



ROMAN CATHOLIC
DIOCESE OF ROCHESTER

**POLICIES FOR THE
ADMINISTRATION OF THE
SACRAMENTS**

**THE RITE OF CHRISTIAN
FUNERALS**

2016

CHRISTIAN FUNERALS

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9.1 GENERAL PRINCIPLES

- Catholic belief in death as the entrance into eternity, hope in the resurrection, recognition of the value of prayer for the deceased, reverence for the body which remains and the sense of mystery and sacredness which surround the end of earthly life are all reflected in the Church's care for the deceased and the family and community of faith that survives them. Private prayer, united with the liturgical rites of the Church, help us to share in the Lord's paschal mystery and to hope for eternal union with God.
- "The Church's liturgical and sacramental life and proclamation of the Gospel make [the Paschal] mystery present in the life of the faithful" (*OCF*, 2).
- "The Church through its funeral rites commends the dead to God's merciful love and pleads for the forgiveness of their sins." (*OCF*, 6).
- A funeral is not a celebration of the life of the deceased, but, as with all of the Church's rites, a proclamation of the mysteries of Jesus Christ as they embrace the human experience and the deceased person.
- The time of death can be a time of evangelization and reconciliation for those who knew and loved the deceased. Priests, deacons and all members of the pastoral staff are to be ever-ready to minister to the bereaved.
- Family members or someone designated by the family should be invited into and involved in the planning and celebration of the funeral rites according to the liturgical norms of the Church and these diocesan policies.
- These rites, like all rites, do not belong to individuals, but are entrusted to the Church. All funeral rites must be coordinated through the parish with the knowledge of the pastor/administrator.
- "The funeral of any deceased member of the faithful should normally be celebrated in the church of that person's proper parish." (*CIC*, c. 1177, § 1).
- "However, any member of the faithful, or those in charge of the deceased person's funeral, may choose another church; this requires the consent of the proper pastor and a notification to the proper parish priest of the deceased." (*CIC*, c. 1177, § 2). This notification is made by the pastor/administrator hosting the funeral to the pastor/administrator of the deceased.
- "When death has occurred outside the person's proper parish, and the body is not returned there, and another church has not been chosen, the funeral rites are to be celebrated in the church of the parish where the death occurred, unless another church has been designated by particular law." (*CIC*, c. 1177, § 3).
- Parishes should be aware of the importance of hospitality for the bereaved family as well as the many visitors that may be present at a funeral liturgy. It is fitting for pastors/administrators and parish staff to assist members of the community in forming volunteer bereavement committees to provide hospitality at the time of the funeral and giving support to the family before and after the funeral.
- The *Order of Christian Funerals* (1989), with the accompanying "Appendix on Cremation" (1997), is to be used in the celebration of the funeral rites.
- Special sensitivity to ethnic/cultural diversity is important in the preparation of funeral rites,

but always with due regard to the norms set forth in the *Order of Christian Funerals*.

- Mindful of the importance of a Christian funeral, the Church prescribes that “deceased members of the Christian faithful must be given ecclesiastical funerals according to the norm of law.” (*CIC*, c. 1176 § 1).
- Children, whose parents intended to have them baptized, but who died before Baptism have a right to a funeral. (Cf. *CIC*, c. 1183 § 2).
- Catechumens are counted among Christ’s faithful, and as such, have a right to a Catholic funeral. (Cf. *CIC*, c. 1183 § 1).
- “In the prudent judgment of the local ordinary, ecclesiastical funerals can be granted to baptized persons who are enrolled in a non-Catholic Church or ecclesial community unless their intention is evidently to the contrary and provided that their own minister is not available.” (*CIC*, c. 1183 § 3).
- “Unless they gave some signs of repentance before death, the following must be deprived of ecclesiastical funerals:
 - notorious apostates, heretics, and schismatics;
 - those who chose the cremation of their bodies for reasons contrary to Christian faith; and
 - other manifest sinners who cannot be granted ecclesiastical funerals without public scandal of the faithful.
 If any doubt occurs, the local ordinary is to be consulted, and his judgment must be followed.” (*CIC*, c. 1184).
- People who find themselves alienated from God, the Church, family members or others often are moved by the experience of death and wish to become reconciled to God, the Church and others. Priests should be generous in extending that opportunity through the Sacrament of Penance/Reconciliation, hearing Confessions as time permits on the day of or evening before the Funeral Liturgy.
- An offering to the parish for funeral services is customary according to the current approved diocesan scale for such offerings. A funeral is never to be denied because of an inability to make an offering. (Cf. *CIC*, c. 1181).
- The Funeral rites are comprised of three principal parts: the Vigil for the Deceased; the Funeral Liturgy (the Mass, the celebration of the Eucharistic Sacrifice, is the principal celebration of the Christian funeral); and the Rite of Committal.

