

To Dust You Shall Return: Today's Reality and Cremation

By Kathleen Conrad

"...Earth to earth, ashes to ashes, dust to dust." These words, prayed as part of the Catholic Rite of Committal, are becoming a very clear reality for us as cremation becomes more and more a choice people are making for themselves and for their loved ones. According to Minnesota Health Department statistics, in 1989 14.5% of people chose cremation; in 1999 that number nearly doubled to 28.3%; and now almost half of Minnesotans are choosing cremation. In the seven-county metropolitan area that number is even higher, with some counties approaching 60%.

Personal preference, ease of body disposition, the ecology and cost are the main reasons people cite for choosing cremation. Increasingly people are planning ahead and making arrangements for their own final disposition rather than leaving all of the decisions up to their survivors at the time of death. They are researching online, getting price lists from local funeral homes, and asking a lot of questions regarding cremation as an option. Included in this consumer mentality is the harsh reality of difficult economic times for people.

The mathematical reality is that the cost of cremation is significantly more affordable. In tough economic times its no surprise that many more consider this option.

After choosing cremation, what families do regarding what comes next fall into four main categories: *those who have some type of service* whether in a church or at a non-denominational celebration of life and interment may or may not follow; *those who have a memorial gathering* which is much like an open house and again interment may or may not follow; *those who pick up the cremated remains and take them home* perhaps to be scattered, saved until another loved one dies and then the remains of both interred together, or countless other personal choices; and *those who leave their*

loved one's cremated remains at the funeral home and pick them up at a later date (sometimes years later), or never pick them up at all.

In 1963, the Catholic Church began allowing cremation, and the standard practice was cremation after a funeral celebrated with the body present, or to have a Memorial Mass with no cremated remains present. In 1997, the American Bishops received an indult permitting cremated remains at the funeral Mass.



Today, the number of Catholics choosing cremation has reached 30%.

For Catholics, the options regarding cremation are clearly defined: celebration of

the Order of Christian Funerals with the body present in a casket then cremation followed by the Rite of Committal; celebration of the Order of Christian Funerals with the cremated remains present in an urn followed by the Rite of Committal; celebration of the funeral liturgy after cremation and the Rite of Committal have previously taken place.

As more and more Catholics experience the Order of Christian Funerals with cremated remains present or attend services at funeral homes and other churches where this is the case, cremation is becoming more acceptable, and even common. As this happens, many people who might formerly not have considered cremation for themselves or their loved ones are changing their minds. The day is fast approaching when we will see more urns and fewer caskets in our churches. The Church's instructions for dealing with cremated remains are clear, *"The cremated*

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MISSION

APM is a community of caring people committed to the Church's human service ministries and the support of each other in those ministries.

THE ROLE OF OUR MEMBERS

is one of leadership in calling people forth to respond to their baptism through ministry and in modeling new ways of ministering.

WE ARE DEDICATED TO NURTURING RELATIONSHIPS

with individuals and organizations within the Archdiocese of St. Paul & Minneapolis and beyond its boundaries.

WE ARE A COMMUNITY OF DISCERNMENT

seeking to discover and to implement ways that will strengthen and improve the quality of our ministry modeled after the life and teachings of Jesus.

From the Chair

Dear members,

Ever since my ordination as a 'deacon' in the Church, some of my siblings and friends think that I have got it 'covered' and no longer have to struggle with life and being a 'good Catholic'. There are a few of them, I must say that I do not try to dissuade (for reasons I'll not cover here). I do try to assure the rest that I by no means have it 'covered' and that I cannot, with out effort and prayer, live as one fully blessed by Christ's Resurrection.

Which brings me to my point; our theme this year of "living the Resurrection" has me pondering just how do we 'live' our salvation through Jesus Christ's Resurrection? I do not have an; 'one size fits all' or satisfactory answer to that. I do know that, for me, it is an everyday determination and often I need the witness of others and their living as such to bolster me.

Case in point; a good friend of mine, Jay (not his real name) lives just such a life. For all the time that I have known him; as he raised his family, owned and operated a successful business, was part of a faith community, he always gave and tithed his time, treasure and talent to make sure the poor and disadvantaged of the world had food and a chance to live with the things they needed. One of his favorite organizations that he supported was and is 'Feed My Starving Children', along with many others. As he approached retirement age, his plans were set – he would devote his full energy and time to help just such organizations to be successful.

