



LITURGICAL NORMS ON CREMATION
Congregation for Divine Worship
(For private circulation)

ORDER OF CHRISTIAN FUNERALS, Appendix 2, "Cremation"

INTRODUCTION

411 The Christian faithful are unequivocally confronted by the mystery of life and death when they are faced with the presence of the body of one who has died. Moreover, the body which lies in death naturally recalls the personal story of faith, the loving family bonds, the friendships, and the words and acts of kindness of the deceased person. Indeed, the human body is inextricably associated with the human person, which acts and is experienced by others through that body. It is the body whose hands clothed the poor and embraced the sorrowing.

412 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. The body of the deceased brings forcefully to mind the Church's conviction that the human body is in Christ a temple of the Holy Spirit and is destined for future glory at the resurrection of the dead. This conviction in faith finds its expression in a sustained and insistent prayer that commends the deceased person to God's merciful care so that his or her place in the communion of the just may be assured. A further expression is the care traditionally taken to prepare the bodies of the deceased for a burial that befits their dignity, in expectation of their final resurrection in the Lord.

PRESENCE OF THE BODY AT THE FUNERAL LITURGY

413 Although cremation is now permitted by the Church, it does not enjoy the same value as burial of the body. The Church clearly prefers and urges that the body of the deceased be present for the funeral rites, since the presence of the human body better expresses the values which the Church affirms in those rites.



414 The Church's teaching in regard to the human body as well as the Church's preference for burial of the body should be a regular part of catechesis on all levels and pastors should make particular efforts to preserve this important teaching.

415 Sometimes, however, it is not possible for the body to be present for the Funeral Mass. When extraordinary circumstances make the cremation of a body the only feasible choice, pastoral sensitivity must be exercised by priests, deacons, and others who minister to the family of the deceased.

RESPECT FOR THE CREMATED REMAINS OF A BODY

416 The Catholic Church commends its deceased members to the mercy of God by means of its funeral rites. It likewise asks that the Christian faithful continue to offer prayer for deceased family members and friends. The annual celebration of All Souls Day, the commemoration of all the faithful departed on November 2, attests to this salutary practice. Masses celebrated for the deceased on the anniversaries of death or at other significant times continue the Church's prayer and remembrance. For Catholic Christians, cemeteries, especially Catholic cemeteries, call to mind the resurrection of the dead. In addition, they are the focus for the Church's remembering of the dead and offering of prayer for them.

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

THE FUNERAL LITURGY

WHEN CREMATION TAKES PLACE FOLLOWING THE FUNERAL LITURGY

418 When the choice has been made to cremate a body, it is recommended that the cremation take place after the Funeral Liturgy. In this case, the Vigil for the Deceased and related rites and prayers, as well as the Funeral Liturgy are celebrated as they are provided in this ritual.



419 At the conclusion of the Funeral Liturgy, the Rite of Final Commendation and Farewell takes place, using the alternate form of dismissal (p. 396). Then the cremation of the body takes place.

420 At the Rite of Committal, the cremated remains of the body of the deceased person are reverently taken to the place of burial or entombment and the alternate form for the words of committal is used (p. 396).

421 When the Final Commendation is celebrated as part of the Rite of Committal rather than at the Funeral Liturgy, the alternate form for the words of committal is used.

WHEN CREMATION AND COMMITTAL TAKE PLACE BEFORE THE FUNERAL LITURGY

422 When cremation and committal take place before the Funeral Liturgy, the Prayers after Death and the Vigil for the Deceased may be adapted as necessary and appropriate and used before the Funeral Liturgy. The Rite of Committal with Final Commendation may also be celebrated at that time. The alternate form for the words of committal is used.

423 Following the committal, the family and friends of the deceased join the Catholic community for the Funeral Liturgy, Prayers which do not make reference to the honouring or burying of the body of the deceased should be chosen instead of those which have these themes.

424 The Funeral Mass is celebrated as given in this ritual. The Rite of Final Commendation is omitted, since it has already taken place. Following the prayer after Communion, the blessing is given and the people are dismissed in the usual way.

425 **When** the Funeral Liturgy outside Mass is celebrated, the Rite of Final Commendation is omitted, since it has already taken place. Following the Lord's Prayer, a blessing is given and the people are dismissed in the usual way.

FUNERAL LITURGY IN THE PRESENCE OF THE CREMATED REMAINS

426 By virtue of an indult granted by the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments (Prot. 1589/96/L), the celebration of the Funeral Liturgy, including Mass, in the presence of the cremated remains of the body of a deceased person is permitted in the dioceses of the United States of America under the following conditions:



a. That the cremation not be inspired by motives contrary to Christian teaching, in accordance with what is laid down by the *Code of Canon Law* (canon 1176 § 3).

b. That each diocesan bishop will judge whether it is pastorally appropriate to celebrate the liturgy for the dead, with or without Mass, with the ashes present, taking into account the concrete circumstances in each individual case, and in harmony with the spirit and precise content of the current canonical and liturgical norms.

427 If the diocesan bishop has decided to allow the celebration of the Funeral Liturgy in the presence of the cremated remains of the deceased person, care must be taken that all is carried out with due decorum. The cremated remains of the body are to be placed in a worthy vessel. A small table or stand is to be prepared for them at the place normally occupied by the coffin. The vessel containing the cremated remains may be carried to its place in the entrance procession or may be placed on this table or stand sometime before the liturgy begins.

428 After the people have assembled, the Funeral Mass is celebrated as laid down in the *Roman Missal* and this ritual. Prayers which do not make reference to the honouring or burying of the body of the deceased should be chosen instead of those which have these themes. Following the prayer after Communion, the Rite of Final Commendation takes place. The alternate form for the dismissal is used (p. 396).

429 When the Funeral Liturgy outside Mass is celebrated, all takes place as laid down in this ritual. Prayers which do not make reference to the honouring or burying of the body of the deceased should be chosen instead of those which have these themes. Following the Lord's Prayer, the Rite of Final Commendation takes place. The alternate form for the dismissal is used (p. 396).

430 The Rite of Committal is celebrated at the cemetery or columbarium as soon as possible following the Funeral Liturgy. The alternate form for the words of committal is used (p. 396).

431 When the Rite of Committal with Final Commendation is celebrated, the alternate form for the words of committal is used.