



ARCHDIOCESE OF ST. LOUIS
Office of Sacred Worship

LITURGY NOTES

AT THE HOUR OF OUR DEATH

When someone passes away, the Catholic Church does not just offer comfort; it gives the hope of eternal life. A Catholic funeral is more than a ritual or a cultural practice; it is a sacred ceremony that expresses our belief in the Resurrection and God's ongoing mercy. It is built on Scripture, shaped by years of prayer, and filled with grace. The Catholic funeral liturgy stands as a profound expression of our faith, hope, and love.

At its heart, a Catholic funeral liturgy is a way to worship. It brings people together to commend the soul of the deceased to God, pray for their peace, and support those who are grieving. This is a communal time when the Church stands by her members in death, just as it does in life, with prayers that go beyond time.



The main parts of a Catholic funeral—the Vigil, the Funeral Mass, and the Committal—create a spiritual path. The Vigil allows for remembering the person in prayer. The Funeral Mass, which is the heart of our faith, connects the deceased to Christ's sacrifice. The Committal is when we return the body to the earth, holding on to hope for resurrection. These sacred practices remind us that death is not the end. For those who die in Christ, life is transformed, not ended.

The Church's funeral liturgy speaks this truth clearly, providing the grieving not just with comfort but with a sense of purpose, encouraging them to keep the faith alive, grounded in the hope of being reunited in God's kingdom. As we think about the importance of the Catholic funeral, let us deepen our appreciation for its spiritual meaning and care. It is vital for us to hold onto and value these rites, which reflect our belief in the Risen Christ and show the Church's ongoing love for her people—from birth, through death, and into eternal life.

CREMATION AND THE CATHOLIC CHURCH

By: Father Nicholas Smith, Director of the Office of Sacred Worship

Cremation has ancient roots. Long before Christianity, cremation was a common practice in Greek and Roman civilizations. For these cultures, cremation was both practical and symbolic. In other words, cremation was a way of honoring the dead, freeing the soul, and conserving burial space. It was not uncommon to see cremains (ashes) being stored in rather ornate urns or scattered on rivers or fields. However, with the rise of Christianity, a shift began to occur.



Early Christians, many of whom were Jewish, followed the Jewish practice of burial, and this

tradition was followed in the Church. For the early Christians, cremation gave rise to various theological concerns. Central to the Christian faith is the belief in the resurrection of the body, which is based on the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Therefore, body burial was seen not just as a tradition, but as a profound statement of faith in the life to come. So, the early Church adopted body burial as the normative practice and rejected cremation, which was often associated with pagan rites.

As Christianity spread, so did the emphasis on body burial. By the Middle Ages, the Catholic Church had formally opposed cremation because it was viewed as a violation of the body and a rejection of the belief in the resurrection of the body. As noted above, body burial was based on the belief of the sanctity of the body created in God's image, and the hope of the resurrection at the Last Judgment. There were exceptions to this rule, like plague outbreaks when cremation was deemed necessary for public health, but the general rule against cremation persisted.

Cremation was not just discouraged, it was forbidden. To cremate a body could be seen as an act of denying the resurrection. In times of persecution, cremation was sometimes used by enemies of the Church as a deliberate act of defiance, thereby making the Church's position even more resolute.

With the 19th century came urbanization, overcrowded cemeteries, and changing public health ideas, which resulted in a rise of secular cremation across both Europe and the Americas. Despite this development, the Church remained firm in its opposition to cremation because She was worried that these new reasons for cremation might carry with them an implicit rejection of Christian doctrine. Yet, the conversation had begun, and the Church was listening.

A turning point occurred in 1963 when the Church's stance on cremation began to shift, following the Second Vatican Council, which led to a more relaxed approach. Under Pope Saint Paul VI, the Vatican lifted the formal ban on cremation. Now, cremation for Catholics was permitted, as long as it was not chosen as a rejection of the belief in the resurrection of the dead.

This was a significant moment as the Church acknowledged the practical reasons behind cremation and began to guide the Catholic faithful on how it can be done in such a way that it aligned with Christian values.

In 1983, the new *Code of Canon Law* reaffirmed that cremation was allowed but emphasized that body burial remained the preferred method of caring for a deceased person.

On August 15, 1997, the US Bishops approved an appendix for cremation in the *Order of Christian Funerals*. While granting permission for cremation, the appendix clearly states the Church's position: "Although cremation is now permitted by the Church, it does not hold the same value as the burial of the body. The Church clearly prefers and urges the presence of the deceased's body for the funeral rites, as this presence better expresses the values affirmed by the Church in those rites."

