



October 2017

My dear friends,

It is never easy to discuss funeral and burial arrangements with loved ones. Yet as Catholics, it is important that we learn and appreciate how our legacy of faith can be embraced in every moment of our journey, even in death.

Following the most ancient Christian tradition, the Church asks that the faithful, in preparing their funeral and burial arrangements, ensure that the bodies of Catholics are buried in cemeteries or other sacred places.

Many Catholics are unaware that since 1963 the Church has also accepted cremation as an alternative to burial. The Church raises no doctrinal objections to this practice, since cremation of our loved one does not affect his or her soul, nor does it prevent God from raising up the deceased body to new life. Thus, cremation does not deny the Christian doctrine of the soul's immortality nor that of the resurrection of the body. Concern about cremation being chosen as a way of denying these doctrines was the reason the Church formerly opposed it, but in our time this is not an issue, and so cremation is now allowed.

Over the years, the number of people being cremated has increased in many countries for a number of reasons. Unfortunately, with this increase come practices that are not appropriate or acceptable.

When cremation is chosen, this choice must never violate the wishes of the deceased.

According to Church teaching, scattering cremated remains on the sea, in the air, on the ground, or keeping them in the homes of relatives, does not display appropriate reverence.

When, for legitimate reasons, cremation has been chosen, the ashes of the faithful must be laid to rest in a sacred place, that is, in a cemetery or, in certain cases, in a church or an area set aside for this purpose, and so dedicated by the bishop. This shows fitting respect for the one who has died.

There is also a spiritual and emotional benefit when cremated remains are laid to rest in a proper place of burial. It gives the bereaved and the Church community a place to focus remembrance and to pray for the deceased. Such a sacred place will also make it easier to memorialize those that have been called home to God.

Within the Archdiocese of Toronto, Catholic Cemeteries & Funeral Services, as a ministry of the Church, has the responsibility for providing cremation to our Catholic faithful according to the faith tradition of the Church, for those who wish to have this alternative to burial. I encourage you to visit www.catholic-cemeteries.com to learn more about this ministry and to have your questions answered from a Catholic perspective.

Be assured of my ongoing prayers for you and your loved ones.

Yours sincerely in the Lord,

† Thomas Card. Collins

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