

THE INTERMENT OF ASHES AND THEIR DISPERSAL AT SEA

The Funeral Service in the Book of Common Prayer contains this rubric:

In the case of the committal of ashes on land or at sea the Guidelines of the House of Bishops currently in force should be followed.

GUIDELINES OF THE HOUSE OF BISHOPS

1. The duty of burial of the dead enjoined on a minister in Canon 32 shall be taken to include the burial of ashes following cremation. In the context of Canon 32, “remains” shall be understood as including ashes after cremation.
2. The act of cremation is symbolically incomplete without interment.
3. The ashes of a cremated body, therefore, should be reverently buried in consecrated ground or in some place set aside for that purpose. They should be placed directly in the soil or buried in a container made of biodegradable material.
4. No ground may be consecrated (even as a Garden of Remembrance only for the interment of ashes) without the appropriate faculty from the Bishop of the Diocese, and without the appropriate permission of the civil authorities, including planning permission.
5. Such interment of ashes should be recorded in the Burial Register in like manner to other burials.
6. Ashes, once interred in consecrated ground or placed in a consecrated area (such as a columbarium) should not be moved or exhumed other than in exceptional circumstances, and then only under the supervision of the Incumbent, to be placed in another consecrated place. Such exhumation or removal would require a faculty from the Bishop.
7. When ashes are to be strewn at sea care should be taken to ensure that this happens in a seemly, practicable manner; taking into account the prevailing wind; and doing so at an adequate distance from the shore.
8. The Bishops are advised, and therefore, advise that it is inadvisable to try to deposit urns of ashes at sea; particularly because of the risk of these being washed ashore at some point in the future.
9. These guidelines pertain in all cases involving the rites and ministry of the Church of Ireland.

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