

THE FUNERAL RITES OF THE CHURCH

CREMATION

A Postscript

WHAT TO DO IF YOU POSSESS CREMATED REMAINS

Unfortunately many Catholic people have not been properly formed regarding the proper way to care for the cremated remains of their loved ones. Because of this they might find themselves with the cremated remains in their possession. What should they do if they have since found out that it is not proper to keep the remains with them? First of all they should contact their parish priest and explain to him that they were unaware of the Church's teaching on the proper disposal of cremated remains. The priest will help them to decide how best to inter the cremated remains. Depending on the regulations of the cemetery it is often allowable to bury cremated remains on top of another grave. Cemeteries also might have a designated area specifically for cremated remains. Some cemeteries provide a columbarium for the interment of cremated remains. Some cemeteries have mausoleums that provide space for the interment of the cremated remains. Once the arrangements have been made with the priest and the cemetery the family will gather at the cemetery and the priest will pray the prayers of final commendation at the place of interment. With the proper interment of the cremated remains the funeral rites of the Catholic Church have been completed.

WHAT IF THE CREMATED REMAINS WERE SCATTERED

If a Catholic had scattered the cremated remains of their loved one without the knowledge that this practice was opposed to the Catholic faith, there is obviously no way that this can be reversed. Hopefully the Catholic who scattered the cremated remains of their loved one did not do so out of a willful defiance to the Church's teachings. If they did then they should confess this as a sin to their parish priest. Once a person has been enlightened by the truth of the Catholic faith they are bound from that day forward to live their life differently. Even though the cremated remains have been scattered and there is no grave to visit the family of the deceased should never forget to remember their deceased loved one in their prayers. In the future they should make sure that the practice of scattering cremated remains ceases and that they help others in their family to understand the Church's teaching on the cremation and the funeral rites of the Catholic Church.

CREMATION IS ALLOWED BUT NOT PREFERRED

Although the Catholic Church now allows for the cremation of her members, this does not mean that she prefers cremation. The Church will always hold up the ancient practice of the burial of the intact body because it follows the pattern of Christ and the nearly two thousand years of Christian burial practice. If

cremation is chosen by the family or by the deceased person them self they must follow the teaching of the Catholic Church regarding the proper internment of the cremated remains. If at all possible cremation should occur after the body has been brought to the parish church for the Funeral Mass. If this is not possible the cremated remains are to be treated with the same respect and dignity as the embalmed body.

Fr. Tim