

Columbarium FAQs

Q. Does the Catholic Church allow cremations?

A. In the early years of the Church, during periods of persecution, the bodies of Christians were burned as an insult to the Christian belief of the resurrection of the body. For this reason, the Church for many centuries did not allow cremation since it was associated with disrespect and mockery of belief in the resurrection. Centuries later, this is no longer the case and people today no longer associate cremation with those ideas.

In May 1963, the Vatican Congregation of the Doctrine of Faith lifted the prohibition forbidding Catholics to choose cremation. This permission to be cremated was incorporated into the revised Code of Canon Law of 1983 (Canon No. 1176) as well as into the Order of Christian Funerals.

The Bishops of the United States and the Holy See have authorized the celebration of a Catholic funeral liturgy with the cremated remains present. The Church does not prohibit cremation.

In 1977, the bishops of the United States published a booklet called Reflections on the Body, Cremation, and Catholic Funeral Rites that presents pastoral guidelines for Catholics who choose cremation. In part the U.S. bishops say:

“The remains of cremated bodies should be treated with the same respect given to the corporal remains of a human body. This includes the manner in which they are carried, the care and attention to appropriate placement and transport, and their final disposition. The cremated remains of a body should be entombed in a mausoleum or columbarium; they may also be buried in a common grave in a cemetery. The practices of scattering cremated remains on the sea, from the air, or on the ground or keeping cremated remains on the home of a relative or friend of the deceased are not the reverent disposition that the Church requires.”

A common practice is the entombment of the cremated remains in a “columbarium.” It is an arrangement of niches, either in a mausoleum, a room, or wall into which an urn or other worthy vessel is placed for permanent memorial.

R. Do you have to be a registered parishioner at Our Lady of Mercy to be inurned in the Garden of Peace Columbarium?

A. No, you do not have to be a parishioner at Mercy. Many niches have already been purchased by people outside the Mercy parish. The priest or deacon from your home parish is welcome to preside at the committal of your cremains.

S. I'm Catholic but my spouse isn't, can we both have our ashes inurned in the Garden of Peace Columbarium?

A. Yes, you do not have to be Catholic to have your ashes inurned here. The non-Catholic decedent may have a minister from their faith perform the committal service with prior pastoral approval from Our Lady of Mercy.

Q. What is included in the price of the niche?

A. The price includes two bronze box urns, 2 niche openings and closings, the inscription of names and dates on the faceplate. It also includes perpetual care to maintain the grounds. Niches come in two sizes, both of which accommodate two urns. The small niche is \$5,000 and the large niche is \$7,500.

Q. Can I sell my niche or give it to someone else if I choose?

A. Yes, niches may be sold or donated (given) to someone. Because there are strict legal requirements regarding the cemetery records, you would need to coordinate plans and paperwork with the Columbarium Manager at Our Lady of Mercy. A title transfer fee would apply.

Q. Are flowers or mementos allowed in the Garden of Peace Columbarium?

A. Flowers may be on site for services held at the Columbarium but may not remain there. The grounds and surroundings will be beautifully landscaped to provide a prayerful and peaceful aesthetic.