

## **Fourteen Steps after the Death of a Loved One**

1. The Pastor should be informed immediately upon the repose of the loved one so he may come to pray the first prayers for the departed where that person has died, whether it be at the home, at the hospital, at night or day.
2. After that, the members of the St Seraphim Burial Ministry are informed by the priest about the repose of the person. The members of the burial ministry come either to the home, or to the mortuary, to wash, anoint, dress and prayerfully prepare the departed one for the funeral and burial. This is a sign of love and respect for the person and his/her body. We should have in mind how the Lord Jesus was taken down from the Cross and cared for by the women and men.
3. The Burial Ministry members will not use cosmetics, unless it is absolutely necessary, neither will the deceased be embalmed or cremated. The funeral director can be asked to help close the eyes and seal the lips of the deceased.
  1. Organ donation. The idea seems laudable, and in many cases is life saving for a sick person. But, as times has gone on, there's an industry growing around this, and I don't think it's alarmist to maybe reconsider all this. I just wonder, seeing articles about abuses.
  2. Remember, that person is still that person, not ALL of him or her, certainly not a prison house, not a husk, not even the best part, we hope, but it is still that person and the body that God created with the soul. By the way, Burial societies were extremely popular with the Orthodox Church parishes early on in America.
4. The body of the deceased is brought to the Church. A visitation of family and friends may also be done at the family home, although these days this is rare. This process should not be drawn out. As soon as possible.
5. Times for funeral services, time for the family to be alone with the departed are arranged with the priest ahead of time before being published for the community.
6. Funeral service should be arranged to be held, ideally, by the 3rd day after death. Sometimes, often, this is not possible, but it is the tradition of the church.
7. A Panikhida (half hour in length) is celebrated on the eve of the funeral, usually at 6 or 7 PM, and the funeral the following morning usually at 10 or 11 AM.
8. Offerings to the church might be made to the Memorial Funeral Fund of the Parish. Some flowers are appropriate, but it is much better to give alms/charity in the name of the deceased. An honorarium should be given to the Choir Director.

9. Coffin is open for the service, unless there is some grievous injury to the person.
10. An icon should be placed in the coffin with person. No other items should be put into it without permission from the priest. A small wreath is placed upon the head of the deceased, which says "Holy Holy Holy" — this is a sign of the victory over death attained by Christ for us.
11. Orthodox priests and deacons from other parishes are always welcome, but the parish priest must be asked about this before anyone is invited to serve.
12. A homily will be given by the priest. No eulogies are offered during the Funeral Service.
13. At the conclusion of the Funeral, all come forward to offer a final prayer, the last kiss and pay their respects, after which the coffin is closed and taken to the cemetery for the brief burial service. All participate in putting dirt into the grave.
14. A memorial meal may be given in the name of the deceased at a restaurant or by arrangement with the Sisterhood at the Parish Hall. Eulogies and remembrances are given during the meal.