

The Church does allow burial at sea in exceptional circumstances.

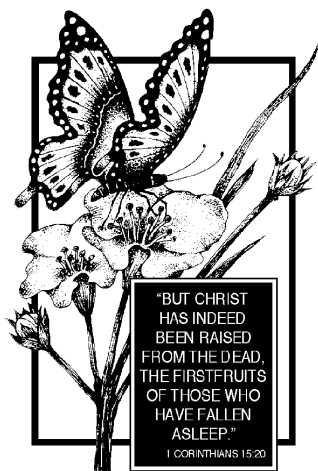
Sometimes families wish to keep the cremated remains at home, but again:

the Church does not permit this practice because of the probability of an accident and it also sees daily life overshadowing the special presence of the bodily remains and, ultimately, it disrespects them by failing to show honor.

We are also reminded that “burying the dead” is a corporal work of mercy of the Church.

Praying for the Dead

The Catechism of the Catholic Church teaches the Eucharistic sacrifice (Mass) is “offered for the faithful departed who ‘have died in Christ but are not yet wholly purified,’ so that they may be able to enter into the light and peace of Christ.” It is our obligation and privilege to pray for those who have died. If you would like a Mass offered for a deceased relative or friend, contact the Parish Office at 834-2126.



Other Elements of the Funeral Rites

- ◆ **Music** is integral to the funeral rites. It allows the community to express convictions and feelings that words alone may fail to convey. It has the power to console and uplift the mourners and to strengthen the unity of the assembly in faith and love. However, non-liturgical or secular music is not appropriate for the funeral rites.
- ◆ **Eulogies**—Though the priest or deacon will remember the faithful departed in the homily, the homily is not the proper time in the Church’s liturgy for a eulogy. It is recommended that if the family wishes to share memories of the deceased, the Vigil (Wake) is the most appropriate time for the family and friends to share reflections. Also, one member of the family may speak for a few minutes after the Prayer after Communion at the Funeral Mass to express gratitude to the assembly and for the life of the deceased.

If you would like more information about planning a Catholic Funeral, please contact our church:

St. Thomas Aquinas Catholic Church
324 NE Oak Street
Camas, WA 98607
360-834-2126



What Families Should Know About the Catholic Funeral

Catholics have a right to a Catholic Funeral by virtue of their incorporation into the Church through the Sacrament of Baptism. The Rites of a Catholic Funeral include the following elements:

Prayers after Death,
Prayers in the Presence of the Body,
Scripture Prayer Service at the Vigil or Wake,
Funeral at Church (with or without Mass)
Interment Prayer Service at the cemetery.

Understanding the Catholic Funeral Rites

The Catholic Church’s funeral Rites involve a series of ceremonies. Each one takes us along a process of facing the reality of death and the stages of grief. And always offers us the hope of new life. Ideally, all these rites should be celebrated for the sake of the people who remain, as well as to pray for the deceased person.

- ◆ After the death of the person, the priest or a lay minister can say the **Prayers After Death**. Often times, if the priest was not present at the time of death or shortly after, then he (or a Church minister) may pray these prayers when he or she meets the family to plan for the funeral services.
- ◆ There is also an “optional prayer time” when the family gathers for **Prayer in the Presence of the Body** for the first time at the funeral home. This is usually a difficult time, since the reality of death is vividly brought to us. This short prayer service allows the family to grieve privately before the friends and neighbors also gather to grieve.

- ◆ The vigil or wake is a time to recall and tell stories of the loved one. As we tell stories, we understand the special character of the person through the eyes of the one telling the story and through the heart reflecting on the stories. The **Vigil Prayers** also tell stories of Jesus' death and resurrection and what he told us about eternal life. This helps us put this death in a perspective from God's point of view, rather than only the painful human point of view that all has ended. Part of the Vigil Prayer is also a story telling of the wonderful loving actions of the deceased.

- When one of its members dies, the Church encourages the celebration of the **Funeral Mass**. In the scriptures proclaimed and the sacrament of the altar, the saving action of the risen Christ becomes living and active in the hearts and minds of the community. Confident in the presence of Jesus in word and sacrament, those present offer prayers and petitions for the deceased, whom they entrust to God's merciful love.

The Funeral Liturgy Outside of Mass is celebrated when, for pastoral reasons, the pastor and the family judge that the funeral liturgy outside of Mass is a more suitable form of celebration. The Funeral Liturgy Outside of Mass is ordinarily celebrated in the parish church, but may also be celebrated at a funeral home or a cemetery chapel.

- ◆ The final part of the funeral Rite of the Church is the **Committal Prayers at the burial**. Waiting for the final resurrection and coming of Jesus is the purpose of the burial. Christ makes "holy the graves of the just" and gives hope to all who await resurrection.



Together these services not only make up the total Catholic Funeral Service, but provide the Church's special prayers for the deceased. These are also intended to meet the many needs of those who are grieving.



As much as we don't like to dwell on death, it is a real part of our lives and families. The Catholic Rites are intended to assist us in praying for the person who has died and help us deal with the difficulties and reality of death.

Our faith provides strength and courage to face this radical loss of our lives. Even those who do not share our Catholic faith recognize that these Funeral Rites bring some greater understanding to a circumstance which of itself seeks answers.

Our culture, which often tries to avoid uncomfortable aspects of life, sometimes wants to skip some or all of the rites of a funeral—thinking that it is best to “just get it over with.” Unfortunately, research shows us that the opposite is the reality. People who do not have adequate time to face death as the Funeral Rites allow and who do not have time to grieve and the support of friends and family often suffer with separation anxiety and grieve longer than those who take the time to participate in the grieving process through the rites of the Church.

Sometimes, relatives who are deciding the details of the funeral are not Catholic or are “non practicing” Catholics, and feel as if they would be uncomfortable with the Catholic Funeral Rites. Indeed, they may be unfamiliar with these rites, but since Catholics expect and have a right to the full rites of the Catholic Church, they do the deceased an injustice by limiting these normal rites. In these situations, the persons planning the funeral arrangements need to think about the faith which the Church provides its members and what it offers for the deceased.

Honoring the Body

Part of Catholic belief is that those who follow the way of Jesus shall be forever in heaven, body and soul, in the presence of God. We believe in the bodily resurrection! Also the Church honors the body because it has been the temple of the Holy Spirit. It was the body that was baptized—beginning our relationship with God. **Therefore the Church says that the body should normally be present at the Funeral Rites. If the person or family wishes cremation, it should take place after the Funeral liturgy, if possible.** Then the cremated remains should be buried in a place of respect.

Cremation

In the modern practices of our culture concerning Funeral Services, some families find immediate cremation of the body to be desirable because it is less expensive or for other personal reasons. It is perfectly acceptable to celebrate a funeral Mass with the cremated remains present. In the Mass, the cremated remains are treated with the same reverence as the body.

The Reverent and Holy Place of Waiting

The Church holds as very important the placing of the body or the cremated remains in a reverent place where people can visit. We will rise in our bodies, so we reverently prepare the place for the body to await the resurrection. Cremated remains also need a safe and reverent place to await the resurrection. They are either buried in the ground or a mausoleum or placed in a columbarium. We, as those who mourn, also need a place to come to grieve. This letting go is difficult and takes time. This is also a reason why we survivors need a place to come and visit and grieve. Scattering the ashes is considered irreverent and disrespectful to the body and not consistent with our Catholic beliefs.