

MANUAL OF INSTRUCTIONS

On the Occassion of a Death
of an Augustinian Recollect Religious



Province of St. Ezekiel Moreno

24 Neptune St. Brgy Bahay Toro, Proj. 8, Quezon City
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TABLE OF CONTENTS

MESSAGE 4

FOREWORD 5

INSTRUCTIONS RELATIVE
TO THE PASSING AWAY
OF AN AUGUSTINIAN RECOLLECT FRIAR 6

Appendix: Const 3. art. 4
THE DECEASED BROTHERS 9

MESSAGE

“... the brothers are to regard the moment of death [...] as reaching the beginning of that which is eternally new.” (*Add. Code 275*)

For the first time, the Province has finally come up with this *Manual of Instructions* as its guide in taking the necessary steps in the case of a friar’s demise. We are grateful to the Team under the aegis of the Commission on History, Culture, and Heritage-Recoletos (CoHCH-R) for initiating the crafting of this guidebook, as well to the brothers who gave their helpful suggestions.

This Manual spells out clearly the roles of the proper authorities and relevant offices, gives due respect to the legal requirements of a foreign country or territory where perchance the death of a religious would occur, and, in a subtle way, challenges everyone to reflect one more time on the Christian meaning of life and death.

More particularly on that third yet subtle way, I would like to point out further that the call is for all of us to always “prepare to cross the threshold of time to enter eternity” (Pope John Paul II, *Address to the Pontifical Academy for Life*, February 27, 1999). That also means, in line with our common life, to be an edifying part of each one’s journey to our Father’s house. A Croatian author makes a profound take on it saying: “The phenomenon of death in consecrated life is perceived in three ritual events: baptism, religious consecration and physical death. These three moments make the so-called 3D (three deaths) transformation which is not only in these three events but through asceticism it is extended to the whole existence of the consecrated person. [...] Considering the relation between asceticism and eschaton [in religious life], a convent could be named a heavenly embassy and consecrated people, heavenly ambassadors.”

Let us continue to read between the lines of this Manual, and we will get to re-discover the treasures of who we really are as religious i.e., as “the tangible seals which the Trinity impresses upon history so that people can sense with longing the attraction of divine beauty” (*Vita consecrata* 20). And finally, we, as consecrated persons, “point to a future with the hope of the Resurrection, ready to follow the example of Christ, who came among us that we ‘might have life and have it to the full’ (Jn 10:10)” (*Starting afresh from Christ*, 9).

May the souls of all the faithful departed, especially our confreres who have gone ahead of us, through the mercy of God, rest in peace. Amen.

In St. Ezekiel Moreno,

Fray Dionisio Q. Selma, OAR
Prior Provincial

FOREWORD

“Because Christ defeated death, he owns it and commands it to serve his greater purpose of redemption.” Christine Chappell

When we see a loved one suffering and in the point of death, most of us would want suffering and death gone. But in reality, it is our loved ones who leave not death and suffering. Unless we see a deeper logic in the tragic event, it seems that the reaper would have the last laugh. But it should not be so. There is a far greater way to see death.

When St. Paul wrote “O death where is your victory, O death where is your sting” he must have seen death in a perspective not seen by many during his time. In Christ he saw death not as a destroyer of life but as a means to reach eternal life.

Alexander MacLaren, a nineteenth-century minister, wrote “Death is Christ’s minister, mighty and beautiful, though his face be dark.” This statement is very comforting for us who believed in Christ. Since he has defeated death, he has now control of it. Death is now in the control of Christ whose interest is only our wellbeing and salvation. Death then, for those who follow Christ, is not something to be feared but an event we have to prepare and to welcome when the right time comes. No wonder St. Francis of Assisi would label death as “sister.”

For Christ’s faithful follower, when death comes it is Christ who calls. In Jn. 14:3-4, Jesus says, “When everything is ready, I will come and get you, so that you will always be with me where I am. And you know the way to where I am going.” In this perspective death has become an invitation for glory, for eternal life and for union with Christ, not an end to life and punishment.

For this, death should be approached with respect and awe. This manual is written with the purpose of approaching the death of a religious and its surrounding circumstances in very respectful manner. Its aim is to instruct those in authority how to move and act upon the death of their confrere. The instructions are to assure that the protocols be followed, traditions and practices be respected, the good memory of the dead religious be cherished, and his death will move those living to think of eternal life.

By no means are we making light of the evil that death brings. It is a foreign entity not part of the original plan of the Father during creation. Thanks be to Christ who has conquered death and has risen! We can now see death not as a horrible reaper but as a ministering angel leading us to eternal bliss with Christ.

INSTRUCTIONS RELATIVE TO THE PASSING AWAY OF AN AUGUSTINIAN RECOLLECT FRIAR

Upon Death

- The prior of the community and another religious inspect the room of the dead friar for any item prone for decomposition (food, trash, used medicines, plants) and dispose them accordingly. electronic gadgets are to be switched off.
- The prior and the other religious secure the following items in preparation of the dead friar's wake—habit, belt, stole (if the dead is a priest and if there is any stole in his room).
- The prior temporarily keeps the personal items of the dead friar brought from the hospital (wrist watch, wallet, cell phone, jewelry, rosary etc..). These items will be turned over to the religious (assigned by the Prior Provincial) who will segregate the belongings of the dead friar.
- Upon the completion of the inspection and gathering of necessary items for the wake, the prior and the other religious seal the dead friar's room until such time when a religious assigned by the Fr. Provincial segregates the items inside.
- In no way will the room be opened except in emergency cases and with the knowledge and in the presence of the local prior and the religious who accompanied him in sealing the room.

