



The Columbarium at Prince of Peace Catholic Church

"Completing the Circle of Life"

Frequently Asked Questions

The columbarium at Prince of Peace is a place that reminds us of all the sacraments we celebrate as Christians. The burial liturgy and inurnment of the individual are the culmination of a person's earthly life in our shared community in Christ.

What is a columbarium?

A columbarium is a group of niches, typically within a wall of brick, stone, granite, marble, or other earth materials, which contains the cremated remains of the departed. Our columbarium would consist of 182 niches and can expand into many more niches in the future. Each niche is approximately 8" x 8" x 12" and can accommodate up to two urns.

Can Catholics be cremated?

Yes. In May 1963, the Vatican lifted the prohibition forbidding Catholics to choose cremation. This permission was incorporated into the revised Code of Canon Law of 1983 (Canon# 1176), as well as into the Order of Christian Funerals. It then became standard practice to celebrate the funeral liturgies with the body and then take the body to the crematorium. Most recently the bishops of the United States and Holy See have authorized the celebration of a Catholic funeral liturgy with the cremated remains when the body is cremated before the funeral. The Church states that the ashes should be buried in the ground or in a reverent final resting place, such as a columbarium.

Why have a columbarium?

The Church throughout history has been the natural repository and final resting place of deceased members of the Christian community. Burial within the church itself or in the adjacent churchyard was once common practice. The amount of land necessary for a burial ground is no longer available to most churches and a myriad of laws and regulations make it extremely difficult to establish a burial site. In recent years, cremation with inurnment of the ashes, rather than burial, has become common. In this way, the remains of the deceased can stay on the church grounds that played such an important part in their lives.

In some cases, many people today are turning to cremation as an economical, dignified way to address the rising cost of funerals. As more and more people turn to cremation, the cost of traditional funerals will continue to rise. By creating a columbarium at Prince of Peace, we are addressing the needs of those who choose cremation and prefer to have their remains located on the grounds of the parish.

What are the benefits to our congregation?

A niche in a columbarium is modestly priced, aesthetically pleasing, and ecologically sound. The ambiance of the columbarium creates a serene and comfortable meeting place for families and friends to gather in love and remembrance, a consoling link between life and death. By incorporating the columbarium in the church community, we are truly attending to the circle of life involvement of the congregation from baptism to faith formation, and earthly death.

How are cremation funerals planned?

As we do for body burials, the parish priest and staff will assist you in planning a funeral in coordination with a funeral home or crematorium. The church staff will provide guidance for placement of a person's remains during your time of need, and coordinate the funeral service and inurnment of the remains.

How will the niches be marked?

Each niche will provide the person's legal name and dates of birth and death. These will be inscribed in a uniform size and font on the face of the granite door covering the niche, at the time of inurnment. The Church office will order the inscription prior to the inurnment.

How will the niches be offered? Who can be inurned in the columbarium?

Niches may be purchased by parishioners of Prince of Peace Parish to be used for themselves or family members. Information is available by contacting the church office at 205-822-9125. The columbarium is reserved for the members of the congregation and their families as defined in the Church Rules and Regulations. Only human remains may be inurned at the Prince of Peace columbarium. The burial service will be as prescribed by the pastor of Prince of Peace, in consultation with the family, and in accordance with the regulations of the Catholic Church and the Diocese of Birmingham.

How are arrangements for cremation and inurnment made?

Arrangements for cremation can be made through a funeral home or directly with a crematorium. Families are encouraged to immediately contact the church office upon the death of a loved one to request assistance for a cremated burial. Remains can be sent directly to the crematorium. The family will be responsible for coordinating the delivery of the body, the cost of the cremation and the delivery of the remains to the church. The church staff will work with the family to plan the funeral service and inurnment. The parish office will also confirm the inscription for the front panel of the niche cover and will arrange to have the plate engraved. In order to engrave the niche faceplate, the panel will be removed and sent out for engraving. A temporary, blank panel will be used to cover your niche until the inscription is complete and reinstalled. The only inscription allowed on the plaque is the full name of the deceased and their birth and death dates.

Will there be a funeral committal service?

Yes, traditional funeral services may be planned as customary in the Church for cremated remains and may include the committal service at the columbarium.

May a particular niche location be chosen?

Yes, niches will be offered on a "first come, first served" basis. To reserve a niche, come by the church office and they will be able to show you which niches are currently available.

How does the cost of cremation and inurnment compare with the cost of traditional burial?

The cost of inurnment in a columbarium is typically much less expensive than traditional burial. Average funerals, as of this writing, range from \$12,000 to \$20,000 or more. This does not include the cost of the cemetery burial plot. Additional costs up to \$2,000 can be charged to open and close the grave.

