

A Few Ideas about Inurnment Ceremonies

Inurnment – placing an urn into a niche – is a ceremony that deserves to be marked and recognized, just as placing a casket into the ground does. It is the final step in the journey of saying goodbye.

The key is to take into account where the ceremony begins and where it concludes. It can begin and end in front of the niche in a cemetery – which is what is described here. Or it could begin in a private location, chapel, church, or outside setting, move to the niche location, and end with the placement of the urn into the niche. If you plan a funeral prior to inurnment (right before or even a long time before, take a look at [typical funeral template elements](#) to help structure a funeral or memorial, then conclude with something shorter at the niche.

Ceremony at the Niche

This ceremony is near the open niche at a cemetery or funeral home. Have a small altar with the urn on it – it is not yet inside the niche. Decorate with flowers, photos, a candle, or momentos, or leave plain with just the urn on it.

Welcome

Take time to introduce yourself, turn off cell phones and let people know what to expect. Say that we are here to be together to say goodbye to <name>. Acknowledge those who are not able to be present today.

Let's take a moment to reflect on <name>, together and in shared silence.

Prayer, blessing, or moment of silence

Take a look at [our selection of prayers and blessings for ideas](#). Here is one:

For every memory of love and joy,
every memory of life well-lived
and every sorrow shared with us,
we give thanks.
Heal any memories of hurt and failure
Give us the wisdom and grace
To use aright the time that is left here on earth, for the sake of love.
Amen

Reflect on goodbye

We are all here to say goodbye for the final time to <name>.

This container that holds the remains of <his/her> body, that has borne <his/her> all his life from birth to death, that gave <him/her> breath to live and sight to see, that has served <his/her> every need, that has shown you the beauty of <his/her> unique person in its eyes and made you aware of <his/her> presence in your heart, and without which <he/she> would be a mystery to you; we now return to its source with the grace it deserves from us, without our attachment to it but with our lasting love for <him/her>.

Invitation to touch the urn

Ask people to come up and touch the urn, and take a moment to say goodbye. If the niche is reachable, this would best be done after the urn is placed in the niche. If the niche is unreachable (high up, for example), do it before it's placed in the niche.

The urn is placed in the niche

Ask people to remain silent while the urn is placed. Then, if it's in reach, invite all to come up, put their hand on the urn, and say a silent goodbye. (see above)

Song

It is powerful for the group to sing together to end the ceremony. If you have a singer who can lead in a song that is known or easily followed, consider having them sing here. If not, you could bring a song on a player and have people sing. Or, just play the song and listen. (But all singing is much more special.)

Conclusion

Mention what is happening after this concludes – for example if people are gathering after for refreshments. Then a simple closing and a few simple words of gratitude are all that's needed.