

Sacred Heart Catholic Church ~ Columbarium



A Final Resting Place for Parishioners, Their Families and Area Catholics

In 2018 a survey was conducted regarding the creation of a columbarium at Sacred Heart. Due to the overwhelmingly positive response, the parish is moving forward with this project. The intended spring 2020 launch was delayed by COVID-19 shortly following project approval by Bishop Hartmeyer.

At one time, the Church prohibited cremation, but on May 8, 1963, the Congregation for the Doctrine of Faith lifted this prohibition. This permission was incorporated into the revised *Code of Canon Law of 1963* as well as into the *Order of Christian Funerals*. Current regulations provide for it as an option to traditional earth or crypt interment.

You will note that cremation is in harmony with the Church's often-repeated reminder that "dust thou art, and unto dust thou shalt return." The practice of scattering or keeping cremated remains is not the reverent disposition that the Church requires. The ashes should be treated with the same respect and attention given to the body of the deceased. This makes a columbarium an ideal final resting place for the ashes.

Each niche will be covered with a granite faceplate that will be engraved with the name, and birth and death dates of the deceased. Each niche can hold two urns. The niche price is the same for use by one or two urns. The price covers the niche subscription, the faceplate, and perpetual care. Urn and engraving costs are separate, payable when niche is used.

Since a columbarium represents a departure from traditional interment practices, many parishioners have asked questions about this facility, its purpose, and arrangements for its use. We have attempted to provide answers to the most frequently asked questions.

Q: What is a Columbarium?

A: Columbarium is a system of small vaults (niches) to hold the ashes of the cremated deceased. In this beautiful peaceful setting, the Columbarium will afford parishioner's families and friends the opportunity to stay at their church home in death, surrounded by loved ones, and prayed for by generations to come.

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Q: Does the Catholic Church forbid cremation?

A: The Church has allowed for cremation since 1963, per Canon Law 1176 part 3.

Q: Physically, how is a columbarium constructed?

A: The niches are in a vertical wall, each covered with a faceplate with the names, and birth and death dates of the deceased. Each niche provides weatherproof protection for each urn within, which serves as a repository for the ashes.

Q: Why do some people choose cremation?

A: There are many reasons why people choose cremation. Since 1963, the number of Catholics choosing cremation has grown dramatically. Reasons include personal preferences, the cost of traditional burials, the potential difficulty of making visits to distant cemeteries, environmental concerns about the use of land and resources and the lack of cemeteries in our area, and the desire to keep the remains of loved ones nearby in a Catholic Columbarium. The Church teaches that cremated remains are to be treated with the same respect as the full body of the departed. Inurnment in a columbarium meets this requirement. Cremation is becoming an increasingly popular option overall. In 2018, over half of all final arrangements in the United States were cremations.

Q: Why should I choose a niche at Sacred Heart's Columbarium?

A: Burial within the church itself or in the adjacent churchyard was once a common practice. Historically, Christians from the earliest time have buried their dead in the consecrated areas near their place of worship where they could be remembered and their remains safeguarded. This columbarium is the first Catholic Columbarium in the Macon Deanery and provides "A Sacred Place". Sacred Heart is our spiritual home where our deceased loved ones will be prayed and cared for by the parish community, family and friends in faith and hope of the Resurrection for generations to come. The niches are affordably priced in comparison to a burial funeral. All of us one day will need a service such as the columbarium provides.

Q: How many niches will there be?

A: The initial construction will afford 360 niches in two panels of 180 niches each: 9 rows and 20 columns. The design supports expansion to a maximum of 1,440 niches.

Q: How are the ashes placed in the columbarium?

A: A compatible urn is provided to the funeral home, who will place the ashes in the urn following cremation. After the funeral rite, the urn is placed in the selected niche. A temporary faceplate will be used until the engraving is complete, at which time the engraved faceplate will be installed and the niche re-sealed.

Q: How will I select a niche?

A: Subscribers may identify their selection on the Columbarium layout by contacting the parish office to identify availability.

Q: How will the columbarium be funded?

A: Subscriptions, memorialization's and benefactions are intended to be the sole funding for the columbarium. Because of this and to support funding for the construction, pre-subscriptions are being offered at a discounted price. Niche costs will raise once construction begins. Construction will begin when the funding has been received.

Q: What is the cost of the columbarium niche?

A: During pre-construction, the columbarium offers three tiers of pricing: \$2750, \$2500, and \$2,250. This price includes perpetual care. Additional charges for the urn and engraving are due when the niche is put in use. Care of the grounds surrounding the Columbarium will be tastefully, continually, and perpetually provided and is a part of the Niche price.

Q: How will I obtain an urn?

A: The parish will provide urns for sale. To ensure the urns fit within the niche, it is strongly recommended that the parish's urns be used. Regardless, all urns must be approved by the parish for use.

Q: Are payment plans available?

A: All subscription payment is due in full at the time of purchase. Cash, check, or credit card are accepted. There is an additional charge for payment by credit card to cover the processing charge.

Q: May anyone purchase a niche at Sacred Heart?

