

long after as the Church with family and friends keeps mindful of all her children now in a place of rest before the general resurrection. The usual method of offering prayer is in the Holy Oblation of the Liturgy itself but also in the Trisagion Prayers offered at other times. This is the usual pattern in the Orthodox practice.

- *In the Liturgy after the funeral:-* Please use the intercession slips and hand them to the priest at the Preparation of the Gifts.
- *Trisagion Prayers or Panikhida:-* These are offered with kolyva (boiled wheat dish) on the Third, Ninth and Fortieth Day of Death, also the Anniversary Day. In common practice the Third and the Ninth are often combined to take place at the end of the next Liturgy. Trisagion Prayers can be arranged at any time at the grave by arrangement with the priest. The Anniversary Trisagion is for inclusion in the Liturgy during the month in question, usually not with kolyva. There is a memorial book in church where entries for the month of repose can be made.



WILLS, FUNERALS AND MEMORIALS IN THE ORTHODOX CHURCH



WILLS

Making a will is desirable for all people no matter how young. It has a particular importance for Orthodox Christians for you may want to consider making *bequests* to Orthodox Charities, your parish or the wider Church.

Some people make a *living will* by which advance provision is made for terminal care. Others may want to make arrangements for *organ donation* which is fine in the Church provided that the rest of the body is buried promptly.

PRE-FUNERAL ARRANGEMENTS

Most families will want to follow the wishes of their relative in respect of funeral arrangements but not all do so in practice. Is there any way round this difficulty?

Ensuring that your next of kin follows your wishes as an Orthodox Christian by a legal instrument is not possible in English law unless you specify your wishes as conditions of a bequest in a will. However, it is still possible for the bequest to fail and your funeral requests to be ignored.

The best you can do, therefore, is to complete and lodge with your will and other documents a written request concerning your funeral, explaining this carefully to your next of kin. You may wish to consult with your priest about this beforehand just to make sure that your requirements are possible from the Church's point of

view, (see below). You should certainly tell your priest of such a document and advise him of the person who (from time to time) will be responsible for your affairs on death. If you do not make such a document there is the possibility of disagreement, even conflict between Orthodox and non-Orthodox parties to the funeral concerning the arrangements. It is advisable that any document you prepare should be witnessed and signed by at least two of your next of kin. If these family members die before yourself a newly witnessed document should be prepared in that eventuality.

ORTHODOX FUNERAL REQUIREMENTS

Here are some things you need to know:-

- Cremations in the Orthodox Church are not permitted. All our bishops have been very clear on this. There are absolutely no exceptions. If there is an insistence on cremation, although the funeral service can take place in church first, some other non-Orthodox arrangements will have to be made by the family at the chapel of the crematorium. The reason for this rule is that violence must not be done to the body but rather it must be venerated as a now “closed” temple of the Holy Spirit.
- Sunday burials are not allowed. There are special adjustments to the service if it takes place in Bright Week. Unless impractical the funeral should take place in an Orthodox Church, not a cemetery chapel.
- The funeral service is different for priests and the Bishop will usually be involved in the service.
- Hymns (western) are not sung in the funeral service under any circumstances, the musical chants being entirely defined by the service itself.
- You need to specify whether or not your body is to lie in Church during the previous night in which case the funeral service must take place as soon as possible the following morning.
- The casket is open during the church service when the viewing has not taken place in church (this is most important). The priest will place the person’s personal saint’s icon in the coffin together with a band of fabric covering the forehead with the Trisagion

embroidered on it:- *“Holy God, Holy Mighty, Holy Immortal One, have mercy upon us.”*

You need to mention this in your funeral document so that either the family can prepare this or, failing that, the Church can provide it instead. Many Orthodox Christians also buy their own funeral shroud whilst living, although these are difficult to obtain in the UK and are not strictly necessary.

- Donations to the Church and charities are encouraged with flowers at a minimum. Generally, no fees are charged in the light of the preceding principle.
- The service in church lasts approximately one hour, the committal at the grave side about 15 minutes.
- Photography / filming is not usually permitted (unlike in other Orthodox services) but there are exceptions.
- The Last Kiss ... the priest will explain to the mourners the way in which they may pay their respects before the open coffin at the end of the service.
- All the mourners should be encouraged to attend the burial. Flowers and kolyva may be brought if desired.

You may wonder why all these arrangements are necessary for an Orthodox funeral. Suffice it to say that the Church’s traditions in these matters should be observed for they speak most powerfully to a culture in denial of death. The essence of Christian burial though is prayer and it is to this that we now turn in the final section of this leaflet.

MEMORIALS

Christianity received the pious practice of praying for the reposed from the faith of Israel. Although Orthodox do not believe in the Latin doctrine of purgatory whereby redeemed souls are purified by suffering beyond death and mitigated by the actions of the living, we do believe in the vital necessity of praying for our departed loved ones as a way in which the Church, united between heaven and earth, grows in mutual love for God and his saints. We remain agnostic about the precise impact of such prayers on the reposed but we pray for them nonetheless out of love and for their salvation.

Such prayers start of course in the funeral service but they continue