

ON THE FUNERAL RITES OF ASHES

My beloved parishioners, it is my sincere observation [perhaps, that of others too] that some Christians are unaware on the funeral rites of ashes. After prayerful thoughts and without any prejudice, I considered it very important to put down these points for the purpose of proper catechesis. This is as contained in the "Order of Christian Funerals," approved by the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops and subsequently confirmed by the Congregation for Divine Worship for use in Canada.

CREMATION

The full celebration of the Christian funeral consists of three principal rites;

- i. Vigil for the Deceased
- ii. Funeral Liturgy
- iii. And the Rite of Committal

Whenever possible, the celebration of all three rites in the presence of the body of the deceased is recommended.

The Christian belief in eternal life and the resurrection of the body has traditionally found expression in the care taken to prepare the bodies of the deceased for burial. The prayers and gestures of the funeral rites likewise affirm the Church's reverence for the bodies of its deceased members as temples of the life-giving Spirit. The longstanding practice of burying the body of the deceased in a grave or tomb in memory of Jesus whose own body was placed in a tomb continues to be encouraged as a sign of Christian faith.

However, Christian funeral rites may also be celebrated for persons who choose to have their bodies cremated, unless it is evident that they have acted for reasons which are contrary to the Christian way of life. The ashes of the deceased should be reverently buried or entombed in a place reserved for the burial of the dead. Liturgical rites should not accompany any method of disposal of the ashes which is not in harmony with the Christian tradition.

CREMATION AFTER FUNERAL LITURGY

It recommended that cremation takes place following the funeral liturgy. In this case, the "Vigil for the Deceased" and related rites and prayers are celebrated as they are provided in the ritual.

FUNERAL LITURGY IN THE PRESENCE OF THE ASHES

By the virtue of an indult granted by the Congregation for Divine worship (prot. no. 99/18, December 3, 1984) the celebration of the funeral liturgy – including the Eucharist – in the presence of the ashes of the deceased is permitted in Canada under the following conditions:

1. that the cremation is not inspired by motives contrary to Christian teaching, according to the Code of Canon Law, Canon 1176, 3;
2. that each ordinary will judge whether it is pastorally proper to celebrate the liturgy for the dead, including the Eucharist, with the ashes present, taking into account the concrete circumstances in each case, with respect for the spirit and content of the current canonical norms.

When the ashes are present during the funeral liturgy;

- i. A small table covered with white cloth is to be prepared in front of the altar in a suitable place [at the left hand side facing the altar in St. Isidore's Church].
- ii. The ashes, in a worthy vessel, are placed there before the liturgy.
- iii. The ashes should not be placed on or near the altar.
- iv. The place chosen for them should be distinct from the place the body of the deceased usually occupies during the funeral liturgy.
- v. The paschal candle is not used.
- vi. Following the prayer after communion, the rite of final commendation takes place.
- vii. The signs of farewell, [that is, holy water and incense] are omitted.
- viii. The alternate form of the dismissal is used.

In conclusion, with a deep sense of obedience to the Holy Mother the Church, I pray that we follow the given rites, until inspired by the Holy Spirit the competent authorities see the necessity of enriching them. Meanwhile, I am very willing to answer your questions should some confusion still persist.

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