9.2 THE VIGIL FOR THE DECEASED

- The Vigil for the Deceased, commonly known as The Wake, allows the family members and friends to remember the deceased in the context of faithful trust and prayerful thanksgiving.
- The Vigil for the Deceased, the Office of the Dead, and other prayer services help express the Church’s faith in the paschal mystery and to console and strengthen the mourners with Sacred Scripture and the prayers of the Church.
- The Vigil for the Deceased provides an excellent opportunity to recall the memories and events that have been a part of the deceased’s life.

- Effective catechesis stresses the value of this time of Vigil, and of calling hours. Pastors/ administrators, parish staff and funeral directors can work together with the family to insure the benefits of this time.
- “The Vigil may be celebrated in the home of the deceased, in the funeral home, parlor or chapel of rest, or in some other suitable place.” (*OCF*, 55). With the pastor’s/administrator’s permission, it may also be celebrated in the church, but at a time well before the funeral liturgy. (Cf. *OCF*, 55). It is advisable to schedule the Vigil at a specific time.
- Forms of devotional prayer, such as the Rosary, are also appropriate during the course of the Vigil, but should not take the place of the official prayer of the Church, the Vigil for the Deceased. Participation of those present is to be encouraged.
- Care should be taken that these rites are celebrated with reverence and respect for their religious nature.

9.3 THE FUNERAL LITURGY

- “When one of its members dies, the Church encourages the celebration of the Mass.” (*OCF*, 154).
- “The Funeral Liturgy (a Funeral Mass or, in rare circumstances, the Funeral Liturgy outside Mass) is the central liturgical celebration of the Christian community for the deceased.” (*OCF*, 128).
- “Among the Masses for the Dead, the Funeral Mass holds first place. It may be celebrated on any day except for Solemnities that are Holydays of Obligation, Thursday of Holy Week (Holy Thursday), the Paschal Triduum, and the Sundays of Advent, Lent, and Easter, with due regard also for all the other requirements of the norm of the law.” (*GIRM*, 380).
- Since the proper setting for Mass is a sacred place, Mass is celebrated in a church and not in a funeral home or similar facility. (Cf. *CIC*, c. 932 §1; c. 1228; **See 2.1 General Principles**).
- “The liturgical color chosen for funerals should express Christian hope but should not be offensive to human grief or sorrow. In the United States, white, violet, or black vestments may be worn at the funeral rites and at other offices and Masses for the Dead.” (*OCF*, 39).
- “The reading of Scripture during a Eucharistic celebration in the Catholic Church is to be done by members of that Church [the Catholic Church].” (*Directory for the Application of Principles and Norms on Ecumenism*, 133). Readers are fully initiated, practicing Catholics, who are “truly suited to carrying out this function” (*GIRM*, 101), and whose lives witness to the Word of God which they proclaim. Proper training is necessary.
 - “On exceptional occasions and for a just cause, the Bishop of the Diocese may permit a member of another Church or ecclesial Community to take on the task of reader” (*Directory for the Application of Principles and Norms on Ecumenism*, 133). While maintaining that a Catholic in good standing serve as a reader at a funeral Mass, permission is granted in exceptional circumstances for a non-Catholic Christian, whose life witnesses to the Word of God, to read with the consent of the pastor/administrator.
- At the Funeral Masses, there is a brief Homily by the priest or deacon, “but to the exclusion of a funeral eulogy of any kind.” (*GIRM*, 382). Carefully selected illustrations from the deceased person’s life may be used, if appropriate.

