

The teaching of the Catholic Church concerning funeral rites

With respect for the body, the Temple of the Holy Spirit, we, body and soul, are destined to live with God forever. In our creed, we profess that we believe “in the resurrection of the body and life everlasting.” Since the body is the temple of the Holy Spirit, was once washed clean in Baptism, was anointed with holy oil, and received the Body of Christ and since the body will rise again, we show great respect for the body in death. We bless the body with holy water and incense it at a funeral Mass.

The following is the teaching of the Catholic Church concerning the funeral rites:

1. The Church prefers and urges that the body of the deceased be present for the funeral rites. In the liturgy, the body is blessed with holy water, a pall is placed over the casket to remind us of being clothed with Christ at Baptism, and an incensation of the body is done at the end of the liturgy.
2. The Catholic Church allows cremation, as long as it is not being done to deny the resurrection of the body and as long as the remains will be properly buried. The preference is for the cremation to take place after the funeral Mass.
3. By virtue of a special permission from the Vatican, if the cremation takes place before the funeral liturgy, the Church permits the cremated remains of the deceased to be brought into the Church under certain conditions. These conditions include knowing what motives prompted the cremation and the assurance that the cremated remains will be properly buried when convenient after the Funeral Liturgy.