Consequently, if a person chooses cremation, the Church, as noted above, allows it, but does not prefer it. The choice to cremate should not be viewed simply as a matter of personal choice. The Church strongly encourages the presence of the deceased's body at the funeral. Even in situations when cremation is selected, the Church prefers that it occurs after the funeral Mass or service.

Pope Francis, in 2016, further clarified the use of cremation in the Catholic Church in the Instruction *AD resurgendum cum Christo* (To Rise with Christ). Here, Catholics were reminded that ashes should be treated with the same reverence given to the body; in other words, kept in a sacred place like a cemetery or columbarium, and that the ashes are not to be scattered, divided, or kept at home. These practices ensure that even with cremation, the dignity of the body is to be respected.

Today, cremation is accepted by the Catholic Church. Many people opt for its use for various economic, environmental, and personal reasons. The Church supports its use provided it is done with respect and in accordance with Church teaching.

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 Cor 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 Cor 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” (Rm 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 Cor 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” (Col 2:12). United with Christ by Baptism, we already truly participate in the life of the risen Christ (cf. Eph 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.

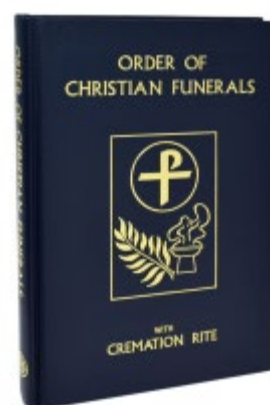
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Questions Concerning Cremation, the Funeral Liturgy, and the Catholic Church

The Church and Cremation

As a Catholic may I be cremated?

Yes. The Church's definite preference is for burial of the body. However, since 1963 cremation has been permitted, although the cremated remains were not allowed to be present during the funeral mass. In 1997 the Vatican gave the bishops of the United States permission to allow the celebration of the funeral mass with the cremated remains present, provided the local bishop permits it. The Archdiocese of St. Louis allows for the cremated remains to be present at the funeral mass.



Do I need to ask permission to be cremated?

No, but it is a good idea to discuss your reasons with your parish priest. For a funeral mass with cremated remains present, the local bishop needs to give his permission. See above.

Cremation

When should cremation take place?

The Church *strongly* prefers that cremation take place *after* the full funeral liturgy with the body. The presence of the body most clearly brings to mind the life and death of the person and better expressed the values that the Church affirms in its rites.

This is the body once washed in Baptism, anointed with the oil of salvation, and fed with the Bread of Life. This is the body whose hands clothed the poor and embraced the sorrowing....Thus, the Church's reverence and care for the body grows out of a reverence and concern for the person whom the Church now commends to the care of God....However, when

circumstances prevent the presence of the body at the funeral liturgy...it is appropriate that the cremated remains of the body be present for the full course of the funeral rites, including the Vigil for the Deceased, the Funeral Liturgy, and the Rite of Committal. The funeral liturgy should always be celebrated in a church (Reflections on the Body, Cremation, and Catholic Funeral Rites, Bishops' Committee on the Liturgy).

Is it necessary to embalm?

When cremation follows the funeral liturgy, embalming is usually necessary. When cremation is to follow soon after death, embalming is not necessary. Each state has its own regulations in this matter, but generally the rule is that a deceased body that is not buried or cremated within 24 or 48 hours is to be embalmed or refrigerated. However, simple embalming and the use of a cremation casket need not involve excessive costs.

Is it necessary to purchase a casket?

No, it is not necessary to purchase a casket for cremation. The only thing required is a simple container in which the body can be transported and placed in the cremation chamber. If you choose to have the body present for Mass, with cremation to follow, rental is an option. Many funeral directors offer regular caskets for rent, as well as the special cremation or shell caskets which you may purchase.

Careful Handling and Proper Interment of Cremated Remains

What is the proper container for cremated remains?

Appropriate, worthy containers (not necessarily expensive) such as a classic urn are proper for the cremated remains. At the present time the U.S. Bishop's Committee on Divine Worship has determined only what is *NOT* a proper container. Although jewelry, dishes, statuary, and space capsules are examples of designer containers now being offered, they are *unacceptable* in Catholic funeral practice. It is also *unacceptable* to have cremated remains made into jewelry, dishes, and the like.

