

Cremation

The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops has published the following pastoral guidelines when cremation is being considered.

The body of a deceased Catholic Christian is also the body once 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.

Although cremation is now permitted by the Church, the Church clearly prefers and urges that the body of the deceased be present for the funeral rites (including the wake and the funeral liturgy) since the presence of the human body better expresses the values, which the Church offers and affirms in those rite.

The cremated remains of a body should be treated with the same respect given to the human body from which they come. 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.

The practice of scattering cremated remains on the sea, from the air or on the ground, or keeping the remains in the home of a relative or friends of the deceased (even a small portion of the remains) are not the reverent disposition that the Church requires. Whenever possible, the appropriate means for recording with dignity the memory of the deceased should be adopted, such as a plaque or a stone which records the name of the deceased.

Cremation at Notre Dame

It is our hope at Notre Dame that these guidelines provided by the Church give adequate explanation and may be adhered to as closely as possible. In summary, what is recommended is that if cremation is opted for, the family wait to cremate the body AFTER the celebration of the wake and the funeral liturgy and that the remains be interred in an appropriate manner as mentioned in the guidelines above.

Normally a priest from the parish will attend the entombment of the remains even if it is some time after the Funeral Liturgy and it is within reasonable distance.

If the body must be cremated immediately after death, a wake is still recommended at the funeral home and the cremated remains, in a worthy vessel, are permitted in the church for a funeral liturgy.

When cremated remains are brought to the church for a Funeral Liturgy, they are placed on a table in the sanctuary before the liturgy begins. A single framed photo of the deceased and flowers may be provided by the family and displayed near the cremated remains.

The family or funeral director removes the remains after the liturgy for the final disposition.