

Bringing Them Home

“Show me the manner in which a nation cares for its dead, and I will measure with mathematical exactness, the tender mercies of its people, their respect for the laws of the land and their loyalty to high ideals.” Wm Ewart Gladstone

In 1989, when the revised Order of Christian Funerals was promulgated, cremation was not the usual way of disposition of a body. The Church advocated that we follow 3 stages of ritualizing the life of the deceased: The Vigil/Wake, the Funeral Mass and the Final Commendation of the Body, which primarily was burial in the earth. We had the entire body present for all three ceremonies. We would never have considered keeping the body at home after the Mass to be buried at a future time.

In 1997, the Catholic Conference of Bishops approved a rite to be used in special pastoral circumstances, when cremated remains were to be present at a Funeral Liturgy. The expectation was that the faithful would still follow the wake, Mass and burial. There was also the expectation to continue to view and treat these remains as the human body, and thus would hold them in esteem, as “a temple of the Holy Spirit” and its destiny “for future glory at the resurrection of the dead.”

In 2020, it appears that we have lost the knowledge around treating cremated remains with the “fundamental dignity of a human person.” CANA (Cremation Association of North America) states that by 2025 48% of Americans will be cremated. In 2019 the MN cremation rate was 67.9% and it is predicted that we will only level off once we move closer to 75%. What does this mean for how we treat the cremated remains of our loved ones?

If choosing cremation, every family needs to answer these questions:

Q. What are you going to do with your loved ones cremated remains?

Often the answer is, “we’re going to keep them at home.”

While initially, that plan sounds fine at that moment, we never have the answer to the follow-up question.

Q. So, what’s the long term plan? Who will care for them after you have died?

There usually isn’t an answer to this question. Yet, because these are human remains, there needs to be a plan that includes the survivors. When there is no plan, often human remains become abandoned or left behind.

It has been said that we protect and secure the things we hold dear. Yet, often we find cremated remains left in attics, closets, garages, storage facilities and even in Good Will stores. Some are left abandoned at church doors or never picked up at funeral homes. Some people scatter the cremated remains at a lake cabin, bury them in their own back yard, or dump them on a relative’s grave at a cemetery. Some are made into jewelry, tattoo ink or put into bullets. None of these methods show respect for one who was baptized into a community of love-one who was a child of God.

If we are honest about it, we know that there are conflicting messages about cremation. Because the state of MN says that cremation is the final disposition of the body, family members often are not instructed that the cremated remains should be buried or interred at a cemetery. For some individuals, there may be financial difficulties in providing a final resting place. For others, society’s attitude of “death as an inconvenience” means that there is no ritualization, no memorialization and no burial.

At Catholic Cemeteries, our mission is to bury the dead. We believe that all are destined for eternal life with God and that all individuals are part of the great communion of saints. Because of this and our knowledge of cremated remains that are often forgotten, we have begun a program entitled, "Bringing Them Home." We can provide a dignified burial option.

On October 24, 2020, we will have an opportunity for those in Catholic parishes who have cremated remains at home to have them interred in a communal crypt at the Resurrection chapel mausoleum in Mendota Heights. For \$200.00, families will have an opportunity to:

1. Have a permanent resting place in which the cremated remains of their loved one will be secure.
2. Have a place that provides peace of mind for the family, knowing that their loved one will be perpetually cared for.
3. Know that by interring the cremated remains, it affirms the worth of the individual by providing a final home.
4. Have a formal record of burial at the cemetery and the name of the deceased on display in a Book of Remembrance in the Chapel Mausoleum.

Requirements for this program are:

- Cremated remains need to be at least 5 years old or we will also accept anyone who has died of Covid-19 in the last year.
- We need the full name of the deceased and date of death
- We need the legal next of kin to authorize the burial of the deceased
- We need a copy of the cremation certificate
- Once cremated remains are interred in the communal crypt, they will be unable to be disinterred.
- Individuals will need to make an appointment with a family service counselor to walk through the process, do paperwork for records, review size of container, and learn about interment process and memorialization options.

After having met with a family service counselor, cremated remains may be dropped off at the Resurrection Cemetery Office beginning on September 2nd and no later than October 2nd in order for them to be interred. They will be placed in a communal crypt prior to the October 24th committal prayer service.

With this ministry, we are trying to accompany people through the grieving process, allowing some closure in knowing where the loved one will be permanently housed and cared for as well as having a place where the whole family can come and memorialize their loved one. The deceased need not be Catholic to be interred here. We will care for them forever.

Archbishop Hebda will lead a committal service on October 24, 2020 in the Chapel Mausoleum at Resurrection. Because of Covid-19, we will not be able to open the service to the public, but we will tape it and have it on the Catholic Cemeteries website no later than November 1st. www.catholic-cemeteries.org

Families will have a permanent place to visit as well as a maintained permanent record of their presence. Our mission is to honor, respect and bury the dead. Every person is a child of God and deserves a resting place and to be remembered.

For more information or questions, please call Sr. Fran Donnelly at 651-255-0537.