



In order that we be clear about Church teachings regarding cremation:

The resurrection of Jesus is the culminating truth of the Christian faith, preached as an essential part of the Paschal Mystery from the very beginnings of Christianity: “For I handed on to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the scriptures; that he was buried; that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the scriptures; that he appeared to Cephas, then to the Twelve” (1 Cor 15:3-5).

It is true that Christ will raise us up on the last day; but it is also true that, in a certain way, we have already risen with Christ. In Baptism, actually, we are immersed in the death and resurrection of Christ and sacramentally assimilated to him: “You were buried with him in baptism, in which you were also raised with him through faith in the power of God, who raised him from the dead” (Col 2:12). United with Christ by Baptism, we already truly participate in the life of the risen Christ.

Because of Christ, Christian death has a positive meaning. The Christian vision of death receives privileged expression in the liturgy of the Church: “Indeed for your faithful, Lord, life is changed not ended, and, when this earthly dwelling turns to dust, an eternal dwelling is made ready for them in heaven”. (Preface for Funeral Masses)

Following the most ancient Christian tradition, **the Church insistently recommends that the bodies of the deceased be buried in cemeteries or other sacred places**. In memory of the death, burial and resurrection of the Lord, the mystery that illumines the Christian meaning of death, **burial is above all the most fitting way to express faith and hope in the resurrection of the body**. The Church who, as Mother, has accompanied the Christian during his earthly pilgrimage, offers to the Father, in Christ, the child of her grace, **and she commits to the earth, in hope, the seed of the body that will rise in glory**. By burying the bodies of the faithful, the Church confirms her faith in the resurrection of the body, and intends to show the great dignity of the human body as an integral part of the human person whose body forms part of their identity. **She cannot, therefore, condone attitudes or permit rites that involve erroneous ideas about death, such as considering death as the definitive annihilation of the person, or the moment of fusion with Mother Nature or the universe, or as a stage in the cycle of regeneration, or as the definitive liberation from the “prison” of the body**. Furthermore, burial in a cemetery or another sacred place adequately corresponds to the **piety and respect owed to the bodies of the faithful departed** who through Baptism have become temples of the Holy Spirit.

Finally, the burial of the faithful departed in cemeteries or other sacred places **encourages family members and the whole Christian community to pray for and remember the dead**.

In circumstances when cremation is chosen because of sanitary, economic, or social considerations, this choice **must never violate the explicitly-stated or the reasonably inferable wishes of the deceased faithful**. The Church raises no doctrinal objections to this practice, since cremation of the deceased’s body does not affect his or her soul, nor does it prevent God, in his omnipotence, from raising up the deceased body to new life. Thus cremation, in and of itself, objectively negates neither the Christian doctrine of the soul’s immortality nor that of the resurrection of the body.

When, **for legitimate motives, cremation of the body has been chosen, the ashes of the faithful must be laid to rest in a sacred place, that is, in a cemetery or, in certain cases, in a church or an area, which has been set aside for this purpose**, and so dedicated by the competent ecclesial authority. From the earliest times, Christians have desired that the faithful departed become the objects of the Christian community’s prayers and remembrance. Their tombs have become places of prayer, remembrance, and reflection. The faithful departed remain part of the Church who believes in the communion of all the faithful of Christ, those who are pilgrims on earth, the dead who are being purified, and the blessed in heaven, all together forming one Church.

The conservation of the ashes of the departed in a domestic residence is not permitted. The ashes may not be divided among various family members and due respect must be maintained regarding the circumstances of such a conservation.

In order that every appearance of pantheism, naturalism, or nihilism be avoided, **it is not permitted to scatter the ashes of the faithful departed in the air, on land, at sea or in some other way, nor may they be preserved in mementos, pieces of jewelry or other objects**. These courses of action cannot be legitimized by an appeal to the sanitary, social, or economic motives that may have occasioned the choice of cremation.

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