- o “A brief homily based on the readings is always given after the Gospel reading ... but there is never to be a eulogy.” (*OCF*, 27; Cf. *GIRM*, 382).
- o The homily relates Christian death to the paschal mystery of our Lord’s death and resurrection. Attentive to the grief of those present, the homily properly includes an expression of praise and gratitude to God for the gift of a Christian life and such virtues or strengths apparent in the deceased’s life.
- Since the Most Holy Eucharist is “the wonderful Sacrament ... by which the unity of the Church is both signified and brought about,” (*Unitatis Redintegratio*, 2), “Eucharistic communion is inseparably linked to full ecclesial communion and its visible expression.” (*Directory for the Application of Principles and Norms on Ecumenism*, 129; **See 2.3 Reception of Holy Communion**).
 - o Noting that sad divisions do exist, parishes nonetheless welcome to the Funeral Mass non-practicing Catholics, people of all faiths, or no faith, to come to pray and mourn a deceased family member or friend. Those who may attend Catholic liturgies who are not familiar with Catholic worship and teaching benefit greatly from honest and charitable guidance regarding the norms governing the reception of Eucharistic Communion.
 - o The United States Conference of Catholic Bishop’s 1996 statement, *Guidelines for the Reception of Holy Communion*, is to be followed. The statement is available at <http://www.usccb.org/prayer-and-worship/the-mass/order-of-mass/liturgy-of-the-eucharist/guidelines-for-the-reception-of-communion.cfm>

9.3.1 Liturgical Music at Funerals

- “Music is integral to the funeral rites ... The texts of the songs chosen for a particular celebration should express the paschal mystery of the Lord’s suffering, death, and triumph over death and should be related to the readings from Scripture.” (*OCF*, 30).
- The music which is chosen for the celebration of these rites can play a powerful role in supporting, consoling, and uplifting the participants, helping “to create in them a spirit of hope in Christ’s victory over death and in the Christian’s share in that victory.” (*OCF*, 31).
- “Music should never be used to memorialize the deceased, but rather to give praise to the Lord, whose Paschal Sacrifice has freed us from the bonds of death.” (*Sing to the Lord: Music in Divine Worship*, 248).
- Even when popular/secular music has special meaning to the deceased or the mourners, such works are inappropriate for use in liturgical celebrations.
- The use of pre-recorded music “lacks the authenticity provided by the living liturgical assembly gathered for the Sacred Liturgy” (*Sing to the Lord*, 93) and should not be used within the Church’s funeral rites.
- Music ministers are to receive remuneration according to the current approved diocesan scale for such services, posted and available on Lotus notes. However, the funeral rites should not be diminished because of the inability of the deceased family to make an offering. In charity, the parish should make adequate provision for music.

9.4 WORDS OF REMEMBRANCE

- Words of Remembrance are not required, but if permitted by the pastor/administrator, take place in this order of preference:
 1. at the conclusion of the Vigil for the Deceased, after the Concluding Prayer, before the Blessing and Dismissal;
 2. at a reception following the Funeral Mass;
 3. at the conclusion of the Rite of Committal at the cemetery;
 4. at the Funeral Liturgy:
 - o at a Funeral Mass, after the Prayer after Communion and before the Final Commendation. (Cf. *OCF*, 170). For pastoral reasons, Words of Remembrance may instead be given prior to the beginning of the Funeral Mass, before the Collect is prayed;
 - o at Funeral Liturgy Outside Mass, after the Lord's Prayer and before the Final Commendation.
- The Diocesan Policy for Words of Remembrance at a Funeral Liturgy, ADDENDUM 6, are to be followed in all circumstances.
- Should a family member or friend be designated to offer Words of Remembrance, ADDENDUM 7, should be given to the person as soon as possible to guide his/her preparation.
- The pastor/administrator may legitimately establish a parish policy of not permitting Words of Remembrance at a Funeral liturgy.

9.5 CREMATION AND CATHOLIC FUNERALS

- "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." (*CIC*, c. 1176).
- "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." (*OCF*, 413).
- "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." (*OCF*, 416).
- In this regard, please refer to ADDENDUM 8, which contains the text of *Ad resurgendum cum Christo*, regarding the burial of the deceased and the conservation of the ashes in the case of cremation.

9.5.1 Cremation Following the Funeral

- When the body of the deceased is to be cremated, this is ordinarily done following the Funeral Liturgy. In this case, the Vigil for the Deceased and the Funeral Liturgy itself are celebrated as normal, with the body present. Following the Funeral Liturgy, the body is cremated, and the

remains of the individual are then buried or entombed using a form of the Rite of Committal. This permits the presence of the body at the Funeral Liturgy serving as a Christian expression of the sanctity of the body of the deceased and the hope of the resurrection.

9.5.2 Cremation Before the Funeral

- This option may be chosen “when extraordinary circumstances make the cremation of a body the only feasible choice.” (*OCF*, 415). In this case, Appendix 2 of the *Order of Christian Funerals* is used.