A: Niches are available to parishioners, their immediate family, other Catholics, and others as approved.

Q: What funeral rites are celebrated when a person is cremated and inurned?

A: There are two options to choose from:

Option 1: The Church's preference is that the body be present at the vigil, which can be held at the church or the funeral home, and at the funeral Mass. After the Mass, the remains are returned to the funeral home for cremation and the inurnment done within the next few days. The funeral home director will provide details on the options and timing.

Option 2: The Funeral Rite may also be celebrated in the presence of cremated remains. During the liturgy, the cremated remains are treated with the same dignity and respect as the full body. After the Funeral Mass or rites, inurnment will follow directly with the cremated remains being placed in the Columbarium Niche.

Q: May family and friends attend the inurnment?

A: Yes, they are encouraged to attend. Consult with the parish office on details should Option 1 above be used, as it may take a few days for the cremation itself with inurnment to follow.

Q: Can Catholics from other local parishes use the columbarium?

A: The columbarium is available to any Catholic and their direct family members. During pre-construction, there will be no additional charge for non-parishioner.

Q: Where will the revenue go that is generated by the columbarium?

A: Part of the subscription fee for each niche will be treated as a donation and reported on your annual contribution statement. Niche reservation revenue will pay for the columbarium's construction, maintenance, and operations. Any revenue more than those needs will be used for the preservation of the columbarium via a perpetual care fund. Beyond this, columbarium funds should support the upkeep of the entire campus, and potentially general parish expenses. Columbarium financials will be maintained in a separate parish account.

Q: What proof will I have that I reserved a niche?

A: A contract will witness the 'Certificate of Right for Inurnment Agreement for Columbarium' with payment of the appropriate fee for the specified Niche. A copy of the contract will be held by you as well as kept on file at the church office. The family is responsible to advise the Church Office of any changes in phone numbers, addresses, or changes made to those that will be placed in the Niche. The use of the Columbarium does not constitute a sale of property but is merely the provisions of an inurnment. The Sacred Heart Columbarium is the property of the Roman Catholic Church, under the Bishop of Savannah.

Q: How are arrangements made for the engraving of the niche faceplate?

A: Inscriptions shall consist of names and dates of birth and death. They will be in the style approved by the Columbarium Committee and will be used in all niche inscriptions. The family will complete a 'Inscription Authorization Form' to assure accuracy of information provided to the engraver starting with the initial reservation process. The Columbarium Committee will make all arrangements for the actual engraving. A blank faceplate will be affixed to the niche until the engraving is complete.

Q: How are cremated remains transported?

A: The cremated remains will be placed inside the urn by the funeral home, and typically the funeral director will deliver the remains directly to Sacred Heart at the time of the funeral Mass. Initial transportation of the remains to the funeral home is coordinated with the funeral director to assure all documentation and laws are complied with. An urn for the cremains is required for inurnment.

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

A: No, that is not allowed. The principle of respect for cremated remains of the 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 acceptable practice – except in extraordinary circumstances.

Q: Can a non-Catholic be inurned in the columbarium? My spouse is not a Catholic and I want to be buried with my spouse. Are there any provisions whereby we can be placed in the same niche?

A: Yes, subject to parish approval if a spouse, parent, or child is Catholic that is allowed. Each niche holds two urns. Your non-Catholic spouse may have a funeral rite at the Columbarium and then be placed in the same Columbarium niche. All inurnment liturgies, however, will be in keeping with the Roman Catholic rites: exceptions require pastor approval.

Q: What happens at the funeral Mass with cremated remains?

A: A journey, which began at baptism, comes to conclusion as we enter eternal life. During the funeral Mass, the cremated remains are treated with the same dignity and respect as a deceased body. The remains are sealed in an urn, which is carried in processions by pallbearers and set upon a table where the coffin would normally be placed.

Q: Is a ritual conducted when the remains are inurned in the Columbarium?

A: Yes, it is. The Rite of Committal is like the service conducted at the gravesite in a cemetery.

Q: Must cremated remains be buried or inurned?

A: Yes, the cremated remains of the body should be treated with the same respect given to the human body from which they came. The cremated remains should be buried in a grave or entombed in a Mausoleum or Columbarium. 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 considered reverent disposition by the Catholic Church.

Q: May I decorate the area near my Niche?

A: The Columbarium is designed in a manner to be beautiful and serene. Additional decorations are not permitted in the area. The only exception is that a small flower arrangement may be left in the columbarium the week that a loved one is inurned.

Q: What companies will be used to build the columbarium?

A: Selected teammates include Azar-Walsh (design), Sheridan Construction, and Eickhof Columbarium (niches). Azar-Walsh and Sheridan designed and built the church, school, social hall, and offices – ensuring architectural compatibility with the Columbarium.

Q: What are the memorials

A: The Columbarium offers the opportunity to memorialize loved ones who are interred elsewhere. The memorial area will be located in the center of the columbarium near the cross. The memorial area will contain risers topped with bronze plaques holding individual bronze memorial tabs. Tabs may contain 1-3 lines of 20 characters each. Memorial tab cost is \$750.

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