The cost of a niche at Prince of Peace and cremation are as follow:

Niche cost	\$3,000	Includes up to 2 (two) brass urns and engraved faceplate
Estimated cremation cost	\$700 - \$900	Per body and includes the death certificate

Additional costs may be incurred if the family chooses a traditional body and casket for the funeral Mass prior to cremation. Embalming would be required first as well as other costs such as facility fees, body preparation, clothing and a rental casket for the service.

How much will each niche cost?

The cost of each niche is \$3,000. That cost includes up to two complimentary brass urns provided by the church. This will cover the cost of the niche, the name and relevant dates engraved on the niche cover, the opening and closing of the niche and perpetual care.

What happens once all of the niches are sold?

We are designing the columbarium Garden in such a way that it can be expanded very easily. If demand warrants, we can accommodate an expansion of the columbarium.

May I have a name and/or dates engraved or etched on the brass urn?

Yes. At a cost to the purchaser, the church-provided urn may be etched or engraved with whatever the purchaser chooses. Etching may be done by any vendor the purchaser chooses. Several vendors, including retail stores such as *Awards & Engraving Place* in Hoover offer engraving. It is the purchaser's responsibility to obtain the urn from the Church, take it to be engraver and pay for the engraving before the inurnment is scheduled. The Visitation and Funeral Mass can occur before the inurnment, but once the lid is placed on the urn, and the urn is placed in the niche, it cannot be removed without additional cost to the purchaser. The Church will not be responsible for storage of an urn after it is engraved or etched.

May a purchaser sell or transfer a niche?

If the niche has not been occupied and the front panel has not been engraved, the purchaser may ask the Church to consider the repurchase the niche. The columbarium board will review the request and the church may or may not repurchase the niche, depending on individual circumstances. Niches may not be sold, transferred, or gifted to another person, estate, or corporation without the approval of the columbarium board and the pastor. If the parish agrees to repurchase a niche for just cause, as determined by the Board, the repurchase price will be the original price less any cost of replacing an engraved niche door and a processing fee of \$100.00. Once an inurnment is complete, no refund will be made.

What about care and permanency?

The columbarium will be perpetually managed by our church's columbarium board designated with that responsibility. A columbarium board is formed of parish members and has representation on the Parish Council. It reports directly to the Prince of Peace Pastor. The columbarium board oversees the columbarium operations. If Prince of Peace Church should close, is sold, or relocated, the columbarium structure with the inurned remains can be removed and relocated to a new suitable site facility or another Catholic Church. If such is not available, the parish will ensure all inurned remains are handled in accordance with Catholic doctrine and legal manner.

How do I reserve a niche space?

You may select the niche of your choice from the unsold and available niche locations. To reserve a niche, come by the church office and they will be able to show you which niches are currently available, and you can fill out the appropriate paperwork and make payment.

Where can I buy an urn and how much do they cost?

Up to two urns are provided in the cost of the niche by the church. If you desire, you may purchase your own urn. There are several companies that offer a wide selection of urns from which to choose. Keep in mind, there are space limitations inside the niches. The size of an individual urn must meet the manufacturer's dimensions and must conform to and be verified before the inurnment date is finalized. Please contact the church office for exact dimensions before purchasing an urn.

Do I need to ask permission from the Church if I desire to be cremated?

No. However, you may want to discuss your desire with your pastor, deacon or other parish minister and ensure you consult with your next of kin and executor of your estate regarding your wishes.

When should cremation take place?

The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops allow cremation to take place immediately after death and for regular funeral rites and services to be performed within a reasonable timeframe.

Is it necessary to embalm?

When cremation follows the funeral liturgy, embalming is usually necessary. When cremation takes place immediately after death, embalming is not required. Each state has its own regulations in this matter, but generally the rule is that a deceased human body that is not buried or cremated within 48 hours is to be embalmed or refrigerated. However, simple embalming and the use of a cremation casket need not involve excessive costs. Your local funeral home can provide additional information about these services.

Is it necessary to purchase a casket for cremation?

No. Bodies may be delivered directly to a crematorium for the cremation process. If you choose to have the body present for Mass, with cremation to follow, rental of a funeral casket is an option. Many funeral directors offer rental caskets for this purpose.

How are cremated remains transported?

It is a matter of personal choice. The crematorium will provide the remains to you sealed in a plastic bag and placed in a box for transport. Most crematoriums will deliver the remains to the church for inurnment. Since cremated remains present no biohazards, you can transport the sealed box with accompanying baggage or take it along as carry-on luggage. Some states regulate the transport of cremated remains. If you plan to fly with the remains, ask the airline office or your state's Department of Public Health for specific instructions before preparing the cremated remains for transport by air. If you plan to ship cremated remains, please contact the transport carrier for their specific requirements.

May I scatter the ashes?

The Catholic Church prefers cremated remains be reverently buried or inurned within a reasonable timeframe following death. *"The practice of scattering cremated remains on the sea, from the air, or on the ground, or keeping cremated remains in the home of a relative or friend of the deceased are not the reverent disposition that the Church requires."* (Congregation for Divine Worship, Order of Christian Funerals, Appendix II)

May I bury the ashes at sea?

