

FUNERALS

Funerals

Through the Resurrection of Christ, and the promised resurrection of all the departed, death is not viewed as an ending, but as a time of repose — a time to rest from the struggles and temptations of our fallen world. Death, then, is understood by the Orthodox as a “dormition”, a time of sleeping. Indeed, the very word “cemetery” comes from a Greek term meaning “a place to sleep.”

When death is imminent, the priest is called to deliver last rites. During the visitation at the funeral home, prayers are offered in the form of a panachyda (dirge) over the deceased with the family and friends present. The next day, another panachyda takes place before the body is transported to the church for the funeral service.

At the funeral service, two things are understood to happen. First, the Saints teach us that our prayers for the departed bring him/her great comfort and joy. Second, through prayers, hymns and music, those who are left behind have a medium through which to express their grief and articulate their faith in everlasting life through Christ Jesus. The funeral ends by the Faithful taking the departed to rest, looking forward to the day when the Lord will wake him/her up from his/her repose.

The Orthodox traditionally bury the reposed, returning the body to the earth because burying the human body respects value of the physical remains and respect it as the creation of God. As Jesus Christ died on the cross and was then buried, Orthodox Christians attempt to live a holy life similar to the one of Christ, so they follow what happened with Christ after his death.

Memorializing the Dead

Ukrainians have different traditional memorial services that they have conduct on specific days after death has occurred. A commemoration with prayers, the panachyda, is held on the third, ninth and fortieth Ukrainians have different traditional memorial services that they conduct on specific days after death has occurred. A commemoration with prayers is held on is the third, ninth and fortieth days after a death has occurred. Commemorative prayers are also repeated on the six month and one-year anniversaries of the death of a person.

Ukrainians also commemorate the lives of their ancestors on the days following Easter, including the Sunday after Easter, known as "Provydy" or "Pomynal'na Nedilja". Many bring traditional Easter Bread and eggs to be blessed during the all-inclusive panachyda following the Divine Liturgy. Others may opt to place these items on the graves of the deceased and have the panachyda conducted at the gravesite.

In addition, the lives of ancestors are also commemorated on four Saturdays before and during the Holy and Great Lent; on the Saturday before Pentecost; on Pentecost, and on the Saturday before the Feast Day of St. Demetrius. It is believed that this puts the spirits of their ancestors at ease so they can continue to rest in peace.

The commemoration of the deceased ones on those days takes place at the church and three kolachi with a basket of fruit are offered by the family. This tradition is associated with the conviction that God will place the soul in a place of eternal life characterized by sweetness of the fruits and honey.

.