



DIOCESE OF TUCSON

192 SOUTH STONE AVENUE

P.O. Box 31 ♦ Tucson, Arizona 85702-0031

520-792-3410 ♦ FAX: 520-792-0291

OFFICE OF THE BISHOP

Dear Catholic Cemeterians,

Burial customs vary from culture to culture. In our Catholic faith we believe life is a gift from God gratuitously given. The body is a temple of the Holy Spirit to be treated with dignity and respect. We believe death is not an end but an entry into eternal life. We live in the hope of our bodily resurrection even as Christ rose from the dead.

So from the earliest of times the church has provided a sacred place for burial and has developed the rituals of the church that accompany one's being laid to rest. Those rituals, replete with meaning, comfort and console family members grieving the loss of their loved one.

In the United States and in most parts of the world today, cremation has become more common. While the church at first frowned upon cremation preferring full body burial, on July 5, 1963 in an instruction titled *Piam et Constantem* the Holy See stated that cremation is "not opposed per se to the Christian religion" as long as it is not chosen in hatred of the Catholic religion or denying Christian belief in the resurrection of the body.

Since that time a number of practices have begun to develop with regard to the care of cremated remains. Some no longer value or understand the importance of burying those remains in a cemetery or other sacred place. So the custom has been evolving of scattering cremated remains or putting them on the mantel of a family member or dividing the remains in lockets or jewelry distributing them among family members and friends.

So the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith with the explicit approval of Pope Francis published on October 25, 2016, a document titled, *Ad Resurgendum Cum Christo* providing clarity on the church's teaching regarding the burial of cremated remains.

In this issue of [Catholic Cemetery](#) you will be able to read the full text of the instruction. There is much in the document that we will need to communicate in our parishes and within our Catholic communities. It will be important to help educate people on the teaching of this document especially on why the church does not permit conservation of ashes of the departed in a domestic residence and why it does not permit the scattering of ashes or preserving them in mementos.

Prohibitions can be ignored unless they are understood and the reasons made clear and convincing.

The Vatican document emphasizes the importance of reserving ashes in a sacred place so that as time passes loved ones will not be forgotten and their remains will always be treated with the dignity and respect they deserve.

The issuing of this document gives us an opportunity to help people reflect on the care of their loved one after death.

Recently I heard of a situation where a man's ashes were scattered by a friend in the balcony of an Opera House because he loved opera. Clearly such an action belies the respect owed the ashes of a human person. Cremated remains are not mere dust that can be swept up.

Most important will be the need for us to accompany family members as they make decisions about the remains of loved ones. Oftentimes they do not understand the church's teachings and what underlies that teaching. This instruction gives us the opportunity to inform our people of what we believe as Catholics about the dignity and immense value of the human body even in death.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Gerald Kicanas".

Most Rev. Gerald F. Kicanas

Bishop of Tucson: Episcopal Moderator of the Catholic Cemetery Conference