

Ref.:

- a) <http://catholic-bulletin.blogspot.com/2008/08/can-catholics-be-cremated.html>
- b) http://www.aboutcatholics.com/worship/can_catholics_be_cremated/

Can Catholics Be Cremated?

by Jon Jakoblich

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For much of history the Catholic Church banned cremation as a choice for dead Catholics, but in 1963 the Vatican lifted the ban. Cremation is now an acceptable practice for Catholics, but only if done for the right reasons.

A full burial can cost a lot of money and for those who cannot afford it (or for whatever other reason) cremation may be the best option.
Why was cremation not allowed?

In the Catechism of the Catholic Church the short paragraph on cremation falls under respect for the dead which is part of the larger topic of respect for the human body.

Scripture teaches we are created in the image and likeness of God (Gen. 1:26-27) and from that teaching Catholics believe there is a great deal of respect to given to the human body in life and in death.

Originally, the practice was banned to counter ancient Roman pagan beliefs. The Romans cremated their dead because they did not believe in an afterlife, which is contradictory to Christian belief.

A Change in Policy

However, in 1963 the Vatican lifted the ban on cremation, but the cremated remains or "cremains" could not be present at the funeral mass. Cremation could only be chosen if not for the reason that a person denies the teaching on the resurrection of the body. Burial was (and still is) the preferred method.

In 1997, the Vatican approved new liturgical norms allowing for the cremated remains to be present at a funeral mass and the remains are to be treated with the same reverence as a whole body in a casket. This means that spreading the cremated ashes is still forbidden.

Cremated remains must be buried, just like a body, in a cemetery, crypt, or other appropriate burial place not put on display.

About the author

Jon JakoblichJon is the creator and mastermind of About Catholics. A loving husband and father he is currently a graduate student in Church Management at Boston College, he has 3 years experience in youth ministry and a passion for his Catholic faith.