

## Holy Trinity Parish



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### Catholic Doctrine on Cremation

Many Catholics have questions about the Church's teachings on cremation. Your Pastor and your Deacon at the Parishes of St. Gregory and Holy Trinity would like to help answer some of these questions and to help clarify the Church's concern for the care of the deceased.

- "The Church earnestly recommends that the pious custom of burial be retained; but does not forbid cremation, unless this is chosen for reasons which are contrary to Christian teachings." (Code of Canon Law, 1985, #1176.3)
- The Church prefers that cremation take place after a full Funeral Liturgy (The Vigil and Funeral Mass.) where the body is present. "This is the body once washed in Baptism, anointed with the oil of salvation, and fed with the Bread of Life." (OCF #412) It is the Church's belief in the sacredness of life and the resurrection of the dead encourages us to celebrate the funeral liturgies with the body present while affirming the value of human life.
- The Rite of Committal then takes place after cremation of the body.
- When cremation takes place before the Funeral Mass (This is the trend in the U.S.) the cremated remains are to be at Mass.
- The Church maintains that the cremated remains should be treated with the same respect as the corporal remains. This includes that a worthy vessel be used to contain the ashes, the manner in which they are carried, and the care and attention to appropriate placement and final disposition of the cremated remains.
- The cremated remains of the faithfully departed are to be buried in sacred ground, or entombed in a mausoleum or columbarium. Therefore the practice of scattering the cremated remains, keeping the cremated remains at home, the co-mingling of cremated remains, or dividing the cremated remains between friends and relatives is not acceptable.
- The ashes of the faithfully departed are not to be preserved in mementos such as pieces of jewelry or any other object.
- When the deceased has notoriously 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.
- By placing the ashes of the departed in a sacred place we are ensuring that the faithfully departed are not excluded from the prayers of their family and Christian community. This also helps the next generation remember the faithfully departed. Tombs help bring us into prayer and reflection as we, the Church, await the Resurrection of the Dead.