

THE COLUMBARIUM

Would you be “promoting cremation” among the Catholic faithful?

There is no doubt that the idea of cremation has taken hold across the country. We will not be promoting cremation, but rather, addressing the need for decent Catholic burial of the remains of a loved one. Our promotional literature will make sure to state the Catholic teaching on death and burial indicating the preference for burial of a body in a cemetery or placing of cremated remains in a grave or columbarium.

Catholics who cremate do not always follow Church teaching with regard to the final disposition of the cremated remains. A simple survey of our local funeral homes indicated that most people do not bring the ashes to a cemetery for burial, but rather prefer to keep them at home, scatter them, make jewelry out of them, divide them among family members, or very often, leave them in funeral homes because they have no other plan for their disposition.

Very often these families will not celebrate any Catholic funeral ritual which is the right of every Catholic. “Direct cremations” mean no wake, no Mass, no burial. Others may have a Mass, a cremation, and then do nothing with the cremated remains. Funeral Directors normally do not suggest to families that they “should” have a Mass or burial of ashes.

Our Parish columbarium will give Catholics and their families a LOCAL place to keep the cremated remains with dignity in an active Church where Mass is celebrated. The ability to visit the columbarium after attending Sunday Mass is an added advantage.

What are the reasons why people do not follow the Catholic traditional funeral Rites?

According to local funeral directors, the principal reasons involve costs. A typical funeral will cost a family approximately \$10,000 plus cemetery costs. At St. John’s Cemetery, for example, a grave costs either \$5,800 or \$6,300 to purchase. In addition, the charge to open the grave is \$2,065 or \$2,575 depending on the day of the week. These necessary fees, coupled with the cost of caskets, outer vaults, where required, headstones, etc. make the cemetery and funeral costs very high.

A second reason often cited is that “...the deceased or the family is not religious.” This is the problem for fallen away Catholics who no longer feel comfortable with Church rituals. Lately, many families request “a priest at the wake” but no Mass. The result of these quick decisions stays with the family, especially if they are in possession of cremated remains. Even if a cremation takes place on the day of a funeral Mass, the ashes are not available to the family until a few days later. The thought of going out to the cemetery at that point often keeps them from doing anything.

We have heard people say that they have had their loved one’s remains for years and are worried about their disposition after they die. People seek closure well after the death of a loved one.

The parish columbarium will provide a dignified final resting place for those in these circumstances.

A MAIN TARGET GROUP of our columbarium sales will be for Catholic families who cremated loved ones a while ago and are still in possession of the cremated remains.

Local funeral directors have shown us rooms containing dozens of boxes of cremated remains which have never been called for by families. People also cite the distances involved in travelling to Catholic cemeteries and do not wish to deal with the death a second time days later. These local funeral directors have lauded our idea of a columbarium at Regina Pacis and indicated that in their opinion, “...they will be sold like hotcakes.”

How will the columbarium at Regina Pacis answer these concerns?

Since our primary intention is to address these pastoral issues, we will insist that in order to purchase a niche here, a Mass of the Resurrection must be celebrated for the deceased. We will also follow the “Rite of Inurnment of Cremated Remains” promulgated by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops.

The cost factors will be significantly less for any family choosing a niche for their deceased loved one. The main cost involved is the purchase of the niche. The price of a niche depends on where it is located in the columbarium and what kind of frontal piece is chosen (glass or marble.) There are no opening costs, head stones, outer vaults or any other items required to be purchased except a dignified urn to contain the remains. Niches will also be sold according to size. Some will be companion niches for couples, others for whole families—now and in the future. People will be paying for “the right to place the remains in the niche” and not for ownership of the niche itself which remains with the parish.

Another significant financial advantage will be the fact that any amount over the fair market value of the niche will be considered a “contribution” to the Church, and therefore, will be tax deductible to the purchaser. The final prices will be determined by the Board of Directors of the Columbarium. It is estimated that the lowest cost will be \$5,000 for a single niche.

Our parish columbarium will simply be another option for those who no longer wish to keep cremated remains at home, scatter them, or do nothing with them. It is an important pastoral opportunity to assure that Catholics learn and respect the Church’s teaching on death and the Resurrection. Of course, provisions will be made for indigent families of the parish.

Why should Regina Pacis parish have a columbarium and not other parishes?

Regina Pacis is a Papal Basilica which cannot be merged with another church. There are no Co-Basilicas. Future plans for churches in the Diocese will have to by-pass Regina Pacis for closing or merging because of its Basilica status. This is mentioned solely to indicate that we can offer families the security of knowing that their loved ones’ remains will be secure here for the future.

