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Funeral

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Guest Writers' Corner

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In grade school my class sang at them for free
pretending we understood the Latin we sang.
Later I served at them, these times for a stipend,
still pretending I understood the Latin I said
as I enjoyed the free limo ride to the cemetery.

They were always the same back then.
Priest, casket, people, wrapped in black,
smells of beeswax and incense filled the air.
The symbols spoke loudly in their silence,
stern sermons were dark and serious business.

It was all about loss, regret, retribution.
Not all was bad. Words of one stirring
sermon roused my guilt, caused me to sit up
head to the confessional the next Saturday.
Those harsh words may have changed my life.

Today all is different. It's about comfort, assurance.
The deceased is praised, honored. Heaven awaits.
All is done with less ritual and more warmth
as friends and family contribute with
prayers, songs, flowers, and memories.

Now, it seems, each is different from the rest.
Families select the songs, scriptures, hoping
to hear words that will say what they would say
about the person who now can no longer hear.
It's better when all know when to sit, stand and kneel.

When my time comes to be the center of attraction
I hope I plan it well but for now I am unsure
how to manage it all. Should it be about comfort
or maybe all about my good points? Better, it should be
about my last shot to deliver messages I hadn't in life.

Perhaps I'll have my children read passages that
I think they need as guidance in my absence,
my grandsons read prayers they need to know
while I'm still pretending to know what's best
and enjoy my last free limo ride to the cemetery.

Paul A. Rothermich



Paul, father of Sarah Campagna, lives in Toledo, Ohio



Sarah with dad and mom, Clara