God had other plans. Ten years ago, Jay suffered a severe brain aneurysm that took away his ability to do much of what he had planned. Many times he would wonder; "how could God do such a thing? All I wanted to do was to serve God through helping the poor, my neighbors with my time and resources".

The image I formed by witnessing Jay's life is one of him climbing up on the cross with Jesus, dying to his plans and his very self. As the years have gone by Jay has, in spite of his limitations of not being able to drive or control parts of his own body, he has found ways to continue to support and help in ministry to others (in more ways than he realizes). In fact, he still gets to fill bags of food for FMSC and even, through the gift of his wonderful children, had a chance to hand those same bags of food to the needy in Haiti. He has

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Memorializing Lives: an Example of Collaborative Ministry at Work

By Sr. Fran Donnelly, B.V.M.

One of the most rewarding ministries that I am currently involved in is one of partnership and outreach. Quarterly, The Catholic Cemeteries provides a committal and burial service for those families who have experienced a miscarriage. We work in conjunction with the HealthEast and Fairview Health Care Systems. Support is provided by Gill Brothers Funeral Homes and the hospitality ministry is from the Community Caring for Life committee at St. Peter's parish in Mendota. In addition to that systemic assistance we also have a retired deacon and a musician who actually lead the service.

It is one of those "it takes a village" stories. Feedback surely supports the notion that these individuals and families who have suffered this kind of loss need community, ritual and closure in order to move on. Families of all faith traditions participate in a Roman Catholic service at whatever level they are comfortable. Resurrection Cemetery provides the actual burial space and labor to respectfully lay these children to rest.

The service begins in the Chapel Mausoleum with prayer, music, readings and a reflection. Then all process, by car, to the actual grave site where the burial takes place, again with music and prayer from The Order of Christian Funerals. However, all are invited to place flowers and other mementos in the grave, if they wish. This always proves to be a poignant moment for families, especially if there are small children present.



Extended families are invited and many do come. The saddest ones are those women who are there alone. Again, the ministers of hospitality, as well as the staff representatives from the participating agencies are there to hand out tissues, flowers and to provide a hug or a shoulder. And another blessing of late is how some of these women are able to reach out to others. The sense of community and of not being in it alone is important.

After the service, people are invited to stay as long as they wish and are reminded that there will be a marker with the date, provided by The Catholic Cemeteries, so they will always be able to locate the specific grave site.

Refreshments are served by the women from St. Peter's who also provide that dear motherly/grandmotherly smile.

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truly reborn himself, resurrected from what seemed like a cruel trick from above, to a blessing and example of just how 'Living the Resurrection' is done.

It continues to amaze me how, we in pastoral care, are blessed by those we minister to and it is in just such service to the Church and neighbor that we know what it is to be 'resurrected'. When we listen to others stories and somehow help them to connect their story to Jesus, then we too live on the other side of the cross; we too are "Living the Resurrection".

God bless you and all you hold dear,
Deacon Al

League of Catholic Women celebrates 100 years of helping women and children

The League of Catholic Women is not your mother's women's club. What began in a tearoom in 1911 has evolved into a formidable organization of volunteers that provide support for single mothers, seniors, women veterans and children's literacy, to name a few. Today the 100-year-old League boasts 600 members, representing all walks of life – a diverse and dedicated group of all ages who enhance and value the personal growth of women.

The League's extraordinary history includes operating residences for single working women, a settlement house for immigrants, a shelter for fatherless children and their mothers; and group homes for girls and boys. Its highly successful First Impression program assists underprivileged women prepare for job interviews, providing professional clothing and coaching. And a scholarship fund offers grants to single mothers at St. Catherine's University and offers "By Your Side" mentoring to help them succeed.

Since 1951, amid the towering skyscrapers in downtown Minneapolis, the League has been housed in a little building with a big green door.

"We open our building's green door wide enough to receive all women," said Mary Ritten, the League's historian and centennial chair. "Social service projects expose us to a broader world and offer the chance to be a part of positive change in our community."

