

Catholics and Cremation

AS CHRISTIANS, WE PROFESS

OUR FAITH in the incarnation of the Word made flesh in Jesus Christ whose body was born of Mary, walked the earth, died on the cross, and rose gloriously from the tomb. Likewise, during our lifetime as a Christian on earth, our body, created by God and raised in baptism to a sacred dignity, serves as a temple of the Holy Spirit. Our body is the visible sign of our humanity. All that we are and hope to be is experienced through the sacramentality of our body.

In view of this belief, from the first century onward, Christians have followed the Semitic custom of reverently burying the dead, both in contrast to the Roman practice of cremation and in opposition to the contempt shown Christians by their persecutors in the occasional cremating of the bodies of martyrs and scattering their ashes. Down through the centuries this practice of burial has prevailed in our tradition.

Because of the sacred nature of the human body, the Church at one time prohibited cremation in most circumstances. This is no longer the case. The prohibition against cremation was lifted during the Second Vatican Council in the 1960s.

Catholics may choose cremation, provided it in no way expresses a denial of the Catholic teaching of the dignity of the body and the promise of resurrection on the Last Day.

A HOLY PLACE

Your Catholic cemetery is a place for prayer and remembrance. Coming to this holy place gives witness to a faithful community of all Christ's disciples—the deceased, the living and even future generations. In this sacred space, we love, weep, smile, remember and share our faith and the promise of the resurrection on the last day.

TO LEARN MORE...

Before choosing cremation, you are encouraged to seek the counsel of your pastor or parish staff person or to contact **The Catholic Cemeteries at 651-228-9991** for more information.



Corporate Office
2105 Lexington Ave. S.
Mendota Heights, MN 55120
651-228-9991

www.catholic-cemeteries.org

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Cremation

WHAT CATHOLICS SHOULD KNOW



THE ARCHDIOCESE OF SAINT PAUL
AND MINNEAPOLIS

Cremation: What the Church teaches

In keeping with the sacred nature of the body, the Church teaches that cremated remains are to be treated with the same respect given to the human body from which they come. The final disposition of cremated remains should always reflect the Christian belief in the bodily resurrection and the respect afforded to the human body, even after death. This includes:

- Celebration of the full Catholic funeral rites.
- Respect in the manner of handling, placement and final disposition of the cremated remains of the body.
- Burial of the cremated remains in a cemetery, preferably a Catholic cemetery.

Cremation: Funeral considerations

If cremation is chosen, the Church prefers and urges that the full body be present for the vigil and the funeral Mass, since the presence of the body better expresses the values which the Church affirms in these rites.

In some situations, it is not possible for the body to be present for the funeral liturgy. The rites do provide for the option of the funeral liturgy in the presence of cremated remains.

When pastoral circumstances require it, cremation and committal may take place even before the funeral liturgy. In any case, burial or entombment of the cremated remains at the cemetery should occur without delay, once the cremation process is completed.

Cremation: Burial options

After cremation of the body occurs, the cremated remains must be placed in an appropriate container, such as an urn made of metal, bronze or wood. At all times in the process, the cremated remains must be treated with the respect and dignity accorded to the full body.

The Church requires that the cremated remains be either buried in the ground or placed in a mausoleum or columbarium, preferably in a Catholic cemetery.

The practice of scattering cremated remains or keeping cremated remains in the home of a relative or friend of the deceased should not be followed. Such methods of disposing of cremated remains are inconsistent with the due respect and honor to be accorded to the remains of the deceased. Other practices such as commingling cremated remains or dividing up cremated remains among family members or friends are not acceptable for Catholics.

The Church recommends that the place of burial or entombment in the cemetery be permanently memorialized with a traditional memorial stone, crypt/niche front or bronze plaque marking the name and dates of birth and death of the deceased person.

