

# DIOCESE OF SPRINGFIELD IN ILLINOIS

## OFFICE OF THE BISHOP

### Instruction on the Preservation of Ashes after Cremation

On December 9, 2023, His Eminence Víctor Manuel Cardinal Fernández, Prefect of the Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith, issued a "[Reply to His Eminence, Cardinal Matteo Maria Zuppi, Archbishop of Bologna, Regarding Two Questions About the Preservation of the Ashes of the Deceased Following Cremation.](#)" Earlier last year, on March 20, 2023, the Committee on Doctrine of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) issued a "[Statement on the Proper Disposition of Bodily Remains.](#)" Both of these documents followed the Instruction, "[Ad resurgendum cum Christo: Regarding the Burial of the Deceased and the Conservation of the Ashes in the Case of Cremation,](#)" published by the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith on August 15, 2016. In order to indicate the discipline to be followed regarding these matters in the Diocese of Springfield in Illinois, this instruction is issued in accordance with canon 34 §1 of the *Code of Canon Law*: "Instructions clarify the prescripts of laws and elaborate on and determine the methods to be observed in fulfilling them. They are given for the use of those whose duty it is to see that laws are executed and oblige them in the execution of the laws. Those who possess executive power legitimately issue such instructions within the limits of their competence."

1. In his reply to the two questions posed by Cardinal Zuppi, Cardinal Fernández wrote:

A) For the reasons listed above, a defined and permanent sacred place can be set aside for the commingled accumulation and preservation of the ashes of deceased baptized persons, indicating the identity of each person so as not to lose the memory of their names.

B) In addition, the ecclesiastical authority, in compliance with current civil norms, may consider and evaluate a request by a family to preserve in an appropriate way a minimal part of the ashes of their relative in a place of significance for the history of the deceased person, provided that every type of pantheistic, naturalistic, or nihilistic misunderstanding is ruled out and also provided that the ashes of the deceased are kept in a sacred place.

**Instruction on the Preservation of Ashes after Cremation**  
**January 25, 2024- Page 2**

2. As stipulated in paragraphs 5-6 of the Instruction *Ad resurgendum cum Christo*, “The reservation of the ashes of the departed in a sacred place ensures that they are not excluded from the prayers and remembrance of their family or the Christian community. It prevents the faithful departed from being forgotten, or their remains from being shown a lack of respect, which eventuality is possible, most especially once the immediately subsequent generation has too passed away. Also it prevents any unfitting or superstitious practices. For the reasons given above, the conservation of the ashes of the departed in a domestic residence is not permitted. Only in grave and exceptional cases dependent on cultural conditions of a localized nature, may the Ordinary, in agreement with the Episcopal Conference or the Synod of Bishops of the Oriental Churches, concede permission for the conservation of the ashes of the departed in a domestic residence. Nonetheless, the ashes may not be divided among various family members and due respect must be maintained regarding the circumstances of such a conservation.” **As Cardinal Fernández notes in the reply to Cardinal Zuppi, “This regulation still retains all its validity.”**

3. The USCCB Committee on Doctrine states in paragraph 6 of its “Statement on the Proper Disposition of Bodily Remains” (citing the paragraph numbers of the Instruction *Ad resurgendum cum Christo* in parentheses), “The basic requirement for showing proper respect to the ashes of the deceased is that they ‘be laid to rest in a sacred place’ (no. 5). They may not be kept permanently at home or divided among various family members (no. 6). They may not be scattered ‘in the air, on land, at sea or in some other way’ (no. 7). They may not be carried around encased in jewelry or other mementos (no. 7). They must be put in a sacred place, usually a cemetery, though it could possibly be a church or some other area that has been ‘set aside for this purpose, and so dedicated by the competent ecclesial authority’ (no. 5).”

4. As the competent ecclesial authority for the Diocese of Springfield in Illinois, I hereby instruct families of the deceased, parish priests, and funeral directors that there are no circumstances foreseen in this diocese whereby the commingled accumulation and preservation of the ashes of deceased baptized persons would be appropriate or permitted, nor would permission be given to preserve even a minimal part of the ashes of the deceased other than in a sacred place.

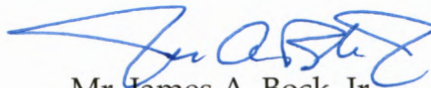
5. Particular law for the Diocese of Springfield in Illinois regarding the proper disposition of ashes after cremation remains fully in effect and can be found in [Diocesan Policies and Procedures Book IV, §1406 – Order of Christian Funerals](#), noting especially **Policy §1406.5 on Interment of Cremated Remains: “All of the cremated remains of a body shall be interred following the Rite of Committal. At no time and in no way shall the cremated remains be divided, separated, or interred in more than one place.”**

**Instruction on the Preservation of Ashes after Cremation**  
**January 25, 2024- Page 3**

Given at the Chancery this 25<sup>th</sup> day of January in the Year of Our Lord 2024, the Feast of the Conversion of Saint Paul.



Most Reverend Thomas John Paprocki  
Bishop of Springfield in Illinois



Mr. James A. Bock, Jr.  
Chancellor

