## *The Disposition of the Body and Ashes*

- The Catholic Church considers a Catholic cemetery, whether parish-affiliated or not, to be the appropriate place for the burial of a believer's body. Bodies are usually placed in the ground, and much more rarely in a mausoleum, a type of funerary chapel.
- As for the disposition of ashes, they too shall be entrusted toa Catholic cemetery to be buried in the ground or placed in a niche of a columbarium.
- The Catholic Church, mindful that ashes are still the human remains of a person, does not favour keeping them at home, placing them in a home garden, or scattering them in any way in nature or in water, and even less dividing them to be placed in pendants or other jewelry.
- When ashes are not duly entrusted to a Catholic cemetery, as there has been no true burial, the Church does not keep a record of their burial in a register.

### *Some Practical Guidelines:*

- When a death occurs, please contact your parish as soon as possible. Every church always has an e number available to reach someone able to assist you.
- If you wish to have a funeral in the church, with or without Mass, have you thought of mentioning it to your loved ones?
  Or even writing it in your last wishes?
- If you are close to someone who is very ill or in danger of death, have you thought of suggesting a visit from a priest for the Sacrament of the Sick?


For further information, please
contact your parish or
the Diocesan Centre of Valleyfield
11, rue de l'Église
Salaberry-de-Valleyfield, Québec, J6T 1J5

Telephone: 450-373-8122
Fax: 450-371-0000
Email: accueil@diocesevalleyfield.org
Website: www.diocesevalleyfield.org
Facebook: Diocèse de Valleyfield


## Funerals in the Church



*"For all who believe in you, Lord, Life is not ended, it is transformed; and when their earthly dwelling comes to an end; they already have an eternal home in heaven."*

Diocèse de Valleyfield

# The Celebration of Catholic Funerals

The Catholic Church is a large family whose members are united through baptism. When a death occurs, this large family wishes to pray for the deceased person, as well as for all those whom this loss plunges into mourning. Gathering at the church therefore allows the entire community to unite with the family and share a time of solidarity and prayer.

## Catholic Funerals

Catholic funerals, strictly speaking, usually include the celebration of the Eucharist (the Mass). For this reason, Catholic funerals cannot be celebrated anywhere other than in a parish church.
If it seems more appropriate, the Eucharist may be omitted, and the funeral may still be held in a church, within the framework of a Liturgy of the Word.
Sometimes, people choose to bid farewell to a deceased loved one at a prayer gathering held at the funeral home. Such a prayer gathering is undoubtedly pleasing to God. However, it does not constitute a Catholic funeral. Catholic funerals, which are recorded in parish registers, are celebrated only in a parish church.
At the funeral home, it is not possible to celebrate the Eucharist; It is also not possible to distribute communion. All priests and all deacons are informed of this and, out of solidarity with their Bishop, strictly comply with it. In case of doubt, it is best to make sure that the ministers presented by the funeral homes are indeed Catholic.

The Order of Christian Funerals states: *"In the funeral rites of her children, the Church celebrates, with faith, the Paschal mystery of Christ. Through baptism, they became members of Christ—who died and rose again. We pray that they may pass with Christ from death to life, that their souls may be purified, and that they may join all the saints in heaven, as we await the resurrection of the dead and the blessed hope of the coming of Christ."*

## The Celebration of Funerals in the Churh

- The family gathers at the parish church of their choosing.
- Relatives and friends are present to offer them care, sympathy, and friendship.
- By their presence in the church, the assembly affirms that the bonds of friendship and affection forged throughout life do not end with death.
- Those present are invited to reflect… to pray…and to listen to the Word of God.
- Those present are also invited to celebrate the Eucharist, should the family so desire—though no one is under any obligation to receive Communion when the time comes.
- Ultimately, all are gathered to remember that God recalls everything beautiful, true, and noble in the life of the deceased, and to ask Him to welcome them.
- If the Eucharist is celebrated, the funeral at the church is presided over by a priest. If a Liturgy of the Word is held, it may be presided over by a deacon or by an authorized layperson trained by the Church.

## The Body or the Ashes?

The Catholic Church is not opposed to cremation. Nevertheless, it favors celebrating the funerals of its members in the presence of the body. It does so in memory of Jesus, whose body was laid in the tomb.
Moreover, the presence of the body gives full meaning to the rite of farewell, which forms the final part of a funeral celebration. For it is the body that, through baptism, became the Dwelling Place of God and the Temple of the Trinity.
The Church therefore wishes that cremation, if chosen, take place after the funeral.

## The Prayer Gathering at the Funeral Home

- This gathering is presided over by a qualified person who is normally delegated, if not by the bishop, at least by the parish.
- If the person was suggested by the funeral home, it may be prudent to verify their status with the diocesan chancery.
- A farewell gathering at the funeral home comprises four moments:
  1. The welcome.
  2. The proclamation of the Word of God, that is, a passage from the Bible taken from the Old or New Testament.
  3. A spiritual reflection – a time of inwardness.
  4. A time of prayer (thanksgiving and petitions).