9.5.3 Burial of Cremated Remains

- Since the human body has an eternal destiny, the Church requires that cremated remains of a body be buried or entombed immediately after the Funeral in the same timely manner as a body.
 - “The cremated remains should be buried in a grave or entombed in a mausoleum or columbarium.” (*OCF*, 416).
 - “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.” (*OCF*, 416).
 - “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.” (*OCF*, 415).
 - It is not appropriate for cremated remains to be divided among family members or to be included in jewelry, which render impossible proper burial.

9.6 THE RITE OF COMMITTAL

- The Rite of Committal, the conclusion of the funeral rites, entrusts the body to its resting place with the Church’s expression of hope, awaiting the resurrection of the body.
- Catholic Cemeteries exist for a prayerful resting place memorializing the existence of deceased men and women who now await the resurrection of the body in Christ. “If this cannot be achieved, however, then individual graves are to be properly blessed.” (*CIC*, c. 1240 §2).

9.7 CONTINUED PASTORAL OUTREACH AND REMEMBRANCE OF THE DECEASED

- The weeks and months following a death in the family may be difficult. Prayer and participation in the life of the Church provide comfort and a way of continuing the relationship with the deceased family member in the communion of the saints. Visits to the cemetery also provide comfort and an ongoing assurance of the Church’s hope in the resurrection of the dead.
- Preeminent among these remembrances is the request for Masses to be offered for the deceased, perhaps on the anniversary of his/her birth, death, etc.
 - “For us who profess the Catholic faith, there is no better way to cherish the memory of our beloved dead than to have Holy Mass offered for them. The Mass also renews our

belief in the Resurrection of Jesus Christ and in the eternal life wrought by His rising from the dead." (*Bishop Matano's Pastoral Letter on Christian Funerals and the Month of All Souls, November, 2014*). <http://catholiccourier.com/commentary/bishops-column/renewing-faith-cherishing-the-dead/>

- o "From the beginning the Church has honored the memory of the dead and offered prayers in suffrage for them, above all the Eucharistic sacrifice, so that, thus purified, they may attain the beatific vision of God." (CCC, no. 1032).
- o Additionally, the month of November is dedicated to the commemoration of All Souls, and parish remembrances are encouraged with designated Masses for parishioners who have died.

ADDENDUM 6:

NORMS FOR WORDS OF REMEMBRANCE AT FUNERAL LITURGIES IN THE DIOCESE OF ROCHESTER

The inclusion of Words of Remembrance in the 1989 *Order of Christian Funerals* is permitted, but not required, and is at the discretion of the pastor/administrator. These Words of Remembrance may occur at the Vigil of the Deceased (Cf. *OCF*, 62, 80), at a reception following the Funeral Liturgy, at the conclusion of the Rite of Committal at the cemetery, or at the Funeral Liturgy. (Cf. *OCF*, 170).

The provision that “a member or a friend of the family may speak in remembrance of the deceased” (*OCF*, 80, 170, 197) has often led to a confusion between these Words of Remembrance and a eulogy. A eulogy recounts some or all of the significant events in the life of the deceased. Biographical in nature, a eulogy tends to be lengthy and similar to a curriculum vitae. However, Words of Remembrance provide briefly some insight into the Catholic faith and values of the deceased as seen through the lens of one or two examples from his/her life. In some instances, the inclusion of Words of Remembrance in the Funeral Liturgy has become problematic, such that:

- o The flow and dignity of the Sacred Liturgy is disrupted by the multiplication of speakers (scheduled or not).
- o An inappropriate and embarrassing choice of stories about and characterizations of the deceased are not infrequently made.
- o The need of those in the assembly to return to work and other responsibilities, and the schedules of the parish, cemetery workers and military honor guards are not respected when the Funeral Liturgy is overly extended by Words of Remembrance.

The following norms are meant to assist pastors/administrators, pastoral staff and funeral directors to develop appropriate and clear practices in guiding those who speak in remembrance of the dead:

- 1) One person only speaks in the name of all when the Words of Remembrance occur at the Funeral Mass or Funeral Liturgy outside Mass.
- 2) These Words of Remembrance should be brief, no more than 5 minutes (one typed page, approximately 450 words). The speaker should be reminded that these words are within the good flow and dignity of the liturgy, and need to take into consideration the schedules of those who are part of this event.
- 3) The Words of Remembrance should be prepared beforehand, and ideally reviewed with the priest beforehand, to avoid undue length or embarrassing situations.
- 4) The proper time for the representative to speak at the Funeral Liturgy is:
 - o at a Funeral Mass: after the Prayer after Communion and before the Final Commendation (Cf. *OCF*, 170); (For pastoral reasons, the priest may instead ask you to offer the Words of Remembrance prior to the beginning of the Funeral Mass, before the Collect is prayed);
 - o at Funeral Liturgy Outside Mass: after the Lord’s Prayer and before the Final Commendation.

