

DIOCESAN POLICY REGARDING CREMATION

The funeral rites of the Catholic Church, which are governed by her liturgical laws, express her faith in the power of prayer, the sacredness of the human person and the reality of the eternal life promised to believers in the risen Lord.

Simply put, the funeral rites have three purposes:

1. Prayer for the departed
2. The honouring of their bodies
3. The giving of hope and consolation to the bereaved

The *Code of Canon Law* states: **A**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@ (canon 1176, '3).

In the tradition and attitude of the Church, it is clear that burying the bodies of the deceased is seen to be more in keeping with the truth that the bodies of the baptized are sacred, because they are temples of the Holy Spirit.

The Church looks to Jesus as the source of all grace and holiness. His own body is sacred and through baptism He consecrates the bodies of all who are **A**grafted@ into Him. Christian bodies are anointed in baptism, confirmation, holy orders and the sacrament of the sick. Jesus nourishes the bodies of believers with the Bread of Life, His own glorified body.

As His body was entombed to await His resurrection, so Christians= bodies are entombed to await their glorious rising with Him. It is in imitation of Him that Christian burial is for us the norm and the tradition.

Nevertheless, with permission of the diocese, Heavenly Rest Cemetery in Windsor has constructed a crematorium. This permission recognizes that cremation is permitted. Cremation is not, however, to be promoted by anyone acting in the name of the Church or its institutions.

When cremation is permitted the rites of the newly published the *Order of Christian Funerals* (Appendix IV, pages 431-433), approved by the Canadian Bishops, are to be followed with the following adaptations:

1. The Funeral Liturgy (celebrated in the presence of the body of the deceased) is to conclude with the Rite of Final Commendation and Farewell. After these concluding rites, the body is to be taken to the crematorium. The body may be accompanied by a formal procession, however, while it may be appropriate to lead those gathered in prayer, no Rites of Commendation or of Committal should be celebrated at this time. Once the remains have
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been prepared, the ashes are taken to the place of burial or interment and the Rite of Committal is celebrated. The cremated remains are never to be interred without the Rite of Committal lead by an appropriate minister. The appropriate minister of Rite of Committal, as described in *The Order of Christian Funerals*, is to be a priest or a duly-appointed pastoral minister.

2. Funeral liturgies in the presence of ashes may be celebrated only with the expressed permission of the Ordinary of the diocese. Each case will be judged on its own merit and permission may be granted for that occasion only. In cases where permission is granted, *The Order of Christian Funerals* is to be followed.

The Funeral Liturgy should conclude with the Rite of Commendation and Farewell in the Church. It should also be noted that when the Rite of Farewell is celebrated in the presence of ashes, the signs of farewell (holy water and incense) are not used. Once the Funeral Procession has reached the place in interment, the Rite of Committal is celebrated.

3. The Rite of Final Commendation and Farewell may be combined with the Rite of Committal only when no Funeral Liturgy has preceded interment. In this case, these Rites are to be celebrated at the place of burial or interment by an appropriate minister. The signs of farewell (holy water and incense) are not used.

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