

The Rite of Committal with Lowering of the Coffin

When you arrive at the cemetery today, you will participate in a brief prayer service that will include the lowering of the coffin into the earth.

Over the past few days, you have lost someone you loved, and you have had to adjust your life to a new reality. The funeral services aim to help mourners move from one stage of grief to another, even as the remains are transported from one place to another.

The final stage may be the most emotional. At the cemetery, you have arrived at the last farewell.

You will hear words of welcome, a brief passage from Scripture, and prayers associated with burial.

Then the one you love will be lowered into the earth like the planting of a seed. For Christians, death is filled with the hope of resurrection. Jesus of Nazareth compared his own death to a grain of wheat that would fall to the earth and die before it produces much fruit.

The service then continues with additional prayers and a blessing.

As you stand above the grave today, you profess your faith that the fruit produced by this life has only begun to flower. Memories and stories will keep the person alive for those of us on earth, and your loved one awaits the promise of eternal life for those who lived in faith. To stand above the grave is to stand in faith, hope, and love that death does not have the final word.

Perhaps the most difficult part of the day is to leave the cemetery. Yet you will leave with a sense that you have offered all you can to honor a person whose life inspired you. A funeral moves mourners through some necessary stages of grief. It does not end the grief, but it will give you new ground where you can stand to face a different future.