

We are required to bury the dead. What about when someone is cremated? Is it okay to have the ashes in an urn in your house? What about the ash bracelets and lockets that funeral homes now offer?

Canon Law states: *“The Church earnestly recommends that the pious custom of burying the bodies of the deceased be observed; nevertheless, the Church does not prohibit cremation unless it was chosen for reasons contrary to Christian doctrine.”* (Can. 1176) Cremation is an acceptable alternative as long as it is not the result of a denial of the resurrection of the body. If the option of cremation is chosen, it is also preferred that the cremation take place after the funeral liturgy. The funeral rites have been adapted, however, to allow for the presence of cremated remains in place of the body at the Funeral Mass.

With regard to respect for the ashes, the Order of Christian Funerals states: *“The cremated remains of a body should be treated with the same respect given to the human body from which they come. This includes the use of a worthy vessel to contain the ashes, the manner in which they are carried, the care and attention to appropriate placement and transport, and the final disposition. 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 the reverent disposition that the Church requires.”*

It is clear that is not okay to have ashes of a loved one in an urn in your house. The practice of wearing ash bracelets or lockets, although not specifically mentioned, does not meet the requirements outlined above for respecting the cremated remains, and would not be acceptable.

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