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# Justice Scalia's Funeral Draws Thousands



By [Daniel Wilson](#)

*Law360, Washington* (February 20, 2016, 5:48 PM EST) -- Thousands mourning the death of U.S. Supreme Court Justice Antonin Scalia descended on Washington, D.C., on Saturday as lawmakers, fellow justices and several possible replacements on the bench gathered for funeral services after two days of public mourning.

Scalia, a devout Roman Catholic, received a funeral Mass in front of 3,500 friends, family and other mourners at the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception before being laid to rest in a private burial. A memorial service for friends and family has been scheduled at D.C.'s Mayflower Hotel on March 1.

Justice Clarence Thomas, one of Scalia's closest allies on the bench, delivered a Bible reading from the New Testament's Book of Romans, and the Rev. Paul Scalia, one of the late justice's nine children and a priest in the Roman Catholic Diocese of Arlington, Virginia, directed the service with a mixture of humor and solemnity and delivered the homily.



A funeral mass for the late Supreme Court Associate Justice Antonin Scalia was held at the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception in Washington on Saturday. (Credit: AP)

Rev. Scalia joked that the funeral in the close-to-capacity basilica was in keeping with his father's wishes for a small "parish funeral Mass."

The reverend also expressed the family's "profound appreciation and thanks" for mourners' prayers and consolation, while recounting several memories of his father. He noted in particular the late justice's devout faith and his devotion to his family, which the reverend summed up with a line that drew laughs from the crowd.

"He forgot our names at times or mixed them up, but there are nine of us," Rev. Scalia said.

Seated prominently in the front rows were Justice Scalia's fellow high court justices, as well as former justices John Paul Stevens and David Souter. Other attendees included presidential hopeful Sen. Ted Cruz, R-Texas, and a number of other Republican senators, much of the D.C. Circuit bench — including several judges **rumored to be** on President Barack Obama's shortlist to replace Scalia — and several prominent members of the D.C. Bar.

U.S. Attorney General Loretta Lynch and U.S. Solicitor General Donald Verrilli were also present at the funeral, as was Vice President Joe Biden and former Vice President Dick Cheney, although Democratic lawmakers were thin on the ground.

Obama was perhaps the most notable absentee, having instead paid his respects as Scalia was **laid in repose** in the Supreme Court's Great Hall on Friday. While the pair were often at odds politically, the White House has denied the president's absence Saturday was for political reasons.

Scalia **unexpectedly died** in his sleep at a Texas ranch on Feb. 13 at 79, becoming **just the fourth** Supreme Court justice to die in office in the last 60 years. Prior to his death, he was the longest serving and arguably most conservative justice on the current court, having been appointed by President Ronald Reagan in 1986.

His jurisprudence **adhered to** an "originalist" doctrine of fealty to statutory text and the plain language of the U.S. Constitution, and he **was well-known** for his sometimes dramatic or confrontational — but also often humorous — manner.

The son of an Italian immigrant father and first-generation Italian-American mother, Scalia was born in Trenton, New Jersey, in 1936. He graduated summa cum laude from Georgetown University, later earning his law degree from Harvard Law School.

Scalia's death, coming in a presidential election year, has set off an already-angry battle both within the **U.S. Senate** and between the Senate and White House, with Senate Republicans **urging Obama** not to nominate any replacement for the justice before the election. The president **has countered** that he has a constitutional duty to nominate a candidate for the vacancy in a timely manner, and that the Senate has a similar duty to review the candidate.

--Additional reporting by Jimmy Hoover. Editing by Kat Laskowski.

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