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*When a Catholic is cremated, must the ashes be buried or can they be scattered or kept in the home?*

A

More and more, people are choosing cremation for the final disposition of the deceased. In 2010, over a third of all funerals involved cremation. And that rate is estimated to increase to over half by 2025. It is done for many different reasons, including economic and environmental reasons, or to follow the wishes of the person who has died. In the past, cremation was rare for a Catholic and the cremains were not brought into church for the funeral. Now both the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (§ 2301) and canon law (Canon 1176, § 3) allow for cremation, provided that it is not done as an act of denial of our belief in the resurrection of the body. Catholics are still encouraged to honor the age-old custom of bodily burial (*Pastoral Companion*). The catechism also instructs that we honor the bodies of the dead with respect and dignity, since they were the temples of the Holy Spirit. Burial of the dead is one of the corporal works of mercy.

The final disposition calls for the ashes to be placed in an urn and placed in consecrated ground or inside a mausoleum. The church has a reverence and respect for the body as a place where the soul had resided. Leaving the ashes on the mantel or scattering them in some significant spot is contrary to church practice and belief.