

## A NOTE FROM FATHER EICKHOFF

During my time of preparation for ordination to the priesthood I had the opportunity to live in the Holy Land for nine weeks. Much of that time was spent in Jerusalem. Among the many holy sites that I visited was the Temple Mount. It is at this site that the successive First, Second, and Third (the temple where Jesus often taught) Temple of God was located. The Third Temple was destroyed by the Romans and has never been rebuilt. It is still possible for Christians to visit the top of the Temple Mount and I was fortunate enough to do so.

It is a strange and even eerie experience to walk where the Temple of God once stood. To know that you might be at any moment standing in the exact spot where the innermost part of the Temple was located – the Holy of Holies – the place where the very presence of God was located and the place that it was forbidden for anyone to enter except for the High Priest. Yet, for the baptized Christian it should not be strange or eerie. For in the Sacrament of Baptism that very same presence of God comes to dwell within our very bodies as St. Paul wrote in the First Letter to the Corinthians:

*“Do you not know that your body is a temple of the holy Spirit within you”*

The body is not simply an empty vessel that is used during life and then discarded at death. It is an integral part of who we are as human beings and blessed by God through His grace in baptism. Our bodies are Temples of God and should be treated with great respect and honor. It is from this realization that our Christian reverence for the bodies of the dead is drawn. Last month the United States Catholic Conference of Bishops reaffirmed the Church’s teaching on the proper disposition of the human body after death. The primary way of showing honor to the human body after death is burial in a sacred location such as a cemetery. Cremation is considered the secondary way of burial so long as the entirety of the cremated remains are properly interred in a sacred location such as a cemetery or church. In both cases we as Christians always bear in mind the great hope of the resurrection from the dead that we have in Christ Jesus when our restored bodies will be rejoined to our souls that are in the safekeeping of God.

Sadly, there are some means of treating the bodies of the dead that do not show due respect for what was and will be again “temples of God.” Too often the family of the deceased will have the deceased’s body cremated and not immediately place the remains in a sacred location. This runs the risk of the remains never being placed in a sacred location if some other event – such as an untimely death – occurs before the final placement of the remains. Sometimes family members will divide up the cremated remains amongst themselves as if the body of a loved one was like property or money and not a temple of God. There are other forms of disposing of the body of the dead that end up destroying the body in its entirety or mixing the remains with the mundane things of the earth. These methods also do not show due reverence for the fact that the very Spirit of God dwelt within the body.

I highly encourage you who are reading this bulletin article to make known your wishes for your funeral and burial to your family members. You can contact Catholic Cemeteries of the Diocese of Joliet to get more information about burial and cremation. You can even contact St. Anne Parish and preplan your funeral Mass so that this task does not fall to your loved ones in an hour of grief.

Yours in Christ,

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Pastor