Yes. Burial at sea of cremated remains differs from scattering. An appropriate and worthy container, heavy enough to cause the remains to sink to its final resting place, may be dropped into the sea. The burial of cremated remains at sea in this manner is an appropriate alternative to the long-standing and revered custom of a traditional burial at sea. Please consult your local government for environmental regulations. (See Order of Christian Funerals, #405.4)

May anything be added to cremated remains such as the cremated remains of other persons, pets, or other objects?

No. The principle of respect for the cremated remains of a deceased Christian embraces the deeper belief in the individuality of each baptized person before God. Throughout history, the mingling of remains has never been an accepted practice. If you would like to place a small memento, such as jewelry, a rosary, etc., it may be placed inside the urn on top of the sealed bag of remains, therefore the item is with the remains, but separate from them.

Who decides if I am cremated?

In most cases you make the decision to be cremated. However, your survivors may decide to have you cremated, generally due to special family circumstances, but rarely against your will. All persons are encouraged to discuss their burial wishes with their family and those who will be tasked with making funeral arrangements.

How do I make my wishes known?

If you desire that your body to be cremated you can make those wishes known in documents designed to help plan and prepare your funeral such as a Last Will, pre-need funeral arrangement, or a notarized affidavit expressing your wishes, designating the individual or individuals who are authorized to control the disposition of your remains.

Do I have to honor my parent's or spouse's wish to cremate them?

Out of respect for loved ones, you will want to do all you can to carry out the wishes of the deceased concerning their funeral services provided they are in keeping with Church practice. We recommend that discussions take place with next of kin to ensure wishes are made known ahead of time and can be honored.

What funeral rites are celebrated when a person is cremated?

All the usual rites that are celebrated with a body present may also be celebrated in the presence of cremated remains. The United States Bishops have written new prayers for cremations and have printed them as an appendix to the Order of Christian Funerals. During the liturgies, the cremated remains are treated with the same dignity and respect as the body.

The following rituals may be celebrated:

- **Prayers after Death.** This ritual is used immediately after death. The presence of the minister, the readings, and the prayers can be of great comfort to the family. (Order for Christian Funerals, #101-108)
- **Gathering in the Presence of the Body.** This ritual can also be of great comfort to family members and friends. It allows for a time of simple prayer and shared silence. (Order of Christian Funerals #109-118)
- **Vigil for the Deceased.** If cremation has already taken place, friends and family may still gather to pray. While it has been a tradition to pray the rosary in some regions, the Vigil for the Deceased in a Liturgy of the Word service, which includes prayer for the deceased and recognition of his/her Christian life is required. (Order of Christian Funerals #54-97)

What length of time is there between death, cremation, and the funeral Mass?

The answer to this question depends on various factors, just as in the case of funerals with the body. The place of death, the location of the crematory, scheduling a time for cremation, the schedule at the parish church, and other circumstances impact the timing. Once all arrangements have been made, you should generally allow at least one day between death and the celebration of the funeral liturgy.

Note: If the Church-provided urn is being engraved, this item MUST be completed before the interment date is finalized. Once the urn lid is placed on the urn, it cannot be removed. Once the urn is placed in the niche, it cannot be removed without additional cost to the purchaser. Also, once the urn is taken by the purchaser for any reason, the Church is no longer responsible for the urn. The Church does not store/restore urns after the purchaser has taken possession of the urn.

What happens at the Funeral Mass with cremated remains?

Significant attention should be given to the primary symbols of the Catholic funeral liturgy, as stated in the Order of Christian Funerals and its commentaries. The paschal candle and sprinkling with holy water are primary symbols of baptism and should be used during the Funeral Mass. A small pall may be placed over the urn or the urn could be placed in an “urn box” provided by the parish and covered with a pall. Photos and other mementos may be used and can be displayed in the gathering space.

Funeral arrangements must be reviewed and finalized with the parish priest or his designate. During the Mass, the cremated remains will be treated with the same dignity and respect as the body. They are to be sealed in a "worthy vessel." They may be carried in procession and/or placed on a table where the coffin normally would be with the Easter candle nearby. The body is always laid to rest with solemnity and dignity. So too, the Order of Christian Funerals provides for the interment of cremated remains (Order of Christian Funerals, #428).

Canon Law on Cremations

Can. 117

§1 - Christ's faithful who have died are to be given a Church funeral according to the norms of law.

§2 - Church funerals are to be celebrated according to the norms of the liturgical books. In these funeral rites the Church prays for the spiritual support of the dead, it honors their bodies, and at the same time it brings to the living the comfort of hope.

§3 - The Church earnestly recommends that the pious customs of burial be retained; but it does not forbid cremation, unless this is chosen for reasons that are contrary to Christian teaching.

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.