

Pastoral Letter

2017-01

My Dear People of God in the Diocese of Novaliches:

Since time immemorial, even during the earliest Christian period, the practice of reverently burying the dead existed. However since 5 July 1963, the Holy office has established that **Cremation** is not “opposed per se to the Christian religion” and has taken out the refusal of the Sacrament and Christian burial to those who asked to be cremated unless this choice is motivated by a denial of our belief in resurrection of the body or by animosity/hatred of the Church and the Christian religion (CIC 1176 § 3, CIC 1983). Therefore, **the practice of Christian Burial in a cemetery or another sacred place is to be preferred over Cremation.**

The Church raises no doctrinal objections to the practice of Cremation since cremation of the body does not affect the soul, nor does it prevent God, in His omnipotence, from raising-up the deceased body to new life.

When Cremation, however, is chosen for legitimate reasons (sanitary, social, economic), the following are to be observed:

1. The ashes must still be laid in a sacred place; that is, in a cemetery or, in certain cases, in a church or area, set aside for this purpose, and so dedicated by the competent ecclesiastical authority.
2. The conservation of the ashes of the departed **in a domestic residence is not permitted.** Except in grave and exceptional cases of cultural nature, may the Bishop in agreement with the Episcopal Conference permit this. Nonetheless, the ashes may not be divided among various family members and due respect must be maintained regarding such a conservation.
3. To avoid any appearance of pantheism, naturalism, or nihilism, it is not permitted to scatter the ashes of the faithful departed in air, or land, at sea, or in some other way, nor may they be preserved in mementos, pieces of jewelry or other objects.
4. When the deceased notoriously has requested cremation and the scattering of their ashes for reasons contrary to the Christian Faith, Christian funeral must be denied according to the norm of the law (c. 1184 CIC).

This Pastoral Letter completes the previous Circular 2015-07 on the same subject and needs to be read in all Masses of Ash Wednesday on 1 March 2017.

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Bishop