Preparation for the Wake

- The prior himself or any religious or any person acting in his person has to accompany the dead friar to the funeral home to make sure the body is treated with respect and prepared well.
- Upon the arrival of the coffin from the funeral home to the convent or oratory or any place of display, the prior or any religious assigned meets the coffin so as to perform the initial rites and prayers of the dead (cf. Rite of Christian Burial)
- As preparation for public viewing, the prior or any religious assigned has to inspect the dead friar to see to it that everything is in proper order.
- In case the family, relatives or close associates of the dead friar will ask for an item as remembrance, claim that an item is promised to be given to them or asked for the return of a borrowed item; the prior will have to explain the rules and circumstances regarding the items in the dead friar's

room and in no way will make any commitment which will obliged the community to give the said items.

After the Burial:

- A religious will be assigned by the Fr. Provincial to segregate the personal belongings of the dead friar.
- The prior of the said religious will be given a copy of the special appointment so the latter may be excused temporarily from the community's activities and duties to attend to the segregation of the personal belongings of the dead confreer.
- A copy of the same appointment paper will be forwarded to the prior of the dead friar's community so that the assigned religious will be given the necessary accommodation and assistance by the community.
- The religious assigned has be prudent in his conversations regarding the contents of the dead friar's room. He has to treat this responsibility with utmost confidentiality for the sake of the memory of the dead religious.
- The prior of the house assigns personnnel (hired personnel, convent boy, etc) to assist the religious in the segregation of the personal belongings. The number of personnel will be determined by the religious assigned to segregate the items.
- Before segregation, the room will be opened and inspected by both the local prior and the religious assigned by the Fr. Provincial.
- The key of the room will now be turned over to the religious assigned to segregate the items, and in no way will anybody be allowed to enter the room without the acknowledged permit from the religious assigned or the local prior.

Instructions for Segregation and Classification of Belongings

- Items with significance and value (historic, monetary, and artistic) are to be turned over to the museum. Items should always be properly labeled.
- Personal records and documents (photographs, letters, journal, diary, sermons, write up, etc) are forwarded to the provincial archive. These documents are to be sealed properly and in no way will they be opened at least within the next fifty (50) years.
- Books are to be given to the library (community, school or theology library depending on the books classification. The community is decide on the matter upon consultation with hired librarian. Books borrowed by the dead religious and are properly marked should be returned to their respective libraries.
- Other items like money, technology, jewelry and other special items with value are to be turned over to the prior for proper disposal.
- Personal items like clothing, collections and souvenirs item (classified as of lesser significant value), are to be disposed by the community. These items could be given to the family, charitable institutions, etc...
- If there are sensitive items and documents found, the religious assigned has to inform the prior

about the said items. Should the prior decide, upon consultation with the religious assigned, to keep the memory of the dead friar intact, the prior needs to consult the local council and inform the Fr. Provincial regarding the item. The Pior needs to ask the approval to dispose them accordingly. Should the Fr. Provincial turn down the request, these items are to be forwarded to the archives for safe keeping. The principles of the “secret archives” should be properly followed relative to these sensitive materials.

- Once segregation is done and the items are properly distributed, the room should be properly cleaned and sanitized. It would be better if all the items of the dead friar are disposed properly and taken out of the room.
- The test of a perfect execution of the post burial cleaning is when the room is totally free of any memory of the dead friar and is ready for occupancy.

Appendix: Const 3. art. 4

THE DECEASED BROTHERS

93 Across the barriers of death, and in configuration with Christ who died and rose again, the communion of love, begun by the brothers on earth, will reach its fullness in heaven, where all will be one in Christ.⁵⁵

The Spirit of piety is to keep the memory of the deceased brothers alive among the religious. Masses and prayers of expiation are to be offered for them.⁵⁶

94 *When a brother dies, whether novice or professed, the community to which he belongs will celebrate the funeral Mass and another Mass on the first anniversary of his death.*

All the priest of the Order are to offer a Mass on the dath of each religious. This also applies to those who have died and had previously been elevated to the episcopate or some other dignity outside the Order.

When a postulant or aspirant dies, a Mass is to be celebrated for him. The same should be done for the father or mother of a religious, in the house in which the religious lives.

On the death of the Roman Pontiff, a Mass is to be celebrated in each of the houses of the Order. On the death of a major superior, a Mass is also to be celebrated in the houses within his jurisdiction.

95 *Each year three general anniversaries of the dead will be celebrated in all houses of the Orde:⁵⁷the first for all the deceased brothers and sisters of the Order, with proper Mass and Office, the second, for the deceased relatives of the religious and for the people dearest to them; the third, for deceased benefactors. On these last two anniversaries, one Mass is to be celebrated, and either Evening or Morning Prayer for the dead.*

⁵⁵Cf. Ga mn3, 28; S. 326. 8 10 PL. 39, 161.

⁵⁶Cf. Conf. 9, 13, 36-37 PL 32, 778, S. 172, 2 PL 38, 936; De civ. Dei1, 13 PL 41, 27.

⁵⁷De cura pro mortuis 4, 6 PI 40, 596.

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