Are there Columbariums in other parish churches?

This idea of a parish columbarium is not a new idea. A simple google search of Catholic parishes with a columbarium will reveal that dozens of parishes across the country have been building them for years. The Cathedral Basilica of the Archdiocese of Los Angeles built 4500 niches in their crypt, and the Basilica of Old St. Patrick’s Cathedral in Manhattan has indoor and outdoor niches available.

We have made calls to many of these parishes and can report that they are very well received by people and many are building additional ones at the parish. Also, in many Latin American countries and in Europe, Catholic churches have been built and primarily supported by the income generated by parish Columbariums.

How many niches do you intend to house in Regina Pacis?

The total number has not been determined as of yet. The Architects (Acheson Doyle Partners) has been instructed “...not to create a cemetery in a church, but a worship site with a columbarium in it.” The emphasis will appear to be completely on the worship site (St. Joseph Chapel). Areas off to the sides of the Chapel will be used for the columbarium. We intend to build the columbarium in phases, as needed. The final plans for Phase One of the columbarium would include approximately 825 niches. It is currently estimated that Phase One of the columbarium will cost approximately \$450,000+. We have hired the firm of CMC Carrier to build the niches. They are one of the largest such firms who do this work. They will also offer supervision of our Sales and Marketing of the niches.

What kind of administrative overhead will be needed to manage the Columbarium?

In the first place, a volunteer qualified Board of Directors has been appointed to be legally and pastorally responsible for the operation of the columbarium. The legal services which are needed are currently being handled by the Firm of Reed Smith Inc. on a pro-bono basis. They have developed sample policies, contracts, and documents for the columbarium based on those used by Catholic and non-Catholic cemeteries in New York State.



COLUMBARIUM NICHES

SIDE CHAPEL

Reports will be available to the Diocesan Finance Department on a periodic basis upon their request. Essential record keeping will follow the same systems used by our own Catholic Cemeteries as well as others suggested by other Cemetery Service companies. Secretarial, sales and marketing staff will be hired to manage the daily needs of potential purchasers. The parish custodial and maintenance staff will manage these regular functions. Building permits and other construction related issues will be supervised by the Building Services department of the Diocese.

CONCLUSION

Former parishioners have called from all over the country to inquire about being buried in Regina. In a short time we will begin our “pre-construction sales” of the niches. People will be able to choose the size and location they wish to purchase and sign the contracts. We anticipate that the project will be completed by December 2015.

Rev. Msgr. Ronald T. Marino
Pastor

To learn more about this Project or to have someone contact you directly,
 please fill out the requested information,
 remove the section below and place it in the collection basket
 or simply mail it back to us.
 More information can also be obtained by calling the Rectory during regular Office Hours.

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BASILICA OF REGINA PACIS RECTORY
 1230 65TH STREET BROOKLYN, NY 11219
 Tel: 718-236-0909 Email: reginarectory@aol.com

Name: _____

Address: _____

Telephone/s: _____

Best time to call: _____

Email: _____

RESTORATION OF THE LOWER BASILICA

THE GOALS OF THE PROJECT

1. To restore the original lower church of Regina Pacis to a worship site.
2. To add a Columbarium to parts of the lower church.
3. To address the future financial security of the parish.

The restoration of the lower Church

Why do you wish to add another worship site to the Basilica?

We are not “adding” to the Basilica, but rather, restoring what was originally there. The current structure is empty and already there. Liturgical additions need to be made, as well as, upgrading of the HVAC system, the floor, the lighting, and the installation of an elevator. No excavation needs to take place.

The parish is very active with new prayer groups, requests for Memorial Masses, visits of tour groups who wish to celebrate Mass, Eucharistic adoration, etc. without disturbing activities taking place in the Basilica, and ethnic celebrations of all kinds. Another worship space would permit these and other activities to be scheduled without conflicts.

How much will it cost to do this restoration?

Bids have been solicited from various liturgical designers and contractors, and the best estimate we can give for the new Chapel will be approximately \$1,500,000.

How do you plan to raise the necessary funds for this restoration?

We have a fourfold funding plan:

1. Memorialization of the liturgical items by the parishioners.
2. Donations from parishioners and other benefactors.
3. Use of parish income generated from major rental agreements.
4. The pre-construction sales of the niches in the columbarium



SAINT JOSEPH'S CHAPEL