action >>. Sacrosanctum Concilium no. 43.*

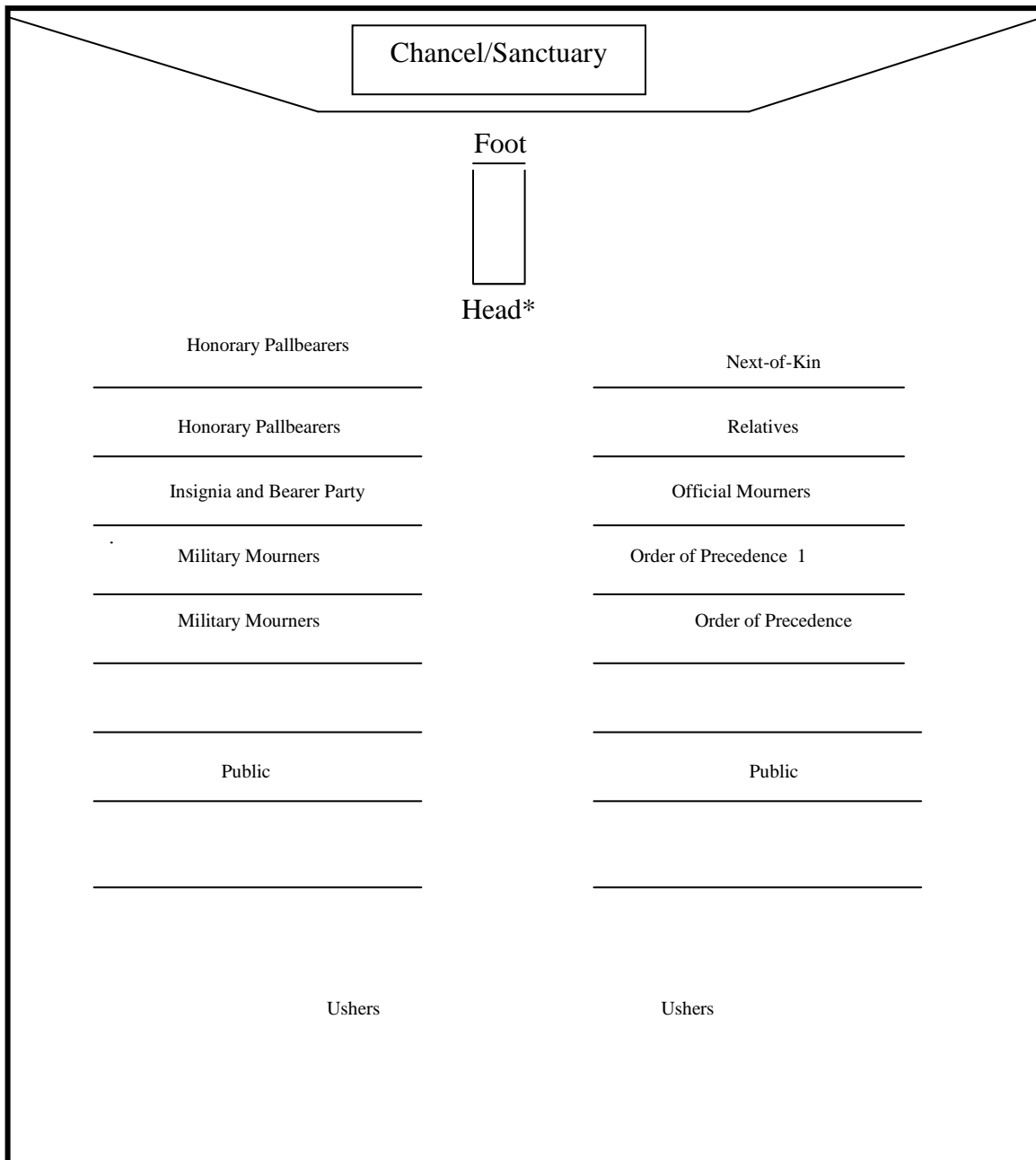
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<sup>8</sup> It can be either the Presider of the funeral and/or a military chaplain.

<sup>9</sup> To the deceased and/or the family.

Annex: FIGURE 12 - 1

### The Chapel Seating Plan



- \*Reversed for funeral of cleric where head is toward chancel/sanctuary.
- The order of precedence for individuals on occasions of state and ceremony in Canada, where state, ecclesiastical, judicial or other high-ranking Canadian authorities are present. The assisting office of the family will be aware of the DND publication A-AD-200-000/AG-000