How are cremated remains transported?

Transportation of cremated remains is a matter of personal choice. Individuals personally carrying a deceased person's ashes will often have the added responsibility of packing and transporting the urn. Using the principle of respect for the body, you may wrap the container of cremated remains with the possibility of sending it as accompanying baggage or take it along as carry-on luggage. Ask the airline office or the state's Department of Public Health for specific information about your region of travel before preparing the cremated remains for transport by air. Where no legal regulations exist regarding transport of cremated remains, most cremationists ship cremated remains in a standard shipping container by the U.S. Mail or other common carriers.

Must cremated remains be buried/entombed?

Yes. Respectful final disposition of cremated remains involves interment or entombment. Burial options include a family grave in a cemetery marked with a traditional memorial stone or an urn garden, a special section in a cemetery with small, pre-dug graves for urns.

What is a columbarium?

A common practice is the entombment of the cremated remains in a columbarium. It is an arrangement of niches, either in a mausoleum, or a room or wall into which an urn or other worthy vessel is placed for permanent memorial.

May I scatter the cremated remains?

NO. 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 (*Order of Christian Funerals, Appendix II, #417*). Burial at sea of cremated remains differs from scattering. An appropriate and worthy container, heavy enough to be sent to its final resting place, may be dropped into the sea (*See Order of*

Christian Funerals, #406.4). Please consult your government for environmental regulations.

May anything be added to cremated remains such as the cremated remains of other persons, pets, other objects?

The principle of respect for the cremated remains of a deceased Christian embraces the deeper belief in the individuality of each baptized person before God. Throughout history, the mingling of remains has never been an accepted practice, except in extraordinary circumstances.

Pre-death Instructions

Who decides if I am cremated?

In most cases you make the decision to be cremated. However, your survivors may decide to have you cremated, generally due to special family circumstances, but rarely against your will.

How do I make my wishes known?

If you desire that your body be cremated you can make those wishes known in your will and in documents designed to help plan and prepare your funeral.

Must I honor my parent's or spouse's wish to cremate them?

Out of respect for loved ones, you will want to do all you can to carry out the wishes of the deceased concerning funeral services provided they are in keeping with Church practice. Yes, you must always keep in mind the therapeutic value to the family of celebrating the full funeral liturgy with the body present. This may significantly outweigh your reasons for cremation before the funeral liturgy.

The Funeral Rituals

What funeral rites are celebrated when a person is cremated?

The Church *strongly* prefers that cremation take place *after* the full funeral liturgy with the body. However, when that is not possible, all the usual rites which are celebrated with a body present may also be celebrated in the presence of the cremated remains. In an appendix to the *Order of Christian Funerals*, the United States bishops have included prayers to be used when the cremated remains of a loved one are present in church. (*Order of Christian Funerals, Appendix II #432-438*)

The following rituals may be celebrated:

- Prayers After Death
- Gathering in the Presence of the Body
- Vigil for the Deceased
- Funeral Mass or Funeral Liturgy Outside Mass
- Rite of Committal

During the liturgies, the cremated remains are treated with the same dignity and respect as the body.

Prayers After Death

This ritual is used immediately after death. The presence of the minister, the readings, and the prayers can be of great comfort to the family. (*Order of Christian Funerals, #101-108*)

Gathering in the Presence of the Body

This ritual can also be of great comfort to family members and friends. It allows for a time of simple prayer and shared silence. (*Order of Christian Funerals, #109-118*)

Vigil for the Deceased

If cremation has already taken place, friends and family may still gather to pray. While it has been a tradition to pray the rosary in some regions, The Vigil for the Deceased is a Liturgy of the

Word service, which includes prayer for the deceased and recognition of his/her Christian life. (*Order of Christian Funerals*, #54-97)

Funeral Mass

Should I schedule a funeral Mass before or after cremation?

The Church *strongly* prefers cremation *after* the Funeral Mass. However, if it is not possible for the body to be present at the Funeral Mass, an indult has been granted by the Holy See which provides for the celebration of the Mass with the cremated remains in church.

Do I need permission to have cremated remains in church (for the funeral liturgy)?

The indult granting the diocesan bishops of the United States authority to permit a funeral liturgy in the presence of cremated remains (in place of the body) requires two things. First, the diocesan bishop must authorize this practice in his diocese. Second, each individual case requires permission. Your pastor will need to seek permission for you.

