

For Catholics Considering Cremation: Part 3 – Cremation Options for Catholics

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Thank you for reading our third installment of 'For Catholics Considering Cremation.' In our second installment, we discussed the Catholic Church's views on cremation. As was mentioned, Catholics who are cremated are entitled to all of the same funeral rites as those who are not cremated:

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

Any (but preferably all) of these rites can be incorporated into a funeral, for which the deceased is a Catholic who has been cremated, but the last three are the most commonly issued today. Let us now take a closer look at the various options available to Catholics who are interested in cremation.

Viewing (open casket): A viewing is the time when family and friends come to see their loved one after he or she has been prepared by the funeral home. A viewing may be private with only immediate family members, or public with extended family and friends. The viewing can include a vigil service and then is followed by a funeral mass or funeral liturgy celebrated outside of mass. The body is then brought to the crematory to undergo the cremation process. The cremated remains are then buried in a cemetery, or entombed in a columbarium or mausoleum niche, at which time the rite of committal takes place.

Visitation with Funeral Mass (closed casket): A visitation is the time when family and friends come to honor their loved one without a viewing. For a visitation, the body will be present, but the casket is closed. The visitation may be held for immediate family members only, or with extended family and friends. As is the case with a viewing, the visitation can include a vigil service. The funeral liturgy is then celebrated in the context of a full mass, or outside of mass. Finally, the rite of committal takes place at the time of burial or entombment.

Visitation with Funeral Mass (cremated remains present): For this option, the deceased is cremated before the visitation. If permission is granted by the Church, then vigil service and funeral liturgy are celebrated after the visitation with the cremated remains present. The remains are then buried or entombed and the rite of committal is issued.

Direct Cremation: For this option, there is no viewing, visitation, vigil service, or funeral mass. After the cremation process, the cremated remains are returned to the family. The family will then make arrangements for burial or entombment of the cremated remains, and then the rite of committal is issued.

In adherence with the Order of Christian Funerals, the Catholic Church requires that cremated remains are to be buried or entombed after funeral rites have been issued. The detachment between the funeral liturgy and the interment is a concern of the Church, when it comes to cremation funerals. After

the death, the funeral liturgy is celebrated soon after, but many times the interment will occur at some unspecified later date. Due to people's busy schedules, the interment is sometimes delayed for a long time, or forgotten entirely. Make sure that you work closely with your clergy to schedule the interment in a timely manner, so that the deceased receives a respectful Catholic committal.

Furthermore, the Church strongly prefers that the cremation does not occur until after the rites have taken place. Vigil service and funeral liturgy can be held with cremated remains present, but it requires special permission, which you must request from your Church.

In order to gain the most complete understanding of the options available to you for Catholic cremation funerals, it is strongly recommended that you speak with your clergy and a funeral director. Having a greater understanding of these processes will help ensure that you fulfill your dying wishes, while following the protocols of your Catholic faith.