

Words to Guide the Newly Departed for Funeral Service (1)

These words are reverently addressed to
the Eternal Buddha Shakyamuni,
all buddhas, and all other honored ones,
and especially to King Yama, the underworld judge for sentient beings from the five realms, as
well as to his servants.

Now, on [month/day/year], this good son [or daughter/boy/girl], aged [number], having reached the last
moment of this lifetime, has departed for the beyond. In place of [appropriate pronoun] secular
name, the dearly departed has received the posthumous name of
[Posthumous name] (Recite the name twice).

When we reflect on events in the past, we acknowledge that even the noble golden body of the
Buddha faded away behind the clouds that descended upon on the twin *sala* trees at Kushinagara,
and even those sages who possessed the three clarities and six transcendent powers eventually
disappeared into the funeral pyre's smoke of transience. Although the newly departed received the
rare gift of life as human beings and encountered the true Dharma that is rarely met, since a
human body is the temporary union of the five aggregates, the life given to [appropriate pronoun]
was transient from the very beginning.

Now, as we recite the essential passages of the Lotus Sutra that guide us to awakening, we ask the
departed and all those present to humbly listen to them.

Chapter 3 of the Sutra of the Lotus Flower of the Wondrous Dharma, "A Parable," says:

"Now this threefold world
Is all my domain,
And the living beings in it
Are all my children.
But now it is filled
With disaster and trouble,
And only I am able
To rescue and protect them."

Chapter 12, "Devadatta," also says,

"The Buddha said to the monks, 'If, in the future, there are good sons and good daughters who
hear this Devadatta chapter of the Wondrous Dharma Flower Sutra and believe and revere it with

pure hearts and without doubt, then they will not fall into the realms of hells, hungry spirits, or beasts. They will be born into the presence of the buddhas of the ten directions. Wherever they are born, they will always hear this sutra. If they are born among humans and heavenly beings, they will enjoy marvelous delight. If they are born into the presence of buddhas, they will be born from lotus flowers.”

To illustrate the meanings of these passages, the Great Bodhisattva Nichiren said as follows: “The Lotus Sutra is the ship that transports us across the River of the Dead; the great white oxcart that carries us over the Mountains of Death; the light that guides us in the darkness of the underworld; and the bridge that conveys us to Divine Eagle Peak.”

In a word, this Lotus Sutra is the mighty vessel ferrying us across to that other shore; it is the bejeweled carriage delivering us to Divine Eagle Peak.

Now, the bereaved family, their relatives and friends, and the members of the Rissho Kosei-kai Sangha who have gathered here resolve to pursue the bodhisattva way by performing virtuous deeds and thus accumulating merits. We pray that these merits may assist the departed in embarking upon the unsurpassable Way and reaching the wondrous realm of nirvana.

We also earnestly ask that the Buddha and all the buddhas and honored ones may extend their hands of compassion, sympathy, liberation, and protection to the departed so that [*appropriate pronoun*] may quickly be led into the radiant land of tranquil light.

Namu Myoho Renge Kyo (*Strike the gong once.*)

Notes

After the third paragraph, make an additional statement appropriate to the circumstances of the deceased’s passing. Refer to the examples 1 to 3 below.

Example 1

Since the departed was recently struck by illness, the best medicine and treatment were given in every possible way, and the family members and friends sincerely cared for [*appropriate pronoun*]. But just as a flame flickers out when there is no longer oil in the lamp, [*appropriate pronoun*] has reached a peaceful conclusion to this life.

Example 2

The departed met with an unforeseeable accident, which brought about [*appropriate possessive pronoun*] immediate and unexpected journey from this world and into the beyond.

Example 3

Every person born as a human being in this world passes away. This goes for the young as well as the old, just as a flower bud is sometimes blown away by the wind before it has fully blossomed, or the way the moon can be suddenly obscured by clouds.