What length of time is there between death, cremation and the funeral Mass?

The answer to this question depends on various factors, just as in the case of funerals with the body. The place of death, the location of the crematory, scheduling a time for cremation, the schedule at the parish church, and other circumstances impact the timing. Once all arrangements have been made, you should generally allow at least one day between death and the celebration of the funeral liturgy.

What happens at the Funeral Mass with cremated remains?

A journey which began at baptism comes to conclusion as we enter into eternal life. Significant attention should be given to the primary symbols of the Catholic funeral liturgy, as stated in the *Order of Christian Funerals* and its commentaries. The paschal candle and sprinkling with holy water are primary symbols of baptism and should be used during the Funeral Mass. However, the pall is not used. Photos and other mementos may be used at the vigil, but are not appropriate for the Mass. During the Mass, the cremated remains should be treated with the same dignity and respect as the body. They are to be sealed in a *worthy vessel*. They may be carried in procession and/or placed on a table where the casket normally would be with the Easter candle nearby.

The Rite of Committal

The body is always laid to rest with solemnity and dignity. So too, the *Order of Christian Funerals* provides for the interment of cremated remains (*Order of Christian Funerals*, Appendix II #438).

This material was taken from the pamphlet entitled *Questions Concerning Cremation, the Funeral Liturgy, and the Catholic Church*, and is a collaborative effort of the Federation of Diocesan Liturgical Commissions and the Worship Offices of Michigan and Ohio in consultation with Reverend Richard Rutherford.

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What Happens to Cremated Remains After the Funeral Liturgy?

The Catholic Church teaches that cremated remains (cremains) should be buried or entombed in a sacred place (i.e., a Catholic cemetery or another properly blessed burial place) out of respect for the body and the hope of the resurrection. The Church *discourages* long-term retention of cremains in private homes or scattering of ashes (See Pope Francis' 2016 Instruction entitled *Ad resurgendum cum Christo*).

If a Catholic is cremated before the Funeral Mass and the cremains are present at the Mass, then the following is to be followed:

- Ideally, the burial or committal of the cremains should take place immediately after the Funeral Mass, or later that same day, if possible.
- If scheduling or travel logistics make that impractical, the burial should be done as soon as reasonably possible, typically with a few days after the Funeral Mass.
- Delaying the burial unnecessarily (e.g., keeping the urn at home for an extended period of time) is not in line with Catholic teaching.

The Church provides the Rite of Committal, which should be celebrated at the place of burial or entombment. It is a continuation of the Funeral Liturgy and serves as the final act of commendation to God and commitment to the earth.

In summary:

- Burial of cremains should happen immediately after the Funeral Mass or very shortly thereafter (a few days, not years).
- The cremains must be treated with the same respect as a full body: placed in a worthy container, interred in sacred ground, and never scattered or divided.

Can a person keep a small portion of the cremated remains in a special place?

Replying to a concern about “problems arising from the increasing number of people desiring to cremate the bodies of the deceased and scatter their ashes,” the Vatican Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith (2023) has updated a rule mandating that the ashes of the deceased be preserved in a consecrated place. However, it also said family members could request that, with the permission of ecclesiastical authority, a small part of the ashes be kept in a sacred place of significance to the deceased person. This statement was given by then Cardinal-elect Victor Manuel Fernández, prefect for the Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith.

In the Archdiocese of St. Louis, the decision has been made that this is not an acceptable practice. It remains the current policy of the archdiocese that ashes cannot be separated.

FROM CATHOLIC CEMETERIES

Please see information provided by Catholic Cemeteries offering guidance but ground burials, above ground burials, and fully body-crypts. Click [HERE](#) to visit Catholic Cemeteries website for more information.



GROUND BURIALS

URNS

- . Moldable bag needed
- . Outside container is optional
- . If an urn vault is used (>10x10x10) a full burial space is required

FULL BODY

- . No outer container is required (casket only)
- . If a concrete box is used, a regular depth burial space is required
- . A shroud or a wicker basket are allowed
- . Green burial is allowed

ABOVE GROUND BURIALS

URNS

- . An ossuary is available at Resurrection Cemetery a moldable bag is required
- . Niches are available for purchase, a moldable bag, or an urn not exceeding 10x10x10 is allowed to be placed in a niche.
- . An urn is allowed to be placed in a casket along with the full body for entombment in a crypt
- . Urns can be placed in a crypt in lieu of a full body entombment

