

УКРАЇНСЬКА КАТОЛИЦЬКА ЕДМОНТОНСЬКА ЄПАРХІЯ  
UKRAINIAN CATHOLIC EPARCHY OF EDMONTON

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*Policy re: FUNERAL RITES IN THE UKRAINIAN CATHOLIC EPARCHY OF EDMONTON*

*Effective: 1 July 2005*

To the Reverend Clergy in Pastoral Ministry in the Eparchy of Edmonton:

The funeral rites that our clergy are asked to provide for the souls in their care are diverse and at times challenging. It is especially in dealing with the grieving family and friends of the deceased that clergy are called upon to show profound pastoral sensitivity and prudence. The following is an attempt to provide some assistance in these matters.

**-1- Who is permitted a Christian Funeral?**

The principle for providing funeral rites for Ukrainian Catholics as well as others is found in *canon 875: Ecclesiastical funerals, with which the Church prays for spiritual assistance for the dead, honors their bodies, and at the same time brings solace of hope to the living, must be given to all the deceased Christian faithful and catechumens, unless they have been deprived of it by law.*

We see that the purpose of funerals concerns both the living as well as the deceased. For the deceased the Christian funeral provides spiritual assistance through prayer, while at the same time honoring the mortal remains, which were created by God. For the living the Christian funeral provides spiritual hope through prayer and liturgical rites both for the ones they loved and for themselves when confronted with death.

The only condition given in *canon 875* preventing a Christian funeral is if the deceased is deprived of a Christian funeral by Church law. To this is added *canon 877: An ecclesiastical funeral is to be denied to sinners to whom this cannot be granted without public scandal to the Christian faithful, unless before death they had given some signs of repentance.*

*Canon 875* and *canon 877* do not elaborate on what these laws or sins might be but remain general. Examples can be found in the Roman Catholic Code of Canon Law, which is more specific in denying funeral rites to: -i- notorious apostates, heretics and schismatics; -ii- those who for anti-Christian motives chose that their bodies be cremated; -iii- other manifest sinners to whom a church funeral could not be granted without public scandal to the faithful. (cf. *CIC canon 1184*)

One condition our *Code* considers is **public scandal**. This can be difficult to evaluate. It concerns what might be called notorious sinners known to the general public, as opposed to those, rightfully or not, who are not held in high esteem by a more restricted group. One way the pastor can approach funerals, which might give rise to various degrees of

public scandal, is to conduct the funeral rites in a Funeral Home or hall facility. If held in church the services generally called *Parastas* or *Panaxyda*, without the Divine Liturgy can be considered.

**Canon 877** also looks for some “**sign of repentance**”. This would include summoning a priest at the time of death, entering a confessional shortly before death, making an act of contrition, stating a desire to die in the state of grace, or making other evident attempts to be reconciled with God and the Church. (cf. Huels, *The Pastoral Companion*, (1995) p. 315)

In light of **canons 875 & 877** those who are living in **invalid marriages** may have a Church funeral if they had preserved their attachment to the Church and there is no scandal. (cf. Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, letter of 29 May 1973).

Persons who **committed suicide** should not be categorically deprived of full burial rites in the Church, considering their probable lack of mental freedom, and the need for the family and friends for the spiritual support of the funeral rites. (cf. Huels, *The Pastoral Companion*, (1995) p. 316)

The **continued neglect** of the Divine Liturgy and other Sacraments, even though the neglect of the delinquent Catholic is generally known, is not sufficient cause for the denial of funeral rites. (cf. Huels, *The Pastoral Companion*, (1995) p. 316)

## **-2- Cremation**

The burial of cremated remains is permitted according to **canon 876:3**: *Those who had opted for the cremation of their own body are to be granted an ecclesiastical funeral unless there is proof that their choice was motivated by reasons opposed to Christian life; but the funeral is to be so celebrated that it is clear that the Church prefers burial of bodies to cremation and that scandal is avoided.*

## **Policy of the Edmonton Eparchy**

In the Province of Alberta as throughout much of North America cremation is becoming a common practice. It is often thought to be less costly than a traditional funeral and it is also seen as a way of avoiding the sight of the lifeless body, remembering the deceased rather when still alive. In the Eparchy of Edmonton burial of cremated remains is permitted, with the strong recommendation that the cremation take place after the completion of the liturgical rites. If however, the decision has been made to cremate before the liturgical rites, clergy are permitted to carry out the liturgical rites but with the following restrictions: -i- if the cremated remains are brought to church there should be no procession in or out of the church with the clergy; -ii- if the cremated remains are brought into the church they should not be placed on the tetrapod but on a stand beside the tetrapod or elsewhere at the front of the nave. -iii- there should to be no traditional “last farewell” or viewing since that is intended for the body.

Clergy should try to explain the Church's belief in the resurrection of the body based especially on Christ's own bodily resurrection, found in the Gospel accounts.

### **-3- Funerals of non-Catholic Christians**

**Canon 670:2** also allows for the burial of non-Catholic Christians in our cemeteries, including funeral services officiated by non-Catholic Christian ministers. In the Eparchy of Edmonton the burial in Ukrainian Catholic cemeteries of former Ukrainian Catholics by ministers of other Christian denominations is permitted for humanitarian reasons so that the deceased may be close to other family members.

**Canon 876:1** deals with the funeral of non-Catholic Christians according to the ritual of the Ukrainian Catholic Church: *Baptized non-Catholics can be accorded an ecclesiastical funeral according to the prudent judgment of the local hierarchy, unless there is proof about their contrary wish and provided their own minister is not available.* In other words non-Catholic Christians can be given a funeral according the rites of the Ukrainian Catholic Church by our clergy with the following conditions: -i- the eparchial bishop approves; -ii- the deceased had not indicated opposition to this earlier; -ii- the minister of the deceased is not available.

### **-4- Funerals of non-baptized Persons**

The possibility of providing a funeral for certain non-baptized persons including children is provided for in **canon 876:2**: *Children, whose parents had intended to baptize them, and others who had seemed to be in some way close to the Church, but who died before they received baptism, can be given an ecclesiastical funeral according to the prudent judgment of the local hierarchy.*

The conditions include some indication the deceased was open to the Catholic Church and the local bishop has given his approval.

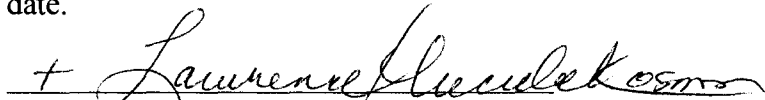
### **-5- Eulogies and Secular Customs**

The use of secular customs, practices and items associated with the deceased is to be avoided on church premises, restricting them rather to Funeral Homes and halls or reception areas.

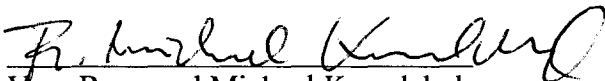
The Edmonton Eparchy policy concerning Eulogies will be issued separately.

### **Policy Approval**

This policy will take effect on 1 July 2005 and will be reviewed in three years from that date.



Most Reverend Lawrence Huculak OSBM  
Eparchial Bishop of Edmonton



Very Reverend Michael Kowalchyk  
Chancellor of the Edmonton Eparchy  
1 June 2005