



GREEK ORTHODOX METROPOLIS OF PITTSBURGH

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MEMORANDUM

TO: The Reverend Clergy of the Holy Metropolis of Pittsburgh
FROM: Metropolitan MAXIMOS of Pittsburgh
RE: Parish Funeral Directives
Date: November 18, 2008

Dear Reverend Fathers and Co-Workers in Christ,

Lately, much discussion has been generated regarding the proper procedure for funeral arrangements of deceased Orthodox Christians of our Holy Metropolis, especially those who may have also been committed members of such organizations as AHEPA, the Daughters of Penelope, the Sons of Pericles, or the Maids of Athena. Numerous inquiries have also been received requesting the appropriate place for laypeople to speak during the funeral process. Insofar as I am committed to not only shepherding the Lord's flock toward God's Holy Kingdom (cf. John 21:15-17) but also in assuring that "all things be done decently and in order" (1 Corinthians 14:40), I am issuing the following directives, effective immediately.

No other rite, except the Funeral rite of the Eastern Orthodox Church and the Trisagion service associated with it, is to be celebrated in the church. The sole officiant of the liturgical services within the local ecclesial community is the presbyter, who always represents the local Bishop, who in turn stands "in the figure and place of Christ" (εἰς τύπον καὶ τόπον Χριστοῦ; St. Ignatius of Antioch). Likewise, the eulogy, aside from celebrating the life of the deceased, must include a message expounding the Church's teaching on the afterlife and offering hope in God's great love and the Resurrection, a task best suited for the parish priest, who has the proper theological and spiritual training and again represents the Bishop.

Special funerary rites or prayers by fellow AHEPANS or members of other parecclesial or fraternal groups may be conducted at the funeral home, but never in the church. Eulogies in church are only to be offered by the ordained clergy and not by laypersons or representatives of organizations. Memorial messages may be offered by others either at the graveside or, preferably, at the traditional *makaria* meal. These settings offer appropriate and intimate opportunities for such offerings of love and respect, and they provide the proper background for extolling the deceased individual.

Finally, let it be known that these extra-ecclesial services must never supplant the Orthodox Christian burial rites. Hence, the priest must remember to remove his *epitrachelion* and not participate in any other form of service, so as to indicate clearly the primacy given to the funeral rites of the Orthodox Church.

Wishing you all a blessed Holy Nativity Fast, I remain,

With my paternal blessings and love,

J. Metropolitan Maximos
+ MAXIMOS
METROPOLITAN OF PITTSBURGH

MMP/fsm