FULL BODY-CRYPTS

- . Casket only
- . Outer containers are not allowed

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

- . **Moldable:** a medium weight plastic bag that can be formed or fitted to a particular dimension.
- . **Outside container:** either a steel, concrete or heavy-duty plastic receptacle in which a casket or urn is placed
- . **Ossuary:** a large above ground receptacle that holds many particular individual cremains
- . **Niche:** an above ground structure that hold individual urns
- . **Green Burial:** a burial method that minimizes environmental impact, such as embalming fluid. These burials make use of biodegradable elements

LEAVING YOUR PERSONAL LEGACY: PLANNING TESTAMENTARY GIFTS TO SUSTAIN THE CHURCH’S MISSION

By: Michael W. Weisbrod, Senior Gift Planning Officer, Roman Catholic Foundation of Eastern Missouri

As faithful stewards of God’s blessings, we are called to prayerfully consider not only how we live, but also how we leave a lasting impact when we are called home to the Lord. One of the most meaningful ways to express our gratitude for God’s abundant gifts is through thoughtful estate planning that ensures the Church’s mission continues to flourish for generations to come.

When we reflect on the words of Psalm 24:1 “The earth is the Lord’s, and everything in it, the world, and all who live in it”, we are reminded that all we possess belongs to God. As such, planning a testamentary gift is an act of faith, love, and trust in God’s providence. A testamentary gift, which is one made through your will, trust, or other estate planning instrument can serve as a profound final statement of your lifelong devotion. Whether large or small, such gifts can provide enduring support for your parish, our archdiocese, Catholic schools, or ministries that have shaped your spiritual journey.

There are several ways to structure these gifts:

Bequests in a Will or Trust: You may designate a specific amount, a percentage of your estate, or a particular asset (such as securities or personal property) to benefit your favorite Catholic organizations. This is one of the most common and flexible ways to support Catholic causes.

Beneficiary Designations: Life insurance policies, retirement accounts (like IRAs or 401(k)s), and annuities allow you to name the Church or a specific Catholic ministry as a beneficiary. This



can often be done with a simple form and may have favorable tax implications for your heirs.

Gifts of Real Estate or Other Assets: A home, farmland, or other real property can become part of your legacy of faith. Such gifts, when thoughtfully planned, can make a transformational difference to Catholic organizations while potentially offering benefits to your estate.

Planning a testamentary gift is not just a legal or financial exercise, it is a spiritual act. We encourage Catholics to approach this discernment with prayer, seeking the guidance of the Holy Spirit in deciding how best to allocate the resources God has entrusted to them. Conversations with family, your pastor, the Roman Catholic Foundation, and trusted advisors are important steps in this process.

Through your generosity, you help ensure that the Church continues to provide the sacraments, proclaim the Gospel, educate our youth, care for the poor, and defend the dignity of human life. Your gift becomes a living testimony of faith, offering hope and strength to future generations. Additionally, your gift may be the inspiration needed for a friend or family member to follow your lead! A well-planned testamentary gift allows you to give joyfully, confident that your faith will bear fruit long after your lifetime.

Next Steps

If you feel called to include the Church in your estate plans, speak with your pastor or the Roman Catholic Foundation. These conversations can help you align your intentions with the needs of the Church and ensure your gift is structured in a way that reflects your values and wishes. Let us each consider how we can leave a legacy that proclaims: "I have kept the faith" (2 Timothy 4:7). Through prayerful planning, may our final act on this earth be one that glorifies God and sustains His Church.

Michael Weisbrod
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Roman Catholic Foundation
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THE FINAL GIFT

By: Cindy Huger

We are all sadly aware of the decrease in the number of Funeral Masses. Obituaries will state that the deceased was "baptized into the Hope of the Resurrection" and then instead of the Funeral Mass there is a "celebration of life," or a service at the funeral parlor. Daily Mass-goers are not given a funeral Mass when they die; instead, family members who may have strayed from the Faith just don't know what to do.

From the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, #1371 states that The Eucharistic sacrifice is also offered for the faithful departed who 'have died in Christ but are not yet wholly purified' so that they may be able to enter into the light and peace of Christ.

Planning end-of-life and funeral arrangements (beyond pre-paying for the plot and funeral) should be done now. This is that final gift you can give to your family, that opportunity of encounter of the Lord in the Eucharist. Grief is one of the most beautiful opportunities of evangelization, healing and hope. Left undone, grief can be a time of despair, guilt, fear and distance from God's Mercy. It's time to make plans to make plans.

