

Gospel

Luke 12:35-40 *Be prepared for the master's return.*

Jesus exhorts his disciples to be prepared for his return, but in a positive way, which promises good things for those who are so prepared.

This passage can be especially appropriate for a person who lived a good, holy life and then died suddenly. Jesus seems to suggest that he will welcome such a person into heaven with great joy and gratitude.

John 6:37-40 *I will not reject anyone who comes to me, for that is the Father's will.*

Jesus says clearly and unambiguously that the Father's will is that everyone be saved. It was for that purpose that he sent Jesus into the world. Jesus makes equally clear that he intends to do the Father's will and not reject anyone who comes to him.

This is a good passage to use for any situation in which the mourners are concerned about the state of their loved one's soul at the time of death. Jesus removes the threat of judgment and, instead, strongly implies that the person's salvation has already been assured by the Father's mercy.

John 6:51-58 *Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life.*

Jesus clearly links participation in the sacraments, especially the Eucharist, to the promise of eternal life. Communion with God in the sacraments leads to communion with God for all eternity.

This passage is generally selected *only* by families who are all practicing Catholics. In those cases, it is not unusual for the deceased to have had a particular devotion to the Eucharist.

John 11:17-27 *I am the resurrection and the life.*

Jesus' surprisingly direct question to Martha serves as a challenge for the assembly, prompting them to ask themselves what they really believe about Jesus' power over life and death. Many people spend most of their lives trying to avoid that topic. But, when a loved one dies, they have no choice but to confront the weakness of their faith. If they have any doubts about resurrection, they can look to Martha for inspiration.

John 12:23-28 *The grain of wheat that falls to the ground and dies in order to give life.*

Jesus is not the only one who gives his life for others. The image of the grain of wheat that dies in order to give life is especially appropriate for a deceased person who lived a life of service. The homilist can point to specific sacrifices in the person's life which produced abundant fruit for others.

John 14:1-6 *I am going to prepare a place for you in my Father's house.*

There are several comforting messages here:

1. Jesus promises to prepare a place for us in heaven.
2. He refers to life in heaven in very personal terms, as dwelling in his Father's house.
3. He promises that when our moment of death comes, he will personally bring us to our permanent home. We need not find the way on our own.
4. Jesus says that he wants us to be with him, which suggests that heaven is a place not just of rest, but of communion with God.