

The Funeral

After three days the first part of the funeral ritual can take place. The crossing from the earthly world to the spiritual is now well underway. In some circumstances this first part of the funeral is combined with the main part of the funeral ritual at the grave-side or the crematorium.

The funeral ritual acknowledges the journey that is now underway for the departing soul. It gives blessing, farewell and benediction. It speaks to the one departed and to those present with a voice that spans the earthly and the world of Spirit. The power of Christ is called upon. The Eternal Spirit is addressed.

The Memorial Act of Consecration of Man

Those who have died are always included whenever the Act of Consecration of Man* is celebrated. When a person departs from the earthly world and enters the world of the Spirit, then they can be especially addressed within the Service on one particular occasion. On a Saturday after the funeral, the Memorial Act of Consecration of Man can be celebrated.

The path of the one who has departed is brought into connection with the prayer stream of the congregation. This celebration of the sacrament gives further help for a new orientation after death. The one who has departed can now fully entrust themselves to the world of Spirit, without losing their connection to the living.

**The Communion Service celebrated in The Christian Community.*



'Pieta' - Neeltje Prior-Bollen

The Services Accompanying Dying

In The Christian Community, there are five possible liturgical services accompanying death and dying:

- Sacramental Consultation
- Communion
- Anointing

... then three days after death (and after a vigil if it is held during the three days)...

- The Funeral (which is normally held in two parts)
- The Memorial Act of Consecration of Man



THE CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY

INFORMATION TO HELP WITH ...

UNDERSTANDING THE SACRAMENTS AND THE END OF EARTHLY LIFE



'Foot Washing' - Neeltje Prior-Bollen

Why Are There Rituals Accompanying Death & Dying?

Just as a person's birth is a holy moment requiring human assistance, so too is a person's death. If this assistance is to be helpful, special knowledge and ability are needed.

A midwife, who accompanies a birth, must have specific knowledge of the birth delivery process - especially regarding the biological challenges of birth and conditions after birth.

To effectively accompany someone who is dying requires knowledge of the inner conditions of the human soul. It also requires knowledge of the soul's path outside the body and the challenges that await the soul in the new and fully altered conditions after death.

The sacraments and rituals for the dying are a tangible help that, like midwifery, arise out of the actual needs of a powerful and fundamental human transition process. They are held by a priest, empowered to offer such help through their ordination.

Sacramental Consultation & Communion – Clearing The Way

If I must relinquish my life, then within my biography, which is often experienced as incomplete, sometimes hurdles appear. Perhaps I cannot decide to let go, because I have no clear relationship to this life; or maybe some matters have not been clarified; or there are still knots to be loosened or gratitude to be expressed.

In this situation the Sacrament of Consultation, confession in its new form, can be a decisive help. The goal is not to have my life weighed or assessed from without, nor to have my decisions taken away. It is given as strength for winning for oneself a clearer picture of one's own life. The unfinished can be more easily affirmed and released when, in the sketch of the life that has been lived, a work of art becomes recognizable.

The Communion that follows can deepen this connection: What I have viewed and released can, transformed within bread and wine, strengthen me, becoming 'healing medicine'.

The Act of Consecration of Man is not itself celebrated at the bedside. Rather, the priest brings bread and wine consecrated from within the Act of Consecration of Man.

Anointing - Help For Crossing Over

There is an art to farewells. If one must separate from someone for a long time, then sometimes it helps to embrace them. Letting go becomes easier when, before that, one has been allowed to connect again.

All sacraments have the character of connecting us with the body, connecting us with the earth. Even the celebration of the Anointing does not mean sending a person away. It helps the dying person take hold of their body once more, so

that they can then more easily let go. This 'embrace' can also be a help in more clearly deciding: do I go, or do I connect myself again? Sometimes, the condition of the one dying improves after the Anointing.

Performing The Anointing

At the deathbed, the priest speaks the High Priestly Prayer, the great prayer of Christ for humanity (John 17). Then the priest anoints the dying person with consecrated oil. With this holy substance, the priest inscribes a cross, a doorway into the heavenly world, over each eye and on the forehead. As the healing oil gently enters the body, the strengthening life of Christ enlivens the soul. He becomes the companion for the passage through death.

Dying persons often have very little strength remaining. The Anointing takes only a few minutes, and addresses the one dying in a very condensed, strengthening form. A server normally helps with the service.

Following Death -The Three Day Vigil

When someone has just died, it can be very helpful for them and those present, for the Lord's Prayer to be said and maybe the prologue of St. John's Gospel to be read.

For three days following death, family and friends can accompany the person who has died with a vigil. Such a vigil is not only a help for the one who is now leaving their earthly life; it can also help those left behind as they seek a new relationship to the departing soul. It is the start of the process of letting go.

Once these three days have run their course, the one departing will have experienced a retrospect of their life and they will have cast off their body. It is now time for the funeral.