

The Catholic Church permits cremation unless it is evident that cremation was chosen for anti-Christian motives. When cremation is chosen one of the following options is used.

1. Cremation After the Funeral Liturgy:

Even when cremation is chosen, the Church recommends that the body of the deceased be present for the funeral rites. The presence of the human body better expresses the values that the Church affirms in the funeral rites. When cremation follows the liturgy, the funeral liturgy and other rites are celebrated as described above.

2. Funeral Liturgy in the Presence of the Cremated Remains:

The Holy See has given the bishop of each diocese the authority to allow the celebration of a funeral liturgy in the presence of the cremated remains of the body. The cremated remains of the body are to be treated with the same respect given to the human body. Prior to the funeral Mass or as a part of the entrance procession of the Mass, a worthy vessel, containing the cremated remains, is carried with reverence into the church. The cremated remains are placed on a suitable stand or table in the place normally occupied by the coffin.

The funeral Mass begins with the sprinkling of holy water; however, a pall is not placed over the cremated remains. The funeral Mass is celebrated as described above. Following the prayer after Communion, the rite of final commendation takes place as usual.

3. Cremation and Committal Prior to the Funeral Liturgy:

When the body is cremated and committed soon after death, the rites of final commendation and committal are used at the appropriate times, even though occurring prior to the funeral liturgy. The vigil and other rites are also adapted, as necessary. Following the committal, the family and friends of the deceased join the community in celebrating the funeral liturgy. After Communion, the blessing is given and the people are dismissed.

The cremated remains of the body, due the same respect as the remains of the body, must be buried in a cemetery, entombed in a columbarium or buried at sea.