

CREMATION for CATHOLICS

Cremation can be a confusing issue for Catholics. At one time, the Church prohibited cremation in most circumstances, but this is no longer the case. The reforms of the Second Vatican Council touched all areas in the life of the Church, including funeral and burial rites. In 1963, the Catholic Church modified its position, allowing cremation to be chosen. 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."

WITNESS YOUR FAITH

Catholics are sacramental people. Our faith life is inspired and enriched by sacred signs that speak of a life that is eternal – resurrected life. God communicates to us through the sacramentality of creation – the visible expression of his creative presence in and through life. The Scriptures begin with the story of creation, which culminated in the creation of the human body infused with the Life of the Spirit. Man and woman become the clear signs of God's presence: "He created them in His own image, male and female He created them."

The ultimate sign of God's presence in human history for the person of faith is the humanity of Jesus Christ. His human body and life are signs that speak to us of a loving God who calls us through the Resurrection into an eternal life with Himself. In this context of faith, the human body takes on enormous importance. It is the visible sign of our

humanity. All that one does, says, hears, touches, feels as a person is through his or her body. Our body is not only important in articulating our physical attributes but the spiritual dimensions of our lives as well. All



Cremation Section "Garden of Eternal Love", Gethsemane

that we are and hope to be is experienced through the sacramentality of our body.

This has tremendous implications for us as we contemplate the meaning of Christian burial. Not only are we celebrating the passage of one's personhood to the eternal through the promise of the Resurrection, we are also reverently recognizing the sacred bond that existed between the reality of that person and the body that was the visible sign that made that person present to us and to the world in which we live. In death, though deprived of physical life, the body continues to function as a sign of the person who loved, cared for, caressed the family, was present to others, labored to earn a living, volunteered time and energy to important projects, and any number of other physical ways it gave witness to the person it represented.

Therefore, there is the need of every Christian baptized into Resurrection faith to

contemplate the importance of the body and the importance of sacred burial.

I'VE CHOSEN CREMATION

The presence of the body best expresses the values which the Church affirms in our funeral rites. When possible, cremation should take place after the Funeral Liturgy and before the Rite of Committal at the cemetery. The rites do provide for the option of the Funeral Liturgy in the presence of cremated remains. This is permitted in the Archdiocese of Seattle with the approval of the pastor.

In keeping with the sacred nature of the cremated remains of the body, the Church asks that they be treated in the same way as the corporeal remains of the body. This includes:

- **Celebrate** the full Catholic funeral rites
- **Respect** in the manner of carrying, placement, and final disposition of the cremated remains of the body
- **Bury** the cremated remains in a cemetery

Questions about cremation should be discussed with your pastor.



Kneeling Angel Columbarium, Holyrood Cemetery

The Catholic Cemetery

The Catholic cemetery is the preferred place for the burial of Catholics. Burial in the consecrated ground of the Catholic cemetery is a sign of baptismal commitment and gives witness, even in death, to faith in Christ's resurrection. It is most appropriate that the rite of committal take place in the cemetery consecrated and blessed for this function by the Church. Catholics would want to be buried in a place that witnesses their faith.

Cremated remains of the body must always be treated with respect and reverence. Scattering or keeping cremated remains in the home of a relative or friend are not the reverent disposition that the Church requires. (*Order of Christian Funerals #417*) The integrity of cremated remains must be respected. Dividing cremated remains among family and friends or having cremated remains cast into pottery and jewelry do not reflect proper respect for the dead.



Sacred Heart Columbarium, Calvary Cemetery

Your Catholic Cemeteries have grave spaces, crypt spaces and niches for the cremated remains of the body. This allows for visitation, memorialization and prayers. Under certain conditions, cremated remains may be placed in a grave with a loved one already interred at the cemetery. Cemetery staff can explain the applicable limitations and requirements.

PRE-PLANNING

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. Perhaps nowhere is the need for the advance planning of burial and funeral rites more important than when one has reviewed all of the Church's tradition and teaching surrounding death and burial and has selected cremation.

For additional information, please call:

1-888-784-8683 (toll free)

CALVARY CEMETERY

5041-35th Avenue NE
Seattle, WA 98105
Phone: (206) 522-0996

HOLYROOD CEMETERY

205 NE 205th St.
Shoreline, WA 98155
Phone: (206) 363-8404

GETHSEMANE CEMETERY

37600 Pacific Hwy S
Federal Way, WA 98003
Phone Seattle: (253) 838-2240
Phone Tacoma (253) 927-3350

ST. PATRICK CEMETERY

S. 204th and Orillia Rd
Kent, WA 98032
Administered by Gethsemane Cemetery
Phone: (253) 838-2240



Cremation is My Choice

WHAT CATHOLICS SHOULD KNOW WHEN THEY HAVE CHOSEN CREMATION



**ASSOCIATED CATHOLIC CEMETERIES
ARCHDIOCESE OF SEATTLE**