

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

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May Catholics be cremated?

Yes. In May 1963, the Vatican's Holy Office (now the Congregation of the Doctrine of Faith) lifted the prohibition forbidding Catholics to choose cremation. This permission was incorporated into the revised Code of Canon Law of 1983 (Canon # 1176), as well as into the Order of Christian Funerals. It then became standard practice to celebrate the funeral liturgies with the body and then take the body to the crematorium. Most recently the bishops of the United States and Holy See have authorized the celebration of a Catholic funeral liturgy with the cremated remains when the body is cremated before the funeral.

The Church encourages placement of the cremated remains in a final resting place.

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Canon Law on Cremation

Can. 117 S 1 - Christ's faithful who have died are to be given a Church funeral according to the norms of law.

S2 - Church funerals are to be celebrated according to the norms of the liturgical books. In these funeral rites the Church prays for the spiritual support of the dead, it honors their bodies, and at the same time it brings to the living the comfort of hope.

S3 - The Church earnestly recommends that the pious customs of burial be retained; but it does not forbid cremation, unless it is chosen for reasons that are contrary to Christian teaching.

A common practice is the entombment of the cremated remains in a "columbarium".

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Why have a Columbarium? Did the Church change its practices?

The Church has traditionally been the natural repository and final resting place of deceased members of the Christian community. Burial within the church itself or in the adjacent churchyard was once common practice.

The amount of land necessary for a burial ground is no longer available to most churches and a myriad of laws and regulations make it extremely difficult to establish a burial site. In recent years, cremation with interment of the cremated remains, rather than burial, has become more common. In this way, the remains of the deceased can remain at the church that played such an important part in their lives. Also, many people are turning to cremation as an economical, dignified way to address the rising cost of funerals.

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Cremation vs Burial

2012

The decision between cremating and burying loved ones remains a very personal one in the United States. Most people don't even like to discuss their plans for their final resting place until their later years. Even then, it comes down to finances, personal preferences and religious beliefs.

Studies show cremation is on the rise. In 2010, the cremation rate was over 40 percent. This number has risen steadily in the past several decades. The reasons for which people gravitate toward cremation are also gaining importance. Let's have a look at some determining factors that help explain why people choose cremation over burial.

Cost - According to the 2012 Cremation Association of North America annual report, money was a leading reason people chose cremations over burial. Although there are cases where cremation can be more expensive depending on the services and products desired by the family, in general cremation is cheaper than burial.

The national average for burial is \$7,300 (including embalming, casket, vault and other commonly requested services), whereas the national average for a cremation is only \$1,650.

Burial – Burial costs typically include a casket, liner, rental costs of funeral home, embalming, grave site, printed items, death certificate, cemetery proceedings and clergy. It does not include gravesite, burial vault and headstone/grave marker.

Cremation – Typically, cremation costs include the cremation process and a basic urn. Similar to traditional funerals, families can choose how elaborate they want the process to be. Cremated remains are present at the funeral Mass in the ossuary, which is placed where a coffin would be.

Location – Nevada leads the nation with the highest percentage of cremations at 72 percent. Other states with high percentages of cremations are Washington, Hawaii, Oregon, Montana, Arizona, Maine and Colorado. Pacific states lead the country in highest cremations per death. South Atlantic states are at the low end. In 2011, the rate for Texas was 32 percent and 56 percent in California.

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Americans Increasingly Choose Cremation

In 2006, 34% of deaths used Cremation as the final disposition option. This compares to 1% of all deaths a hundred years ago. The rate of cremation in the US continues to climb and is expected to reach 52% in 2025.

What are the factors that contribute to this trend?

