


CREMATION GUIDELINES

"Blessed are the pure of heart, for they shall see God." – Matthew 5:8 — 

History

Many Catholics today still believe that the Church forbids cremation. This was true, for a variety of reasons, prior to Vatican II. Cremation was prohibited in the Jewish faith, being cited as desecration of the body. Having its roots of Judaism, the Christian tradition of full body burial was the method of disposition for the deceased. Moreover, in an effort to protect the sanctity of the body and the belief in resurrection, cremation was prohibited. Although cremation was a common practice among Greeks and Romans, Christians moved away from the practice because of their:

- Faith in the Resurrection of the body;
- Reverence for the body as a member of the body of Christ and a temple of the Holy Spirit;
- A strong reaction to persecutors use of burning bodies as a taunt against belief in the Resurrection

The practice of the early Church came to be crystallized in the code of Canon Law, which strictly forbade cremation except in times of plague or natural disaster. The reforms of the second Vatican council changed the Church's position in this regard.



HOLY CROSS CATHOLIC CEMETERY

THE CATHOLIC CEMETERIES | ARCHDIOCESE OF SAN FRANCISCO

1500 Mission Road • Colma, CA
650.756.2060

www.holycrosscemeteries.com

What is The Church's Policy on Cremation Today?

In 1963 the Catholic Church modified its general prohibition of cremation as a burial option. The new directives allow cremation to be chosen provided the choice does not reflect a denial of the Church's teachings about life, death, and resurrection. The code of Canon Law (Can. 1176, No.3) states: "the Church earnestly recommends that 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." In short, cremation is allowed for those who request it in good faith.

What is Cremation?

Cremation is the reduction of the body of a deceased person to recoverable bone fragments through a process that combines intense heat and evaporation. The fragments are then pulverized and referred to as "cremated remains."

What Type of Services are Available to Those Choosing Cremation?

The Catholic Church strongly prefers that the vigil service and funeral mass are offered according to "The Order of Christian Funerals" with the body present, as the presence of the body most clearly brings to mind the life and death

of the person. After the funeral Mass, the deceased may be taken to the Crematory by the funeral director and the Committal Service will take place at the Cemetery following the cremation. When circumstances prevent the presence of the body at the funeral liturgy, as of November 2nd, 1997 in the Archdiocese of San Francisco the cremated remains of the body may be present in the Church for all services.

Why does the Church Prefer Cremation After the Services?

The Church discourages immediate cremation because of the belief that grieving in the presence of the body helps people deal with their loss. Mourners need sufficient time to remember and celebrate the life of the deceased; to begin to grow accustomed to the absence of a loved one; to unite and support each other; and for the community to express its loss. The Church wants to encourage families to take the time needed to say their goodbyes and thus begin the grieving process. Nothing (not even immediate cremation) can take away the pain we feel at the loss of someone we love.

What Happens to the Cremated Remains After the Services are Selected?

The remains of the cremated body must be treated with the same respect given to the entire body. This includes the manner in which they are carried; the care and attention to the appropriate placement; and transport and their final disposition.

A Tradition of Faith Throughout Our Lives.

The practices 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. Finally, the deceased should be memorialized with the plaque, marker or monument that records the name of the deceased. Its value is twofold:

- Memorials constitute a visible history of our faith community
- Memorials are an important aid to survivors, providing a focal point for the expression of grief and a place for comfort as survivors go through the grieving process



Why Do Catholics Choose a Catholic Cemetery?

It is only natural that those who share the same faith in life will wish to carry on the sense of community after death. When it comes to the issue of death, the sensibilities and needs of Catholics are unique and call for certain practices in the care of handling the remains of the deceased. Therefore, in the sacred grounds of a Catholic cemetery there are safeguards mandated by the Church's Canon Law which guarantee permanence, reverence, and respect of the deceased.

Advanced Planning for Cremation

Perhaps nowhere is the need for advance planning of burial and funeral rites more important than in the selection of cremation. That preplanning is critical for several reasons:

- The opportunity to raise questions with other family members and discuss everyone's feelings
- The need to research and understand the funeral rite options that are provided by the Church for cremation
- The need to research and understand burial options, including the selection of an appropriate urn
- The need to discuss finances and possibly prepaying all charges

Most of us are accustomed to making our own decisions about our daily life and future plans. We exert control over the final distribution of our assets and care of our survivors through a will and life insurance policies. The care and attention given to these decisions should also be extended to the decision about cremation.

If you have any questions or need additional information, please contact:

Holy Cross Catholic Cemetery, Colma	650-756-2060
Holy Cross Menlo Park Cemetery, Menlo Park	650-323-6375
Mt. Olivet Catholic Cemetery, San Rafael	415-479-9020
Our Lady of the Pillar Cemetery, Half Moon Bay	650-712-1679
St. Anthony's Cemetery, Pescadero	650-712-1679
St. Mary Magdalene Cemetery, Bolinas	415-479-9021
Tomales Catholic Cemetery, Tomales	415-479-9021

Burial or Inurnment for Cremated Remains

Placement and Memorial Options

Legacy:

Large, unique family plots and columbaria; heritage sites and historic sections; an opportunity to share the family stories and unite loved ones in memory.

Elegance:

Beautiful glass niches display urns personalized to reflect a life story.

Traditional:

In-ground burial in landscaped sections to commemorate a life well-lived.

Tribute:

A marble niche in a Garden Court or Mausoleum features engraved names, dates, and photo medallion.

Memorial:

Memorial options include: inscribing a name on a Memory Tree, designing a Memorial Bench, lighting a Memorial Candle, donating one of the Stations of the Cross, or placing a name on an existing family monument.

"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life." - John 3:16



CREMATION GUIDELINES

A Tradition of Faith Throughout Our Lives.