



Mass For Suicide Healing and Remembrance Preparation Guide

An opportunity for recognizing the need for healing from having one's life touched by suicide is becoming an increasingly important ministry of the Catholic Church. Individuals and families have found a Mass for Suicide Healing and Remembrance to be deeply supportive and meaningful. An appropriate time to offer such a Mass would be during National Suicide Prevention Month (September), though there are other appropriate times as well, and no time is pastoral inappropriate given the wide reach of suicide's impact in our communities.

There are many reasons to host a Mass for Suicide Healing and Remembrance

1. The Mass offers spiritual support through prayer and the reception of the Eucharist.
2. The Mass provides a sacred space to remember and honor loved ones who have died by suicide.
3. A ritual, such as bringing forward a flower or lighting a candle, serves as a tangible way to remember the deceased and symbolically commend them to God's love and mercy.
4. The Mass and ritual acknowledge the pain and loss experienced by those left behind.
5. The Mass can provide healing and comfort for grieving individuals and families.
6. Community support, such as praying together, may ease the burden of grief.
7. God's compassion and care may be experienced, especially during difficult times.
8. The Mass helps to reduce stigma by publicly addressing suicide.
9. Mass participation may open conversations about suicide and mental health.
10. The Mass emphasizes Christ's love and mercy, offering hope and strength in faith and community.

Preparations and Planning for A Mass of Suicide Healing and Remembrance

6-8 months prior:

- Select desired date
- Choose location
- Connect with parish priest and secretary to confirm availability. Schedule date, location, presider, and time of Mass
- Check and confirm with parish/ACC liturgist
- Form a sub-committee or team for planning. Have a button or nametag to identify Mental Health Ministry (MHM) team members.
- Consider sharing a "Save the Date" with key markets, such as parishes, ACCS in the Deanery, diocesan calendar, local public health dept., etc.



3-4 months prior:

- Create advertising materials such as fliers, bulletin announcements, social media posts, etc. Include on any advertising that a flower will be available to bring forward during the Mass
- Create a large poster to post on an easel at the back of the church advertising the Mental Health Ministry and the Mass for Suicide Healing and Remembrance
- Create or gather Mental Health Ministry (MHM) resources (prayer cards, bookmarks, resource numbers, etc.)
- Start promoting across ACC/diocese:
 - Bulletins, newsletters, social media
 - Consider other key markets: suicide support groups, funeral homes, etc.
 - Seek out upcoming related community events
- Include the Director of Worship or liturgist in planning meetings to discuss liturgical considerations
 - Readings and lectors
 - Music and musicians
 - Universal Prayer
 - Ritual and Prayer
 - Gift bearers

2 months prior:

- Obtain a Book of Remembrance, if that will be part of the ritual
- Order flowers for the ritual: log stem white carnations work well (white flowers symbolize new life)
- Consider securing donations for the flowers
- Promote and advertise the Mass
- Finalize plans for ritual with Director of Worship or liturgist
 - Location of flowers before Mass and during ritual
 - Two or more volunteers to offer flowers
 - Location of two baskets for ritual (flower basket with two open ends work best)
 - Secure a volunteer to carry up the Book of Remembrance when all flowers are placed
 - Secure a volunteer to take flowers after Mass to a reverent location (such as placed in a vase by a statue of Mary)
- Invite additional clergy to attend if they are able

1 month prior:

- Finalize liturgical details with Director of Worship or liturgist
 - Compose Universal Prayer
 - Compose the prayer that will conclude the ritual



D I O C E S E O F S A I N T C L O U D

- Write announcement prior to Mass (This announcement may be made by a member of the MHM, member of the planning team, deacon, or priest.)
- Consider displaying MHM resources 1-2 weeks prior to Mass in host parish
- Secure all items needed for the Mass
 - Basket(s) for flowers (open ended flower baskets)
 - Book of Remembrance, pen and table or podium–location and volunteer to carry
 - Posters for the entrance of church
 - Consider posters directing people to pick up a flower and sign the book if they have lost a loved one to suicide
 - Table for MHM resources
- Make sure flowers are ordered.
 - Assign someone to pick up flowers and deliver to the church
 - Secure vases or buckets for flowers at entrance of church
- Finalize MHM resources
 - Assign someone to bring to the church
 - Have a QR code posted for MHM website at resource table
 - Post 988 in prominent places
- Ritual texts are emailed to appropriate people, e.g., presider, liturgist, musician

Day before/Day of:

Display all posters

- An easel may be used for large posters
- Bring tape for hanging smaller posters
- Have flowers delivered or picked up; ensure there is water in the bottom of the bucket to keep the flowers fresh
- Put MHM resources on a table
- Make sure baskets to receive flowers are in place by the altar
- Ritual texts are printed and placed in prayer-binders. Announcement prior to Mass is printed out and given to presenter.

Prior to the start of Mass

- Team members arrive 30-45 minutes prior to Mass
- Large poster is in place at the entrance of church
- Flowers in vases or pail at the entrance of church
- Book of Remembrance in the middle of church. This location may be different depending on host church
- Members of team help explain the flowers/ritual as people came in
- Resource table in back of church: prayer cards, books, bereavement folders



D I O C E S E O F S A I N T C L O U D

- Make announcement just before Mass to explain what will occur and invite people to inscribe the names to be remembered in the Book of Remembrance and get a flower if they have not already done so. This announcement may also explain about resources in back of Church, etc.
- Baskets for the ritual may be placed near the altar or ambo before Mass.

Just Prior to the Start of Mass

- If the Book of Remembrance was placed in the middle of the church, please move it to the side for the Opening Procession. The stand with the Book of Remembrance may be returned to the middle after the Opening Procession.

Ritual During Mass

- Homily ends, the presider invites people to come forward and place their flowers in the baskets. The presider may also invite those who had not picked up a flower before Mass to pick up a flower in the center of the church at this time and then join in procession, bringing it to the front.
- A member of the planning team stands in the center aisle with extra flowers for those who did not pick one up prior to the beginning of Mass.
- Servers or other designated person(s) pick up the basket(s) near the altar/ambo and carry them to the front center aisle. Standing on the main floor, the basket(s) is/are held for people to place the flowers in.
- During the procession appropriate instrumental music is played.
- At the very end of the procession of flowers, the designated volunteer carries up the Book of Remembrance and stands next to the person(s) holding the basket(s) of flowers.
- The presider prays the Closing Prayer of the ritual, with hands extended in blessing over the flowers and Book of Remembrance.
- After the Closing Prayer the basket(s) of flowers is placed near the altar along with the Book of Remembrance.
- If the Book of Remembrance had been in the middle of the church, be sure that the stand it was on is moved off to the side.

Following Mass

- Have team members available for conversation or questions.
- Resource materials may be left at the back of church for a week or so.
- The flowers in the basket(s) near the altar may be taken to an appropriate location, such as near a statue in the church or at the foot of the Cross in a cemetery.
- The Book Remembrance is retained for future use.