

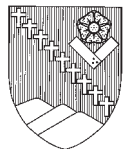
We answer your questions about Cremation for Catholics



Recognizing that the goal of our lives is eternal life with God, we prepare for that by prayer, reception of the sacraments and care for those around us. Preparation for death is an essential part of life for a Christian.

In today's society, for some, choosing cremation is part of that preparation for death. The Church continues to prefer and encourage the faithful to bury or entomb the bodies of their departed loved ones. However, if cremation is chosen for worthy motives, the church wishes to support the faithful in honoring the life, faith and memory of the departed.

Cremation may be a confusing issue for Catholics. At one time, the church prohibited cremation, but this is no longer the case. We have provided some answers to the most commonly asked questions and we hope this will be helpful in making your decision. "Lord, for your faithful people life is changed, not ended."



Catholic Cemeteries of the Diocese of San José

When did it become allowable for Catholics to be cremated?

In 1963, the Catholic Church lifted its prohibition forbidding Catholics to choose cremation. Canon 1176 of the 1983 Code of Canon Law states, "The Church earnestly recommends the pious custom of burying the bodies of the dead be observed, it does not however, forbid cremation unless it has been chosen for reasons which are contrary to Christian teaching."

When should cremation take place?

The Church prefers that cremation take place after the full Funeral Liturgy wherein the body is present. "This is the body once washed in baptism, anointed with the oil of salvation, and fed with the bread of life." The Church's belief in the sacredness of life and the resurrection of the dead encourages us to celebrate the funeral liturgy with the body present while affirming the value of human life. As Catholics we celebrate our funeral liturgies because they recall Christ's victory over death. With His victory, comes our promise of eternal life.

If it is not possible for the body to be present at the Funeral Mass, the Catholic Church has granted permission for the celebration of the Funeral Mass with the cremated remains of the body present in church. Since it is the "earthly remains" and not the body of the deceased that is present, there are slight adaptations in the liturgy.

How are the cremated remains of the body laid to rest?

The cremated remains of the body should be buried or entombed, Scattering the cremated remains of the body, keeping them at home, or dividing them among various family members is not the reverent disposition the Church requires.



Garden Niches

Our Catholic Cemeteries have grave space or niches for cremated remains of the body. This allows for visitation, memorialization and prayers.

What Catholic rites are available for those choosing cremation?

The *Order of Christian Funerals* presents the Church's plan for the celebration of the death of one of the faithful. These rites assume the presence of the body, but adaptations are available for those choosing cremation. Contact a parish or priest to prepare for the *Order of Christian Funerals*.

The *Order of Christian Funerals* consists of three parts:

- 1) Vigil and related Rites and Prayers,
- 2) The Funeral Liturgy, and
- 3) The Rite of Committal

The "Vigil and Related Rites and Prayers" gives the family and friends an opportunity to gather in the presence of the deceased and to offer support and prayers to and for each other as well as the deceased, and recall their Christian life.

The "Funeral Liturgy," frequently celebrated within Mass, but which may be celebrated outside of Mass, allows us to relive the Easter mystery and Christ's promise of eternal life. The "Rite of Committal" is our farewell to our beloved brother or sister in Christ. At this time we turn over the care of our loved one to the cemetery, as we await the resurrection of the dead along with the communion of saints.



Glass Front Niches

Cremation Burial at Catholic Cemeteries

Contact the Catholic Cemetery of choice to receive assistance in making the following arrangements:

- Choice of grave space or niche
- Selection of urn or outer container
- Memorialization

Once your Catholic Cemetery arrangements are made, you will need to choose a funeral home to handle cremation.

The following is needed the day of burial:

- Cremation certificate
- Christian burial permit
- Payment of all cemetery expenses
- Authorization from recorded owner (if necessary)

References

Christian Burial Guidelines, by the National Catholic Cemetery Conference, Copyright 2001

Cremation—New Options for Catholics, by Fran Helner, Catholic Update, St. Anthony, Messenger Press, Copyright 2001

Honoring the Dead, Catholics and Cremation Today, by H. Richard Rutherford, C.S.C., The Liturgical Press, Copyright 2001

Order of Christian Funerals, prepared by International Commission of English in the Liturgy, Liturgical Training Publications, Copyright 1989

Order of Christian Funerals, Appendix Cremation, prepared by International Commission of English in the Liturgy, Liturgical Training Publications, Copyright 1997

Questions Concerning Cremation, the Funeral Liturgy and the Catholic Church, 1999 Federation of Diocesan Liturgical Commissions, the Worship offices of Michigan and Ohio in consultation with Rev. Richard Rutherford

Reflections on the Body, Cremation and Catholic Funeral Rites, Committee on the Liturgy, National Conference of Catholic Bishops, Copyright 1997

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