If your parish is looking to start a Catholic Grief Support group and does not know how to begin contact me. Formal training is available and recommended.

Contact Information: 314-369-8052 or cgrunik@ymail.com

Click [HERE](#) for information on the upcoming Final Gift Seminar

From Death to Life



Catholic Funeral & Cemetery Planning Workbook

CATHOLIC FUNERAL PLANNING GUIDE

Now available for download, this helpful guide offers step-by-step support for planning a Catholic funeral, whether for personal use or parish preparation. It includes liturgical options, scripture readings, and music suggestions to assist families in honoring their loved ones with reverence and faith. **Please note: The Office of Sacred Worship logo must remain intact on all copies.** Click [HERE](#) to download.

MUSIC



Announcing Choir Auditions at the Cathedral Basilica of St. Louis

Join the Cathedral Choir, Schola Cantorum, or Archdiocesan Choir

The Cathedral Basilica of St. Louis invites singers to audition for three of its sacred music ensembles: the **Cathedral Choir**, the **Cathedral Schola Cantorum**, and the **Archdiocesan Choir**. These choirs offer opportunities for vocalists of all backgrounds to participate in the vibrant musical life of the Cathedral and the Archdiocese. **Auditions are required** to participate in any of the three choirs.

Audition Dates:

- **Tuesday, July 8** | 4:00–7:00 p.m.
- **Wednesday, July 9** | 4:00–7:00 p.m.

Location:

St. Cecilia Chapel
(Lower Level of the Cathedral Basilica)
4431 Lindell Blvd., St. Louis, MO 63108

Cathedral Choir

The Cathedral Choir sings regularly at the **10:00 a.m. Sunday Mass**, as well as for various solemnities and major liturgical celebrations. This choir is geared toward **volunteer parishioners** and is ideal for those who wish to contribute more fully to the liturgical life of the Cathedral.

- **Rehearsals:** Wednesdays, 7:00–9:00 p.m. in St. Cecilia Chapel
- **Membership Requirements:** A healthy voice, good musical ear, choral experience, and a commitment to rehearsals and the liturgical schedule

- **Audition is required**

Cathedral Schola Cantorum

The Schola Cantorum is the cathedral's professional chamber ensemble in residence and specializes in the Church's most treasured sacred music. Repertoire styles include **Gregorian chant** and Renaissance polyphony from the **16th and 17th centuries**.

- The Schola Cantorum sings in collaboration with the Cathedral Choir at weekly Sunday 10:00 AM Mass, Archdiocesan liturgies, and concerts.
- **Rehearsals:** Wednesdays, 7:00–9:00 p.m. in St. Cecilia Chapel
- A classical or baroque sacred aria is required for consideration into this ensemble. Repertoire choices must be approved by the director prior to the audition.

Archdiocesan Choir

For those who are **not parishioners of the Cathedral**, participation in the **Archdiocesan Choir** is warmly encouraged. This choir serves a broader role in the life of the Archdiocese and is composed of singers from parishes throughout the region.

- The Cathedral Choir sings in collaboration with the Archdiocesan Choir.
- Participates in many of the **major Archdiocesan celebrations** and select concerts
- **Rehearsals:** Tuesdays, 7:00–9:00 p.m. in St. Cecilia Chapel
- **Encouraged Participants:** Parish music directors, cantors, and choir members are especially invited to consider this opportunity for fostering greater musical and spiritual community across the Archdiocese.

Audition Information:

For more information regarding audition materials and requirements, or to schedule your audition, please visit:

<https://cathedralstl.org/about-basilica/sacred-music>

Or email: music@cathedralstl.org

RECLAMATION



The Reclamation Center of the Archdiocese of Saint Louis collects, cares for, and repurposes religious and liturgical items no longer in use. It seeks to give these items new life in the church, specifically in chapels, agencies, schools, retreat centers, and with the clergy. The Reclamation Center has many items to help us in our prayer and faith life. Please visit our website at:

<https://www.archstl.org/about/offices-and-agencies/worship-office-of-reclamation-center/>

CHRISTIAN INITIATION



Please contact Joe Milner (JoeMilner@archstl.org) with any questions about Christian Initiation.



ARCHDIOCESE OF ST. LOUIS
Office of Sacred Worship

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www.archstl.org/sacred-worship

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