- More religions are accepting cremation.
- Many people do not feel the need to preserve their body.
- Some people dislike the idea of being buried.
- Cost considerations.
- Cremation is very simple, especially “direct cremation” in which the body goes directly to the crematorium without embalming and viewing.
- People are increasingly less traditional.
- People are increasingly planning their own disposition.
- People are increasingly individualizing their memorials.
- Cremation removes the time constraint of full body burial.
- Cremation allows remains to be easily transported to a remote location.
- Fewer people have reserved spaces in family burial plots.
- Crematoriums have used technology to considerably reduce emissions.
- More burial grounds are offering columbariums and ground vaults.

Probably one of the most important factors in this trend is the social affirmation. Cremation becomes more acceptable as more people choose it. Basically, people know that others have researched cremation prior to choosing it. People may also factor that society finds cremation acceptable.

On average, cremation burials are 20-25% of casket burials. The additional cost of casket burials is due to multiple factors. Casket burials:

- Involve more parts, like markers, marker bases, liners, vaults, etc.
- Involve costlier parts, like a casket.
- Involve more transportation.
- Require heavy equipment: ex.: backhoe, lift, etc.
- Traditionally involve a Funeral Home, which typically charges more than a nonprofit.
- Traditionally involve a viewing, which has a lot of associated cost.
- Often involve a funeral package, which provides more services.

Funeral Cost

City	Low	High
Atlanta	\$3,890	\$11,595
Baltimore	\$3,170	\$7,995
Boston	\$3,650	\$8,795
Chicago	\$4,060	\$9,675
Houston	\$2,025	\$10,020
Nashville	\$2,945	\$8,460

Burial Plot

Plot average nationwide - \$2,000 to \$4,500

Engraved headstone - \$500 and up

Funeral and Burial costs are added to arrive at the total cost.

Note that these costs are per person.

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What is a Columbarium?

A Columbarium is a group of niches, typically within a wall of brick, stone, granite, marble or other materials, that contains the cremated remains of the departed in a "worthy vessel". At Saint Paul, Wall #1 contains 110 niches and Wall #2 contains 160 niches. Provision has been made for a future third wall, which will contain 160 niches. Each niche can accommodate up to two urns.

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What are the benefits to Parishioners?

A niche in the Columbarium is modestly priced, aesthetically pleasing, and ecologically sound. The ambiance of the Columbarium creates a comfortable meeting place for families and friends to gather in love and remembrance, a consoling link between life and death.

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What information about the Columbarium is on the Parish website?

The website is a living document that will be updated to address questions about the Columbarium, its purpose, how to acquire a niche, *Frequently Asked Questions* and the *Rules and Regulations*.

To view Columbarium information on the Saint Paul website, go to www.saintpaulseneca.org, click the "SACRAMENTS" tab, scroll down to "Related Activities" and click on "COLUMBARIUM" or the picture of the Columbarium.

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How are the niches marked?

Each granite niche cover is engraved with the person's legal name and dates of birth and death. These are inscribed in a uniform size and arrangement after the time of interment. The time to be engraved varies with the engraver's workload and other factors.

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Who can be interred?

The Columbarium is reserved for the use of current and former members of Saint Paul the Apostle Catholic Parish (Saint Paul's in Seneca, SC and Saint Francis of Assisi in Walhalla, SC) and Saint Andrew Parish (in Clemson, SC) and their families as defined in the Columbarium *Rules and Regulations*. Non-Catholic family members are welcomed. Only human remains may be interred.

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May a particular niche be chosen?

Yes, niches are offered on a "first come, first served" basis. The cost does not vary according to location. However, niche units are added periodically as needed so the number of niches to choose from at a given time may be limited.

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Who is paying for the Columbarium?

The Columbarium is funded and maintained solely by the sale of the niches. No money is drawn from Church funds.

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What is the cost of interment in the Columbarium?

The maximum cost of a single occupancy niche is \$3800 (one urn) and double occupancy is \$4,500 (two urns). This price is inclusive of all interment costs, including opening, engraving, maintenance, etc.

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How is the cost of a niche determined?

