

ST. MARY OF THE VISITATION CATHOLIC PARISH COLUMBARIUM AND MEMORIAL GARDEN FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

Funerals are an important part of our parish life, and are an opportunity to experience God's mercy and love in the midst of pain and grief as our loved ones goes home to Jesus Christ. St. Mary of the Visitation is building a Columbarium onsite to meet the needs of our Parishioners that desire cremation and a final resting place near the Church. While our Parish Staff is always here to help you through the process, the following questions and answers are meant to help you determine if burial in Visitation's Columbarium is for you.

1. What is a Columbarium? A Columbarium is a structure composed of small enclosed niches for the interment of urns containing the ashes of our deceased parishioners. The word is derived from the Latin word columba which means the "dwelling place of a dove". This name may have been chosen because of the resemblance of the burial niches to dovecotes, or because the dove also is a symbol of the Holy Spirit whose presence is associated with the resting place of the faithful departed.

2. What is the teaching of the Catholic Church in regard to cremation? In 1963, the Catholic Church approved cremation for Catholics. The Catholic Church permits the cremation of the deceased, with the understanding the practice now undertaken is not from any disbelief in the resurrection of the body, but on account of financial or other pastoral considerations.

According to the Church, cremated remains should be buried or entombed and receive the Rite of Committal in accordance with the teaching of the Corporal Works of Mercy. The Church teaches the scattering of the remains, keeping them at home, or dividing them are not reverent dispositions.

Either the cremated remains or the body may be present for a funeral mass. The Church prefers that the body be present but it is not required. If no remains are present, a memorial mass would be appropriate. The Rite of Committal is performed at the Columbarium following the mass when the cremated remains are present or at a later date if the cremated remains are not present at the mass.

3. What is Inurnment and Interment? Inurnment describes the placement of a person's ashes in a niche in a Columbarium after cremation. Interment refers to the placement of a person's body in a casket in the ground or in a mausoleum.

4. What are the advantages of choosing the Columbarium as opposed to a cemetery? It is not so much a matter of advantage as much as it is choice. Many people choose to be buried in a Columbarium at their church for a strong desire to be laid to rest on the grounds they loved and served. They prefer the simplicity of the ceremony and prefer to preserve a nearness to the church and perpetuate a relationship which was a lifelong pursuit. Those who choose to be placed in a Columbarium at the church like its religious focus and the nearness to the church. The proximity makes it convenient for visits by loved ones and for periods of meditation and reflection.

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There can be cost advantages with cremation and burial in a Columbarium compared to a traditional burial in a cemetery. The cost to bury an urn in a cemetery is comparable to Columbarium burial costs depending on the number of plots required and cemetery gravesite costs. For these reasons, it is recommended you do your own cost comparison.

5. How were the Columbarium policies established? A Columbarium committee comprised of Father Joy; a Finance Committee representative; a Pastoral Council representative; a Building and Grounds Committee representative; and several volunteer Parish members was formed. The goals of the committee were to plan and develop the design, building, financing, contracts, policies, and operation of the Columbarium. An attorney with the Diocese provided final review of the policies to assure the rights of the Church and parishioners were protected.

6. How will the Columbarium be funded? The Columbarium will be funded from the building fund and niche sales.

7. Where will the Columbarium and Memorial Garden be located? The Columbarium Memorial Garden is located in the courtyard of St. Mary of the Visitation Catholic Church, just off the northeast corner of the church. This site and location provides an exceptionally beautiful, private site for grieving, prayer and meditation. The courtyard begins at Mary's Garden with Blessed Mother and ends at the Memorial Garden, where Sacred Heart of Jesus welcomes you.

8. How do I purchase a niche in the parish Columbarium? The cost outlined below is for one niche. Each niche holds up to two urns. The owner of the niche has the right to name up to two family members who will have the right to be inurned in the niche. No engraving is performed until an eligible family member has been inurned.

The cost of the niche is initially set at \$3,500 for parishioners, and \$4,000 for non-parishioners. The Columbarium Committee will occasionally review these prices, and make changes as needed.

The fee covers the urn, inurnment of cremated remains, opening and closing of the niche, inscribing the plaque, and maintenance of the Columbarium and Memorial Garden. The Church is not responsible for any other expense or cost. Any costs of cremation, transportation, and any attendant costs and expenses shall be the responsibility of and shall be paid by the person or persons at whose direction the cremated remains are deposited in the Columbarium.

9. How will the grounds be maintained? The Church maintains the Columbarium and Memorial Garden. A perpetual maintenance fund is established to provide for initial construction, ongoing operational costs, future maintenance, and possible expansion. This fund is self-sustaining from funds received solely from the sale of niches.

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10. What is the size of each niche and may I provide my own urn? Each niche is 12"x12"x12". The urn must meet the size requirements of 5.5" wide x 5.5" deep x 7" high, or if a vase style, 6 inches diameter by 10 inches high. St. Mary of the Visitation will provide urns. However, with the approval of the Pastor, the purchaser or their family can provide their own urn.

