A Directive From Bishop Serge Poitras Regarding Word of Remembrance at a Funeral:

I am communicating to you the following guidelines:

1. A brief address called "a word of remembrance" may be accepted.
2. Only one person is authorized to speak on behalf of the family or friends of the deceased person.
3. This speech may not exceed five minutes, that is to say, a text of about one page in length.
4. It must highlight some qualities of deceased person, especially his of her relationship to God and the place that the Lord occupied in his or her life.
5. This speech takes place at the very beginning of the celebration, once the body or the ashes have been brought to the front of the church.
6. The presider of the celebration (priest of deacon) invites the representatives of the family to deliver the word of remembrance.
7. Once this is concluded, the liturgical celebration begins with the sign of the cross and the usual greeting.
8. In his homily, the celebrant may allude to the previously delivered "word of remembrance" that, ideally, he would have read before the celebration.

By allowing this "word of remembrance" at the beginning of a funeral, I am placing myself in line with my letter on the pastoral priority for this year, "On the Way with Jesus". Indeed the Lord drew near to the disciples on the road to Emmaus. He listened to them expressing their suffering and their hopes. He enlightened them with his Word and led them to the Eucharist.

We are led to do something similar for our faithful by giving them the possibility of presenting a word of remembrance at the beginning of the celebration. Taking into account this common point that all of the participants will have heard, our word in the homily will be able to refer even more concretely to the existence of the deceased person, seen in the light of faith. In the Eucharistic celebration, this particular life will be united to the mystery of the death and Resurrection of the Lord.

Warmest regards in Our Lord,

Serge Poitras
Bishop of Timmins