The Columbarium Advisory Board has the task of determining price levels sufficient to 1) provide perpetual care and 2) construct the next wall. The Pastor approves the pricing. Forecasting costs a decade from now is very difficult. Construction costs at the time of building the next wall will be factored in to the cost of a niche.

A Funeral Home or Crematorium must be contacted for “direct cremation” if interment is planned at the Columbarium. This includes minimal services of the Funeral Home staff, removal of the remains from home or hospital and cremation of the remains. These costs are separate from the Columbarium and are negotiated with the Funeral Home. The Funeral Home also arranges for the death notice and copies of the death certificate for which they charge a fee.

Additional cost may be incurred if the family chooses a traditional viewing at a Funeral Home prior to cremation. Embalming is required as well as other costs such as facility fees, body preparation, clothing and a rental casket for the service.

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What happens once all of the niches are sold out?

The Columbarium plan is to begin the construction process for additional niche space when 85% of the niches are licensed. Various approvals, permits, and actual construction will take 12 to 18 months, during which time the remaining niches are available.

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Are there some niches set aside for unexpected interments?

The plan for the installation of additional niche walls is such that there should be a limited number of unsold niches available at any time.

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What about care and permanency?

The Columbarium has perpetual care funded through the sale of the niches. The Pastor and a Committee of Parish members oversee the care. The Columbarium is the property of the Bishop of Charleston, and the Office of the Bishop assures permanent care.

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Who administers the activity of the Columbarium?

The Columbarium Advisory Board reports directly to the Pastor. The Board is responsible for Columbarium management and finances.

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What are the regulations for purchase of a Memorial Plaque?

A Memorial Plaque can commemorate any deceased relative of a current or former Parish member. Members with burial arrangements elsewhere can be remembered in this way in South Carolina, as can deceased parents or other special relatives.

Information in the Parish records indicates the relationship of the Memorial Plaque to the Parish member.

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How are arrangements for cremation and interment made?

Arrangements for cremation are made through a Funeral Home or Crematorium. Prior to going to the Funeral Home or Crematorium, a visit to Saint Paul's Parish Office should be made to discuss the pending funeral, and confirm the inscription to go on the faceplate of the niche. The Funeral Home or Crematorium returns the urn with the cremated remains to you for the final services. Once you know when the cremated remains will be provided to you, the interment can be arranged. The Parish Office will schedule the church services and interment.

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How do I reserve a niche?

Contact Saint Paul's Parish Office and they will assist you in completing the "Niche License", selecting a niche, and accept payment of the appropriate amount.

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Is there a funeral/committal service?

Yes, traditional services continue as usual in the Church, and include the committal service at the Columbarium. The burial service is as prescribed by the Pastor, in consultation with the family, and in accordance with the regulations of the Diocese of Charleston.

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Do I need to ask permission to be cremated?

No, but it is a good idea to discuss your family's wishes with the Pastor, deacon or other parish minister. Don't forget to address your wish to be cremated with your family. Put your directive in writing in the form of a pre-needs planning document.

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Who decides if I am to be 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.

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How do I make my wishes known?

If you desire that your body be cremated you can make those wishes known in documents designed to help plan and prepare your funeral. The possession of a niche license prior to death is an affirmation of your wishes.

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Do I have to honor my parents 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. And 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.

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May I scatter the ashes?

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 is not the reverent disposition that the Church requires." (Order of Christian Funerals, Appendix II)

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What funeral rites are celebrated when a person is cremated?

All the usual rites that are celebrated with a body present may also be celebrated in the presence of cremated remains. The United States' bishops have written new prayers and have printed them as an appendix to the Order of Christian Funerals. During the liturgies, the cremated remains are treated with the same dignity and respect as the body.

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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 Crematorium, 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 three or four days between death and the celebration of the funeral liturgy. The Parish Office can help determine a practical schedule.

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What happens at the Funeral Mass with cremated remains?

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 are 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 in the ossuary and placed where the coffin would be with the Easter candle nearby. 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, #428).

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