



AUSTRALIAN CATHOLIC BISHOPS CONFERENCE

Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith Publishes guidance on burials and conserving ashes in the case of cremation

**Media release
25 October 2016**

The Australian Catholic Bishops welcome a new document from the Vatican's Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith published today, 25 October 2016, regarding burying the deceased and conserving ashes when cremation is chosen.

Titled, '*Ad resurgendum cum Christo*' meaning '*To rise with Christ*', the document provides details about the doctrinal and pastoral reasons for choosing a burial. It also explains what is appropriate when conserving ashes in the case of cremation.

The Congregation highlighted that the contents of the document, '*To Rise with Christ*', are intended as a point of reference for the Church.

Archbishop Denis Hart, President of the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference said, "The new instruction, '*To rise with Christ*', affirms what the Church has always held with regard to cremation, reverence for the human remains in the body or in the ashes and the following burial".

Key points in the newly published document include:

- States the Church's preference for burial of the remains of the faithful
- Because of Christ, Christian death has a positive meaning. The Christian vision of death receives privileged expression in the liturgy of the Church: '*Indeed for your faithful, Lord, life is changed not ended, and, when this earthly dwelling turns to dust, an eternal dwelling is made ready for them in heaven*'.
- Following Christian tradition, the Church recommends that the bodies of the deceased be buried in cemeteries or other sacred places
- Burial is above all the most fitting way to express faith and hope in the resurrection of the body
- By burying the bodies of the faithful, the Church confirms her faith in the resurrection of the body, and intends to show the great dignity of the human body as an integral part of the human person whose body forms part of their identity
- Through the practice of burying the dead in cemeteries, in dedicated spaces within church buildings or their environs, Christian tradition has upheld the relationship between the living and the dead and has opposed any tendency to minimise, or relegate to the private sphere, the event of death and the meaning it has for Christians
- The Church raises no doctrinal objections to the practice of cremation
- The ashes of the faithful must be laid to rest in a sacred place, that is, in a cemetery or in dedicated spaces within church buildings or their environs
- This ensures they are not excluded from the prayers and remembrance of their family or the Christian community
- Conservation of the ashes in a private residence is not permitted
- Out of respect for the integrity and sacredness of both body and ashes, scattering or dividing ashes among family members is not favoured

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Note for journalists: The Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith promotes and explains the theology that underpins different aspects of the life of the Church