

CREMATION

Please keep in mind the following points when making funeral arrangements that involve the cremation of the body of the deceased:

- Burial of the body of the deceased faithful remains the preference of the Catholic Church. The body of a deceased loved one forcefully brings to mind the mystery of life and death and our belief that our human bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit and destined for future glory in the resurrection of the dead. In addition, the body that lies in death recalls the personal story of faith, the past relationships, and the continued presence of the deceased person. The long-standing practice of burying the body of the deceased in a grave or a tomb as was Jesus continues to be encouraged as a sign of Christian faith. However, cremation has become part of the Catholic practice in the United States and is permitted in accord with certain norms.
- If a body is to be cremated, it is always preferable that the body of the deceased be present for the Funeral Liturgy and that cremation take place after the Funeral Liturgy.
- If the body of the deceased is cremated prior to the Funeral Liturgy, the cremated remains are to be brought into the church in a worthy vessel, that is, in a solid and durable container, which may be marked with the name of the deceased. The vessel may be carried in the entrance procession and positioned on a suitable table in the same place where the coffin is usually positioned or it may be put in place on the table before the Funeral Liturgy begins. The covering of the vessel with the pall, a white cloth which is a reminder of the person's baptism, is omitted.
- If the cremated remains are present at the Funeral Liturgy, it is most appropriate that the burial/disposition of the cremated remains immediately follow the Funeral Liturgy. Whether the cremated remains are present at the Funeral Liturgy or whether the body is cremated following the Funeral Liturgy, the length of time between the Funeral Liturgy and the burial of cremated remains is not to exceed thirty days. It is not permitted to delay the burial/disposition of the cremated remains in anticipation of the eventual burial of another person.
- The permanent storage of cremated remains in a private home, funeral home or any other place is prohibited.
- Cremated remains are to be buried in a cemetery or entombed in a mausoleum or columbarium. While there has been an historical preference for burying the remains of the faithful departed in a Catholic cemetery, this is not required. If a Catholic is buried/interred in a non-Catholic cemetery, the individual grave is blessed at the time of burial or interment.
- It is not permitted to scatter cremated remains.
- If cremated remains are buried at sea, the cremated remains are to be in a solid and durable container, and not scattered.
- The integrity of the cremated remains is always to be respected. The cremated remains of one deceased person may not be mixed with the cremated remains of another person. It is not permitted to divide the cremated remains and retain, inter or entomb them in more than one place. It is also not permitted to divide the cremated remains in such a way that they are contained in lockets or jewelry. Any other practice which violates the integrity of the cremated remains and impedes reverent and proper burial/disposition is prohibited.