ADDENDUM 7:

GUIDELINES FOR PREPARING WORDS OF REMEMBRANCE

Thank you for accepting the responsibility of speaking Words of Remembrance on behalf of the family and friends of the deceased. Here are some points to guide you in the preparation of what you will say. Out of respect for the Church's prudential wisdom and teaching in this regard, please read and observe these guidelines carefully.

1. **You have been asked to offer "Words of Remembrance," not a eulogy.** A eulogy tends to tell the story of a person's whole life and accomplishments, and can become lengthy. Words of Remembrance provide briefly **some insight into the faith and Christian values of the deceased** as seen in one or two representative example from his/her life. The Words of Remembrance, then, become words of encouragement and comfort to those who are present.

2. Since they occur within the Church's worship of God and of prayer for the deceased and those who mourn his/her loss, the Words of Remembrance should be **no more than 5 minutes (a single type-written page, approximately 450 words)**. Keeping your remarks brief and to-the-point recognizes not only the integrity of the liturgy, but also the fact that people have often made a sacrifice to be present. Brevity is the kindest and most appreciated consideration you can give them.

3. There may be some in the congregation who did not know the deceased, but have come in support of the family. Therefore, **"inside" stories about the deceased may not be understood**. Save such remembrances for the more personal moments with the family, especially during the painful days and weeks after the funeral. The time for the Words of Remembrance is not a time for lengthy story-telling. Your comments should show respect and sensitivity for the deceased and those who are present to pray.

4. Before you begin to compose the Words of Remembrance **seek help from God by starting in prayer**, that you will be enabled to speak in a way worthy of the occasion. Ask suggestions from friends and family.

5. **Write out your remarks in full.** Writing out the complete text will insure that you stay within the time limitation. The priest, deacon or a member of the parish staff may be available to preview your remarks and make helpful suggestions. Rely on their judgment and experience.

6. **Rehearse your Words of Remembrance before a friend or family member.** If there are deep emotions that need to be dealt with, rehearsal is the time to express them. While a public display of emotion is understandable and sometimes laudable, copious tears and uncontrollable sobbing before the congregation will not be beneficial. The use of a written text is helpful.

7. Before the Funeral Liturgy begins, ask the priest, deacon or a member of the parish staff to show you exactly **where you are to speak**. Familiarize yourself with the location and, if possible, listen to yourself say a few words into the microphone.

8. The priest or deacon will introduce you at the proper time, so that you will know exactly when you are to come forward. **Approach the podium or lectern with great confidence.** To begin with expressions like "I'm not used to this sort of thing," or "I hope I can get through this," defeats you before you ever begin.

ADDENDUM 8

CONGREGATION FOR THE DOCTRINE OF THE FAITH

Instruction *Ad resurgendum cum Christo*
regarding the burial of the deceased and the
conservation of the ashes in the case of cremation

1. To rise with Christ, we must die with Christ: we must “be away from the body and at home with the Lord” (2 Corinthians 5:8). With the Instruction *Piam et Constantem* of 5 July 1963, the then Holy Office established that “all necessary measures must be taken to preserve the practice of reverently burying the faithful departed”, adding however that cremation is not “opposed per se to the Christian religion” and that no longer should the Sacraments and funeral rites be denied to those who have asked that they be cremated, under the condition that this choice has not been made through “a denial of Christian dogmas, the animosity of a secret society, or hatred of the Catholic religion and the Church.”^[1] Later this change in ecclesiastical discipline was incorporated into the *Code of Canon Law* (1983) and the *Code of Canons of Oriental Churches* (1990).

During the intervening years, the practice of cremation has notably increased in many countries, but simultaneously new ideas contrary to the Church’s faith have also become widespread. Having consulted the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments, the Pontifical Council for Legislative Texts and numerous Episcopal Conferences and Synods of Bishops of the Oriental Churches, the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith has deemed opportune the publication of a new Instruction, with the intention of underlining the doctrinal and pastoral reasons for the preference of the burial of the remains of the faithful and to set out norms pertaining to the conservation of ashes in the case of cremation.

2. 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 Corinthians 15:3-5).