The League administers programs that have made an immeasurable impact on the community. The organization's social services attempt to answer needs that arise in each new decade: Emergency House for transitional housing in the 80s and the Aids Ministry in the 90s. In its centennial year, the League is launching Minneapolis Network, an initiative to interact with various north Minneapolis non-profits in community-building efforts. The League has also inaugurated Veterans Outreach, a cooperative effort with the VA that offers women vets and wives of vets the information they need to get on with life after deployment.

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This is something that I would like to see replicated at Gethsemane Cemetery in New Hope some day. And I know that many parishes do something similar at their parish cemeteries. If you wish to know more about this, please feel free to contact me. Also, if you care to come and experience the service for yourself, they are held on the first Saturday of November, February, May and August at 10 a.m. at Resurrection Cemetery in Mendota Heights. You would be most welcome.

Welcome New Member!

Hello, I am Anne Marie Bartlett, a returning member to APM and now serving as chair-elect on the board. Hopefully this article will give you a little glimmer into who I am.

I was a pastoral minister at St. John the Baptist in New Brighton from 2000-2007 and then stepped away to manage a shelter for women and children living with domestic violence. After doing that work for a few years, I had an opportunity to get back into parish work and am now working as the pastoral minister at Holy Name of Jesus in Medina. I am completing my first year.

It is so good to be back doing this work. We have a thriving BeFriender ministry at Holy Name and a very active senior ministry. I have had many new names and faces to put in my memory bank and this parish is hopping with activity. As fall approaches, the energy level is gearing up.

I earned my social work degree in 1994 at St. Catherine University and in 2008 I completed training as a spiritual director. I love having ongoing opportunities to grow professionally and personally.

My family life is wonderful. I have three adult children who have blessed me with four wild and crazy grandsons. We have great hockey games (I get two sticks), SORRY tournaments, movie nights and our youngest little guy, now one year old, is the center of our world when we are all together. Greg, Gabriel, Joey, and Brody are my guys.

I look forward to what this year on the APM board will bring to my life and those I will meet on the way. I am working with wonderfully talented, passionate and faith filled people in APM and I hope many of you reading this will find your way to some of the events over these coming months.

In Memoriam

Chief Petty Officer John Faas
Petty Officer 2nd Class Nicholas Spehar

Prayers

For Deacon Bob Wagner, for healing after surgery



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The Executive Board meets bi-monthly to implement the APM mission. APM members can play a vital role by helping to identify issues, needs, future leadership, and other concerns for the common good. Please call on any Board members listed above if you have suggestions or needs.

2011-2012 Board Meeting Dates:
 October 19, December 16, February 15, April 18 and June 20

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Just one of the League's inner-city efforts involves Risen Christ School (RCS) in South Minneapolis. The League secured and for years helped fund the position of Director of Volunteers at RCS, allowing the school to administer many programs, including providing tutors to its students as well as donating hundreds of "take home" books through the Children's Book Express program.

"We are extremely fortunate and grateful to the League for years of support from League volunteers," said Fran Rusciano Murnane, RCS's director of advancement. "Their time and talent add to the success of many of our highly successful initiatives from reading to the arts."

Mark Your Calendar Now!	
Program II November 17, 2011 1:00-3:30pm Lumen Christi St. Paul	Sr. Katarina Schuth
Winter Retreat January 27 Location TBD	Speaker TBD
Program III March 8, 2011 1:00-3:30pm St. Edward's Bloomington	Bernie Evans
Spring Banquet May 22 6-9pm Binz Refectory St. Paul	Speaker TBD

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remains of a body should be treated with the same respect given to the human body from which they come." (OCF#417)

The Church has also crafted beautiful prayers for the Rite of Committal, reminding us ***"that our bodies bear the imprint of the first creation, when they were fashioned from dust,"*** and that ***"in faith we remember, too, that by the new creation we also bear the image of Jesus who was raised to glory."*** (OCF#406) All of us blessed to preside at this Rite are grateful to have these words of comfort and reassurance to offer those assembled, and for ourselves.

No matter which choice a person makes, cremation or casket, the fact remains that ***"to dust we shall return."*** But for we who believe, there is also the ***"confident hope that one day God will raise us and transform our mortal bodies."*** (OCF#406)



in the Archdiocese of St. Paul * Minneapolis

The newsletter of the Association of Pastoral Ministers is published for its members as an expression of APM's mission. Input, suggestions and feedback from its members is valued and requested. Please direct these to any board member or email lamos@stpetersmendota.org.