11. Who is eligible to purchase a Columbarium niche? The Columbarium is intended primarily for the use of St. Mary of the Visitation Catholic Church parishioners and their immediate family members; and others with prior approval of the Pastor and the Columbarium Board. Immediate family members do not need to be Catholic to be inurned in the Visitation Columbarium. Previous members of St. Mary's who have moved away, members of other Parishes that are current, active, contributing, registered members of area Catholic Churches may purchase a niche as well.

12. If my spouse or other family members are not Catholic, are they eligible for inurnment in the Columbarium? Yes. Each niche holds two urns. Your non-Catholic spouse or other family member can have a Rite of Committal and be placed in your Columbarium niche. All funeral services will be in keeping with Roman Catholic rites. Any exceptions will require approval by the Pastor.

13. How is "eligible family member" defined? Eligible family members are limited to the spouse, children, and parents of the purchaser.

14. May more than two people be interred in a niche? No. There is not sufficient space within a niche for more than two urns.

15. I purchased a niche to accommodate one person. If I later decide to add another person, may I do so? Yes, provided that the second person meets the qualifications previously described.

16. How do I make arrangements for cremation? Arrangements for cremation are made through a funeral home or other places that provide cremation services. Following are a few crematories in our immediate area:

Laughlin Service Funeral Home & Crematory 2320 Bob Wallace Ave SW, Huntsville, AL 35805 Phone: (256) 534-2471 Website: <https://www.laughlinservice.com/>

Spry Funeral Home and Crematory 2411 Memorial Parkway -Huntsville, AL 35810 Phone: (256) 536-6654 Website: www.spryfuneralhomes.com

Berryhill Funeral Home 2305 Memorial Pkwy NW, Huntsville, AL 35810 Phone: (256) 536-9197 Website: <https://www.berryhillfh.com/location/huntsville>

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Serenity Funeral Home 2505 University Dr NW, Huntsville, AL 35816 Phone: (256) 539-9693
Website: <https://www.serenityfuneralhm.com/>

Legacy Chapel Funeral Home & Crematory 15 Hughes Rd, Madison, AL 35758 Phone: (256) 325-5011 Website : www.legacychapelfunerals.com

17. How is the niche inscribed?

- a. A niche inscription is included in the purchase price of a Right to Inurnment.
- b. In the interest of maintaining the dignity and beauty of the Columbarium and Memorial Garden, the same type lettering (font, size, color, and the like) will be used for all niche inscriptions.
- c. The Church will have the sole responsibility for choosing materials, maintaining uniformity and procurement of inscriptions.
- d. Inscription style and content on the niche shall consist of:
 - i. Surnames and Christian names
 - ii. Dates of birth and death (month, day, and year)
 - iii. The only exception to this policy will be to include the rank of anyone who served in the military.

18. How do I make arrangements for the funeral? Your first contact should be with the office staff at St. Mary of the Visitation Catholic Church. A meeting time with the family will be arranged.

19. Can memorabilia be placed in the niche with the urn? Small items such as a rosary may be placed with the urn as space allows.

20. May the cremated remains of my pet be placed in the niche? No, but you may discuss with the pastor.

21. May I place flowers or other items in the Columbarium from time to time? No. This policy is established to keep the area free of the clutter. The Columbarium site will be perpetually maintained in a manner designed to be beautiful, serene, holy and edifying. On the day of an urn placement (i.e., the placing of an urn in a niche), flowers or plants may be placed in the Columbarium and Memorial Garden; such flowers or plants should be removed on the following day by the family.

The placing of any items, such as toys, signs, wreaths, ornaments or any other article is not permitted in or near the Columbarium and Memorial Garden. Any of these items will be removed and disposed of without notice. Nothing of either a permanent or temporary nature shall be placed in the Columbarium and Memorial Garden without prior written consent. The Church will maintain the Columbarium and Memorial Garden.

22. What are the Columbarium Hours? Visitation hours are daily from dawn to dusk.

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23. What happens if I move out of the area after I purchase a niche? Each case will be decided individually, but it is the intent to provide a refund of your original purchase price, less 25% to cover maintenance and administrative expenses. There will be no refund if the niche has been engraved.

24. What is the cost of the niche? The price of a niche in the Columbarium is initially set at \$3500 for Parishioners, and \$4,000 for non-Parishioners. We accept cash or check.

25. What if I don't see my question in this document? If you did not find the answers to your questions in the Columbarium "Frequently Asked Questions and Answers", please contact the St. Mary's office staff, or Columbarium Committee members.

If you are ready to purchase a niche and pay by check, you will make your check payable to St. Mary of the Visitation Catholic Church. You will select a niche location and sign the contract documents. Make sure you have the birth date/year for each individual named to be eligible to use the niche. Copies of all documents will be made for your records.

If you are purchasing a niche for a family member who has passed away, you will also fill out an Inscription Order Form to define how you want the niche front engraved.

COLUMBARIUM BOARD

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