Through his death and resurrection, Christ freed us from sin and gave us access to a new life, “so that as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life” (Romans 6:4). Furthermore, the risen Christ is the principle and source of our future resurrection: “Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who have fallen asleep [...] For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive” (1 Corinthians 15:20-22).

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” (*Colossians* 2:12). United with Christ by Baptism, we already truly participate in the life of the risen Christ (*Ephesians* 2:6). 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”.^[2] By death the soul is separated from the body, but in the resurrection God will give incorruptible life to our body, transformed by reunion with our soul. In our own day also, the Church is called to proclaim her faith in the resurrection: “The confidence of Christians is the resurrection of the dead; believing this we live”.^[3]

3. Following the most ancient Christian tradition, the Church insistently recommends that the bodies of the deceased be buried in cemeteries or other sacred places.^[4]

In memory of the death, burial and resurrection of the Lord, the mystery that illumines the Christian meaning of death,[5] burial is above all the most fitting way to express faith and hope in the resurrection of the body.[6]

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.[7]

By burying the bodies of the faithful, the Church confirms her faith in the resurrection of the body,[8] 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.[9] 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 and in which “as instruments and vessels the Spirit has carried out so many good works”.[10]

Tobias, the just, was praised for the merits he acquired in the sight of God for having buried the dead,[11] and the Church considers the burial of dead one of the corporal works of mercy.[12]

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, while at the same time fostering the veneration of martyrs and saints. Through the practice of burying the dead in cemeteries, in churches or their environs, Christian tradition has upheld the relationship between the living and the dead and has opposed any tendency to minimize, or relegate to the purely private sphere, the event of death and the meaning it has for Christians.

4. 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.[13]

The Church continues to prefer the practice of burying the bodies of the deceased, because this shows a greater esteem towards the deceased. Nevertheless, cremation is not prohibited, “unless it was chosen for reasons contrary to Christian doctrine”.[14]

In the absence of motives contrary to Christian doctrine, the Church, after the celebration of the funeral rite, accompanies the choice of cremation, providing the relevant liturgical and pastoral directives, and taking particular care to avoid every form of scandal or the appearance of religious indifferentism.

5. 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”.[15]

The reservation of the ashes of the departed in a sacred place ensures that they are not excluded from the prayers and remembrance of their family or the Christian community. It prevents the faithful departed from being forgotten, or their remains from being shown a lack of respect, which eventuality is possible, most especially once the immediately subsequent generation has too passed away. Also it prevents any unfitting or superstitious practices.

6. For the reasons given above, the conservation of the ashes of the departed in a domestic residence is not permitted. Only in grave and exceptional cases dependent on cultural conditions of a localized nature, may the Ordinary, in agreement with the Episcopal Conference or the Synod of Bishops of the Oriental Churches, concede permission for the conservation of the ashes of the departed in a domestic residence. Nonetheless, the ashes may not be divided among various family members and due respect must be maintained regarding the circumstances of such a conservation.

7. 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.

8. When the deceased notoriously has 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.^[16]

The Sovereign Pontiff Francis, in the Audience granted to the undersigned Cardinal Prefect on 18 March 2016, approved the present Instruction, adopted in the Ordinary Session of this Congregation on 2 March 2016, and ordered its publication.

Rome, from the Offices of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, 15 August 2016, the Solemnity of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary.

Gerhard Card. Müller

Prefect

+ Luis F. Ladaria, S.I.

Titular Archbishop of Thibica

Secretary

[1] AAS 56 (1964), 822-823.

[2] Roman Missal, *Preface I for the Dead*.

[3] Tertullian, *De Resurrectione carnis*, 1,1: CCL 2, 921.

[4] Cf. CIC, c. 1176, § 3, can. 1205; CCEO, c. 876, § 3; c. 868.

[5] Cf. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1681.

[6] Cf. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 2300.

[7] Cf. 1 Cor 15:42-44; *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1683.

[8] Cf. St. Augustine, *De cura pro mortuis gerenda*, 3, 5; CSEL 41, 628:

[9] Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Pastoral Constitution *Gaudium et Spes*, 14.

[10] St. Augustine, *De cura pro mortuis gerenda*, 3, 5; CSEL 41, 627.

[11] Cf. *Tobit* 2:9; 12:12.

[12] Cf. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 2300.

[13] Cf. Holy Office, Instruction *Piam et constantem*, 5 July 1963: AAS 56 (1964) 822.

[14] CIC, c. 1176 § 3; cf. CCEC, c. 876 § 3.

[15] *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 962.]

[16] CIC, c. 1184; CCEO, c.876, § 3.