

Diocese of Fall River
Proper Internment of Cremated Remains

- **The Church continues to prefer the practice of burying the bodies of the deceased, because this shows a greater esteem towards the deceased.**
- **By burying the bodies of the faithful, the Church confirms her faith in the resurrection of the body, and intends to show the great dignity of the human body as an integral part of the human person whose body forms part of their identity.**
- **The Church considers the burial of the dead one of the corporal works of mercy.**



- **Nevertheless, cremation is not prohibited, “unless it was chosen for reasons contrary to Christian doctrine.”**
- **In circumstances when cremation is chosen because of sanitary, economic or social considerations, this choice must never violate the explicitly-stated or the reasonably inferable wishes of the deceased faithful.**
- **[The Church] cannot condone attitudes or permit rites that involve erroneous ideas about death, such as considering death as the definitive annihilation of the person, or the moment of fusion with Mother Nature or the universe, or as a stage in the cycle of regeneration, or as the definitive liberation from the “prison” of the body.**
- **By death, the soul is separated from the body, but in the resurrection God will give incorruptible life to our body, transformed by reunion with our soul.**
- **When, for legitimate motives, cremation of the body has been chosen, the ashes of the faithful must be laid to rest in a sacred place, that is, in a cemetery or, in certain cases, in a church or an area, which has been set aside for this purpose, and so dedicated by the competent ecclesial authority.**
- **For the reasons given above, the conservation of the ashes of the departed in a domestic residence is not permitted.**

*Pastors have encountered circumstances wherein the family of the deceased clearly intends to have the cremated remains of their loved one properly buried, though at some later date after the funeral. With sensitivity to the fact that such family members are in a state of grief over their loss, pastors will need to determine whether the motives for such delays accord with the directives found in this document and what guidance may be given as to the appropriate keeping of such remains until the burial takes place.

- Only in grave and exceptional cases dependent on cultural conditions of a localized nature, may the Ordinary, in agreement with the Episcopal Conference or the Synod of Bishops of the Oriental Churches, concede permission for the conservation of ashes of the departed in a domestic residence.
- Nonetheless, the ashes may not be divided among various family members and due respect must be maintained regarding the circumstance of such a conservation.
- **In order that every appearance of pantheism, naturalism or nihilism be avoided, it is not permitted to scatter the ashes of the faithful departed in the air, on land, at sea or in some other way, nor may they be preserved in mementos, pieces of jewelry or other objects.**

These terms are well defined in an earlier bullet point: “. . . *considering death as the definitive annihilation of the person (nihilism), or the moment of fusion with Mother Nature or the universe (naturalism), or as a stage in the cycle of regeneration, (pantheism) or as the definitive liberation from the “prison” of the body, (dualism).*

- When the deceased notoriously has requested cremation and the scattering of their ashes for reasons contrary to the Christian faith, a Christian funeral must be denied to that person according to the norms of the law.

*Pastors may offer to celebrate a memorial mass for the deceased at a later date.

- The Church who, as Mother, has accompanied the Christian during his earthly pilgrimage, offers to the Father, in Christ, the child of her grace, and she commits to the earth, in hope, the seed of the body that will rise in glory.



All points from *Ad resurgendum cum Christo*, Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith on October 25, 2016.

*Comments discussions of the document at Presbyteral Council Meeting, 12/12/16.