



# ***A Catholic Perspective Regarding Cremation***

and Guidelines for Funerals at

**Sacred Heart Church, Divine Mercy Parish  
& St. Bernard Church**

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## **Planning for the Funeral Liturgy of Your Loved One:**

Please accept our condolences and know that the prayers of our parish community and indeed, the entire Church are with you at your time of loss and sorrow. A member of our Bereavement Committee will work closely with you and your Funeral Home to assist you with the necessary arrangements. As always, our pastor or one of our priests is also available to speak with you.

## **What Respect is owed to the Cremated Remains of the Body?**

*"The cremated remains of a body should be treated with the same respect given to the human body from which they came. This includes the use of a worthy vessel to contain the ashes, the manner in which they are carried, the care and attention to appropriate placement and transport, and the final disposition. The cremated remains should be buried in a grave or entombed in a mausoleum or columbarium. The practice of scattering cremated remains on the sea, from the air, or on the ground, or keeping cremated remains in the home of a relative or friend of the deceased are not the reverent disposition that the Church requires. Whenever possible, appropriate means for recording with dignity the memory of the deceased should be adopted, such as a plaque or stone which records the name of the deceased."*<sup>1</sup>

Arrangements should be made, prior to the Funeral, to lay the cremated remains to rest in a grave, mausoleum or columbarium.

*"Your bodies are members of Christ... Your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit... You are not your own; you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body." 1Cor 6: 15,18,19*

## **Internment should take place as soon as possible after the Funeral Mass**

The Funeral Mass is a "Mass of Christian Burial." *Internment* is another word for "burial." Prior to the Funeral, arrangements need to be made for the respectful internment of the remains of your loved one in a grave, mausoleum or columbarium. If the cremated remains are present at the Funeral, the internment takes place either immediately after the Mass of Christian Burial or shortly afterwards. If cremation will take place after the Funeral, internment of the remains should take place as soon as possible after the cremation. The plans for internment of the cremains should not be left unresolved. Your Funeral Director and/or our parish bereavement minister can help you with this decision.

<sup>1</sup> Order of Christian Funerals, no. 417.

## When is Cremation allowed by the Church and under what Conditions?

Based on Divine Revelation from Our Lord Jesus Christ, Catholics, as all Christians, believe in the Resurrection of the body. Because the practice of cremation was previously associated with those who rejected belief in the Resurrection of the Body, it was previously forbidden by the Catholic Church. In the United States, permission was granted in 1997 to allow the presence of cremated remains at a Funeral Liturgy, provided that 2 conditions are met: 1) The cremation of the body is not associated with any disbelief in the resurrection of the body, and 2) the cremated remains of the body are *“treated with the same respect given to the human body from which they come.”*<sup>2</sup> This is why we insist that arrangements are made, prior to the Funeral for the respectful internment of the cremated remains.

The cremated remains should not be divided, scattered, comingled with other remains or kept in the home.

“Although cremation is now permitted by the Church, it does not enjoy the same value as burial of the body. The Church clearly prefers and urges that the body of the deceased be present for the funeral rites, since the presence of the human body better expresses the values which the Church affirms in those rites.”<sup>3</sup> Even when cremation occurs after the Funeral Liturgy, the cremated remains should still always “be buried in a grave or entombed in a mausoleum or columbarium.”<sup>4</sup>

## Why does the Church care what happens with Cremated Remains?

Because “the body, which lies in death naturally recalls the personal story of faith, the loving family bonds, the friendships, and the words and acts of kindness of the deceased person. Indeed, the human body is inextricably associated with the human person, which acts and is experienced by others through the body. It is the body whose hands clothed the poor and embraced the sorrowing.”<sup>5</sup>

The body of the deceased is sacred because having been united with Christ in Baptism, it has become the temple of the Holy Spirit and will one day be raised again with Christ in glory. This body was “washed in baptism, anointed with the oil of salvation, and fed with the Bread of Life. Thus the Church’s reverence for the sacredness of the human body grows out of a reverence and concern both natural and supernatural for the human person.”<sup>6</sup>

It is for this reason that the Church insists that the bodies of the deceased, whether cremated or not, should receive “a burial that befits their dignity, in the expectation of their final resurrection in the Lord.”<sup>7</sup>

### From the Catechism of the Catholic Church

The bodies of the dead must be treated with respect and charity, in faith and hope of the Resurrection. The burial of the dead is a corporal work of mercy (see *Tobit* 1:16-18); it honors the children of God, who are temples of the Holy Spirit. Autopsies can be morally permitted for legal inquests or scientific research. The free gift of organs after death is legitimate and can be meritorious. The Church permits cremation, provided that it does not demonstrate a denial of faith in the resurrection of the body. (no.s 2300-2301)

<sup>2</sup> Order of Christian Funerals, no. 417.

<sup>3</sup> Order of Christian Funerals, no. 413.

<sup>4</sup> Order of Christian Funerals, no. 417.

<sup>5</sup> Order of Christian Funerals, no. 411.

<sup>6</sup> Order of Christian Funerals, no. 412.

<sup>7</sup> Order of Christian Funerals, no. 412.