



Diocese of Gallup Policy on Cremation and Funerals

## In the Diocese of Gallup

There should always be a sense of peace when dealing with family members, even when the family is not practicing the faith. All should be treated with utmost respect. No one should ever be lectured at a time like this when a loved one has passed away. This is a time for love and charity.

There should NEVER be a refusal of Christian burial due to bad marriage, low Mass attendance, suicide, or lack of registration in a certain parish. This is not a time for legalism.

Alert funeral homes of procedures during a Catholic funeral. Never presume the funeral home understands Catholic rituals.

Cultural rituals should be respected, as long as these do not supersede the Catholic funeral rites.

Either the rosary or Vigil Service may be celebrated in church or funeral home as the priest and family determine the afternoon or evening before the funeral Mass.

This is left to local custom.

Funerals of the unbaptized such as miscarriages, stillborns, etc. should be done with greatest love and charity. The unbaptized should not be left out of the loving embrace of the Church. There are appropriate liturgies for the unbaptized.

Instill in parishioners the need to pray for the dead and have Masses celebrated for the dead. Also, deceased priests should be remembered in Masses on a regular basis.

If a parish has a cemetery, it should be kept clean and neat in respect for the deceased.

Many funeral homes include a fee for clergy in their overall cost for services. Clergy should make sure they receive this if it is already included in the funeral cost. Otherwise, the funeral home may take possession of it.

## Diocesan Policy on Cremation

1. The 1983 Code of Canon Law, canon 1176.3 says: "The Church earnestly recommends that the pious custom of burying the bodies of the dead be observed, it does not, however, forbid cremation unless it has been chosen for reasons which are contrary to Christian teaching."
2. The National Conference of Catholic Bishops in 1996 requested an indult to permit the diocesan bishop to allow the presence of the cremated remains of a body at the Funeral Liturgy in dioceses of the United States. The indult was granted March 21, 1997.
3. At their meeting in November 1996 the NCCB (now known as the USCCB, United States Conference of Catholic Bishops) approved modified texts and ritual adaptation for funerals in the presence of cremated remains of a body. They were approved by Rome and mandated for use from November 2, 1997. The modifications are found in Appendix 2 of newer editions of *Order for Christian Funerals*. The indult makes it clear that the Church's preference is still that the body be present at the funeral rites.
4. The US Bishops decided that in the funeral liturgy when the cremated remains are present:  
No mention is to be made of "body"  
No symbol that is exclusively baptismal in nature, i.e. the placing of a pall, is to be used. There is no objection to incensations or sprinkling with holy water. The paschal candle is also permitted.  
The urn with the cremated remains could be placed on a table where the coffin would be if the body were present.
5. The same respect should be shown to the cremated remains as to the body of the deceased. A suitable container should be used for them. If the containers offered by the funeral home are too expensive for the family's budget, a vase or urn with a secure lid can be purchased at a store. It should be taken to the funeral director before cremation takes place.
6. It is not necessary to hire a hearse to transport the urn to the place of burial, but respect should still be shown.
7. The cremated remains should actually be buried. The priest/deacon should make that gently clear to the family when they come to make arrangements for the funeral service.
8. If the service is for a Native American, any tribal customs should be taken into account. Their wishes should be respected.
9. Priests & other parish leaders should use discretion in enforcing this policy, judging each case on its own merits. Until the people have been taught these new things and are familiar with them, parish leadership, especially priests and deacons, would best be lenient in insisting on full compliance in every case.
10. This policy will be reviewed in two years so that it can be adjusted as more experience dealing with cremation is gained.