



WHAT IS A CELEBRATION OF LIFE?

A Celebration of Life is a ceremony that is typically held in lieu of a traditional funeral or memorial service. What sets these services apart is the level of personalization and tone. A Celebration of Life is not a somber affair. Instead, we find lots of laughter and storytelling. The focus is not on the death of the person, but on the joy that the person brought to others. But it can stand alone as well as be incorporated as a component of a more traditional service. For some, the best arrangement is to hold a celebration of life in concert with a traditional funeral or memorial service. For others, a separate stand-alone Celebration is more fitting.

HOW DO YOU PLAN A CELEBRATION OF LIFE?

Planning a Celebration of Life is much like planning any other gathering that commemorates a life event. You'll need to decide on the specifics (time, place, etc.), how you will get the word out and what elements you would like to incorporate. If your situation doesn't offer the time or resources to undertake such an effort, you can take advantage of the services offered by our Priest.

Steps to planning a Celebration of Life

1. **Decide on the type of service:** Will this be a funeral or a memorial service? Will it be stand-alone or part of a more traditional funeral? What would you like the tone to be?
2. **Set a budget:** While worrying about the cost may seem inappropriate, it is important that you know how much you can reasonably afford. Having an idea of what your financial constraints are can help you narrow down your choices for the

details of the celebration such as the type of food and the venue. Our suggested gift to our Parish is \$150 for Church, Music \$100, Bulletins \$50, Video \$100, and stipend to our Priest, \$100 - \$300. You can pick and choose what you would like.

3. **Estimate how many people will attend:** It may be difficult to determine an exact headcount, but an estimate of the number of people you think will attend is important for selecting the right sized venue and refreshments, if you plan to offer them.
4. **Choose a location, date, and time:** When designing a Celebration of Life you are not limited in your choice of venue. You can certainly take advantage of the space available at St Teresa's s, but you can also choose to have your event at your home, at a local park, or at some location that held meaning for the person you are honoring. Don't forget to consider unconventional locations as well as the tried and true. For example, if the deceased was a film lover you consider renting a theater for your celebration.
5. **Decide if you would like to use our Priest:** For many people, the idea of planning a large event can be overwhelming. In these cases, our Priest can help take the pressure off by working through the details with you. If you would like to be totally hands-off, that's ok. If you would like to handle just a certain segment of the Celebration, our Priest can work with you in that area as well.
6. **Decide who you would like to speak:** You can ask specific people to share their thoughts or invite anyone who would like to offer an anecdote to speak. You should give them guidance on the type of story they would share. You can also ask our Priest to speak on your behalf.
7. **Decide on activities you would like to include:** The beauty of a celebration of life is that you can customize your ceremony however you'd like. Think about the way your loved one preferred to spend his or her time. A sky lantern release, a group motorcycle ride, a book drive, or a group walk are all examples of the type of

activities that are common. The important thing is that the activity is an appropriate tribute to your loved one. A simple ceremony or a Mass is available.

8. **Decide on what type of refreshments you would like to have:** Your venue, budget, and other constraints can help you decide on the type of refreshments you serve. You are not expected to provide a full meal unless that is something you would really like to do. In any case, food and drink are not required. We ask that you don't bring refreshments to the Church.
9. **Decide on how you will personalize the event:** There are an unlimited number of choices when it comes to personalizing your event. Many people create a tribute movie or slide show and display photos around the venue. Your choice of music and readings can also be highly personal. If the deceased was a collector, for example, you might decide to display some of his or her items on a special table. Would a theme be appropriate? If your loved one was fond of a particular musical artist, film, or set of characters you might request that attendees dress in costume. Remember, there are no rules.
10. **Set your order of events:** Many people choose to have the more structured events such as readings and music followed by some type of activity and then a reception. There is no right or wrong way to do it.
11. **Choose how you will decorate the venue:** Flowers are always welcome at our Parish, if you choose to leave an arrangement we will also display them at our Sunday Mass and pray for the family. Since the Church is not left open you will need to have the florist call the Church to schedule delivery of the flowers. Poster boards are also welcome depicting the life of we celebrate.
12. **Determine how you will get the word out:** If your celebration of life is being held in conjunction with a traditional funeral or memorial service, include the details in the obituary and on social media. You can also ask others to spread the word to others who would like to pay their respects. If you are having a celebration that is separate from traditional services, stand alone, or will take

place sometime in the future, you may want to take the added step of calling or writing a note to those who may not be active online. Invitations are not normally sent for funerals, but it is perfectly acceptable to personally invite people to a Celebration of Life if you would like to. Keep in mind that people who do not receive a formal invitation may still want to attend.

St. Teresa of Calcutta Catholic Community welcomes you to Celebrate with us in this your time of grief in our intimate warm Chapel. We are a compassionate caring community and value ALL life in this world. Our Pastor, Fr. Victor Ray has been described as a, 'hands-on' Priest, 'user friendly' in today's lingo. St. Teresa's is truly a parish of Love and acceptance as Mother Teresa was to this world in Calcutta, India. May your Grief turn to Joy as we celebrate together a life given to us for this short period of time.