

DIOCESAN NEWS

Revised ritual allows 'cremains' at funerals

By Lee Strong
Associate editor

The presence of cremated remains — cremains — is now officially permitted at funeral services in the United States, according to newly revised ritual.

"I'm so glad that we have it finally," commented Joan Workmaster, director of the Rochester Diocesan Office of Liturgy. "I know (Bishop Matthew H. Clark) has received letters from people saying how sad they were that they couldn't have the cremated remains at the funeral."

In a memo sent to pastors and pastoral administrators Sept. 24, her office advised that the Vatican has approved alternative prayer texts and new introductory material for the United States. They will be published as an appendix to the Order of Christian Funerals, the church's official ritual book for the final rites of passage for a deceased Catholic.

The Vatican had approved the presence of cremated remains at funeral services last March, but the bishops of the United States asked dioceses to wait until the Vatican approved revised prayer texts. That approval came Sept. 3.

In accord with a directive sent out by Bishop Anthony M. Pilla of Cleveland, president of the National Conference of Catholic Bishops, the revised ritual could be used as of Oct. 4 and must be used beginning Nov. 2.

Under the previous rules, Workmaster explained, either the body was brought to the church for a funeral Mass, then cremated — still the recommended option under the new guidelines — or the body was cremated and interred, and friends and relatives celebrated a memorial service.

The latter option, Workmaster noted, "was difficult on people."

The texts for the revised ritual have not been published yet, but Workmaster said parishes may go ahead with the services based on the reports and information they have already received. She suggested, however, that they contact her office to make sure that what they plan to do is appropriate.

Meanwhile, her office is beginning to arrange workshops on the revised funeral rites.

"The bishop has asked us to make sure we do some work with clergy and some of the people involved in grief ministry," she

reported. In particular, she added, people need to review ritual issues involving some of the symbolic elements in the funeral liturgy.

For example, she noted, when a funeral Mass is said with the body present, the coffin is covered with a white cloth called a pall. When cremated remains are present instead, the instructions for the liturgy say the remains are to be contained in a vessel put on a table or stand in the place normally occupied by the coffin. But the vessel is not to be covered with a pall.

"That's a symbol that goes strictly with the body and not with ashes," Workmaster remarked.

The changes come more than a year after the U.S. bishops first took up the issue. They voted in June 1996 to request an indult, or exception to general church law, that would allow each bishop to permit the presence of cremated remains at a funeral Mass. Rome approved that request in March 1997.

In November 1996, the bishops approved revised texts and introductory instructions. After Rome granted the indult, those texts were sent for approval, and Bishop Pilla asked bishops to hold off on use of the indult until the needed texts were approved.

Among the provisions of the new ritual, the Easter candle may be situated alongside the cremated remains, as it would be alongside the body.

The vessel containing the cremated remains "may be carried to its place in the entrance procession or may be placed on this table or stand sometime before the liturgy begins," the instructions say.

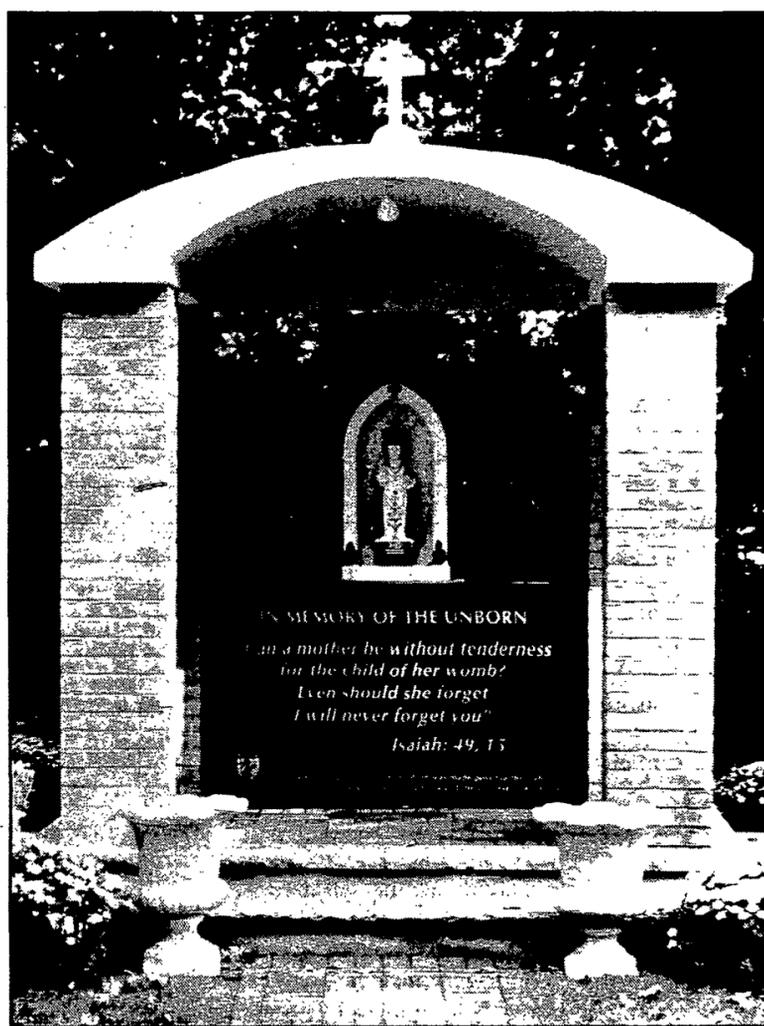
When the priest blesses the body with water, the standard prayer is, "In the waters of baptism (name) died with Christ and rose with him to new life. May he/she now share with him eternal glory."

