

9. The body is taken to the gravesite where the Trisagion is said again by the pries. The body of the Christian-alave or dead-is the temple of the Living God: it is laid to rest in the grave as a candidate to resurrection. Christian burial-places are called in Greek, kemeteria and in Latin, coemeteria which means “sleeping places.”

THE MAKARIA

The Makaria, i.e. “blessed luncheon” is a traditional repast or light luncheon of fish and other simple foods, which follows the committal at the cemetery. This occasion serves as an added opportunity to comfort the breaved family. St. Paul exhorted: “Help carry the burdens of each other”

THE MNEMOSYNO

The Mnemosyno, i.e. “calling to memory” is a prayer service know in English as the memorial Service. In the Mnemosyno, we ask God to show mercy and forgive the sins of the deceased. The Mnemosyno is chanted 40 days after the death(or nearest Sunday to the 40 days) and annually for three years on the date of death. A tray of “Kolyva” i.e. cooked wheat is prepared for the service which is later distributed to the worshippers. This is based on Christ’s words in John 12:34 “ I tell you truly that unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies it remains a single grain of wheat; but if it dies it brings a good havest.” The Kolyva is a symbol of our faith in Christ’s resurrection in which we all participate.



“I am the Resurrection and the life; whoever believes in me will live, even though he dies; and who ever lives and believes in me will never die.”

-JOHN 11:25-26

THE ORTHODOX CHRISTIAN

Funeral Service



Annunciation Greek Orthodox Church
of Cleveland, Ohio

THE ORTHODOX CHRISTIAN FUNERAL

The word for “funeral” in Greek is rendered as “Kidia” which comes from the verb “kidome” which means: to care with interest; to pay attention; to feel affection and love for. Thus the funeral service can be understood as: Taking tender and loving care. And that’s exactly what we do at a funeral; We take tender loving care of the loved one, or person we do not know, even an enemy, since traditionally even wars were stopped to bury the dead.

The Orthodox Christian Church, as loving Mother, lovingly accepts her children into the Church on the day

of their birth and forty days after they are born; lovingly baptized and chrismates them; lovingly nourishes them with Holy Communion; teaches them and guides them in Church schools; lovingly hears their confessions and forgives their sins; lovingly anoints them with unction and their illnesses; lovingly marries them; lovingly ordains those who wish to enter into her services; lovingly attends to their needs; and finally, lovingly lays them to eternal rest.

ORDER OF THE SERVICE

The priest escorts the body of the departed from the entrance of the church to the solea. When they arrive at the solea the casket is opened and the funeral service begins. It consists of the following parts:

1. A “conversation” between the departed and God through the lips of those attending, by the chanting of eighteen verses from Psalm 118. Its main theme is to be a song of praise to the Divine Law by using in each verse one of the ten different words which

reveal the Law given us by God such as: Law, Way, Judgement, Witness, Commandments, Ordinances, Rules, Truth, Word and Declaration.

2. The “conversation” continues with the “Evlogitaria” so-called because each starts with the preface: “Evlogitos I, Kyrie”, which means: Blessed are you, O Lord.
3. Then, we the living, add our pleas in support of the request of the deceased with the last

Evlogitarion: “Rest O God, your departed servant and assign your servant to paradise...” Hymns are offered to the Trinity and the Theotokos, followed by the Kontakion: “With all the saints, give rest, O Christ, to your departed servant’s soul, where there is no pain, no sorrow and no lament, but only life eternal”.

4. Now comes the Philosophy of life, graphically expressed with eight hymns written by St. John of Damascus: “What pleasure of life ever remains unmixed with grief? What glory endures... All human things are vanity...” “And again I looked in the graves and beheld the naked bones and said to whome could these belong? King or soldier, rich or poor, righteous or sinner?...”
5. Then comes the teaching of the Church with a Preface (Prokeimeon), an Apostolic passage and a Gospel passage. The Preface to the apostolic Reading is very toughing, indeed. We, the living, address to the deceased these prayerful and wishful words: “Blessed is the road on which you travel today, because a place of rest has been prepared for you.” In

the Apostolic passage from First Thessalonians 4:13-17, Paul tells Christians what their attitude toward death should be and goes on to give a superbly beautiful and inspirational picture of the second coming of the Lord to judge the living and the dead. That judgement by the Lord is described clearly, concisely and emphatically in the Gospel reading from John 5:24-30: “...Whoever hears my word, and believes in him who sent me, has eternal life.”

6. Now comes the final petition, prayer and dismissal.
7. The eulogy is delivered at this time, and all are invited to pass by the casket and offer the “last kiss” i.e., pay the final respects.
8. When all have passed through, the priest pours on the body blessed oil, saying; “Sprinkle me with hyssop and I shall be cleansed, wash me and I shall be whiter than snow.” Then he spreads some earth on the body, “The earth is the Lord’s and the fullness thereof, the world and those who dwell therein, you are earth and to earth shall you return.” He then escorts the body to the entrance of the church where he concludes the whole service.