The substitute prayer to be used for blessing the cremated remains of the body reads, "As our brother/sister (name) has died with the Lord, so may he/she live with him in glory."

The rite with cremated remains also uses an alternative dismissal at the end of the liturgy.

Church law once prohibited cremation for Catholics. In 1963 the Holy Office, forerunner of the Vatican's doctrinal congregation, issued a ruling allowing cremation under certain circumstances.

The new Code of Canon Law issued in



Greg Francis/Staff photographer

Never forget

Culminating a yearlong project, members of the Finger Lakes Conference of the Knights of Columbus were joined by more than 400 people Sept. 14 at St. Thomas the Apostle Church, 4536 St. Paul Blvd., Irondequoit, to dedicate a memorial to the unborn. Constructed behind the parish rectory, the monument was financed by \$20,000 in donations, including approximately \$7,000 for memorial bricks costing \$50 each. The monument includes a plaque quoting Isaiah 49:15, proclaiming that even if a mother forgets the "child of her womb," God will never forget. According to Conference Chairman Art Harris, the memorial is the largest of its kind built by any Knights group in the United States. Anyone interested in buying a memorial brick to extend the walkway may contact Harris at 716/594-2133.

1983 said the church recommends bodily interment but does not prohibit cremation unless it is done for reasons "contrary to Christian teaching."

Since 1969 the Catholic funeral ritual has made provision for the committal of cremated remains. But it had not made similar provision for the presence of cre-

mated remains, instead of the body, at the funeral Mass.

Recent studies indicate that more than 20 percent of U.S. deaths now end in cremation, and that is expected to rise to 33 percent or more within the next 15 years.

This story contains material from Catholic News Service.

Feds fund Fisher study of Venezuelans' views on democracy

By Rob Cullivan
Staff writer

ROCHESTER — Dr. Richard S. Hillman, chairman of the political science department at St. John Fisher College, has received a three-year \$100,000 start-up grant from the U.S. Information Agency to establish an Institute for the Study of Democracy and Human Rights.

In an Oct. 3 interview with the *Catholic Courier*, Hillman explained that the institute will be operated in conjunction with the Central University of Venezuela (UCV), a public university in the capital city of Caracas. It will study such democratic values as governmental accountability and human rights in Venezuela.

Hillman added that it was rare for a small college like Fisher to attract this kind of USIA grant that usually goes to large research institutions. He said that only 18 of the 87 proposals submitted to the federal agency this year were funded.

As part of the process of establishing the institute, Dr. Elsa Cardozo, coordinator of the Graduate Program in International Relations at UCV, is visiting Fisher this

month. Hillman and Cardozo will serve as director and associate director of the new institute respectively.

Hillman wants the institute to become permanent, receiving private support and participating in a variety of educational exchanges with schools, governments and other institutions in both Latin America and the United States.

"We believe that democracy can help to promote stability that mutually benefits everyone, including academics and people in the business community ...," he said.

Faculty members from both schools will spend semesters-in-residence teaching graduate and undergraduate programs at each other's institutions over the next three years, Cardozo and Hillman said. Each institution will work with the other in creating courses on democratic theory for new graduate programs in international studies at UCV and Fisher, they said.

To help launch the institute, earlier this year UCV students conducted the first part of a three-part survey of Venezuelans to assess attitudes toward democracy, Cardozo and Hillman said.

"We're finding that people want to par-

ticipate, but that they don't participate," Hillman said of the Venezuelans surveyed. "I think the most striking thing was how disillusioned people were with political parties and political leaders. They didn't even want to associate with them."

Cardozo added that Venezuela was not as bad off as many other Latin American countries. Since a democratic government was elected in 1959, the government had been a model of stability for Latin America. However, beginning in the late 1970s, a combination of economic, political and cultural problems has endangered the country's system, she said. Cardozo noted that her government survived two attempted military coups in 1992 as well as the removal of a corrupt president, Carlos Andres Perez, in 1993.

Cardozo added that she herself joined a three-month strike by university teachers earlier this year that garnered them a slight increase in salary. Such unrest has become more pronounced among professionals in recent years, she and Hillman said.

Hillman and Cardozo added that such institutions as the judiciary and the nation's police are viewed as biased towards

the wealthy by most Venezuelans, 70 percent of whom are lower-class. They added that journalists and students still enjoy public approval because students have demonstrated against the government, and journalists have exposed corruption.

Meanwhile, the Catholic Church — to which most Venezuelans pledge at least nominal allegiance — still commands respect, Hillman and Cardozo said. Both academics said the church has often played the role of mediator in Venezuela, staying above the political fray, and hence, keeping its hands clean of politics. However, they added that some Catholic academics have earned respect from the people for protesting against the government.

"They're very critical of the government and outspoken for social justice," Hillman said.

Hillman said he has already taught at UCV three times over the last decade as a Fulbright scholar. He said that after the institute's first three years, Fisher will host a conference in April 2000 to assess its progress on behalf of the Middle Atlantic Council of Latin American Studies, a professional and academic U.S. organization.