

Official Archpastoral Guidelines

by Metropolitan Methodios

In response to questions concerning the official position of the Metropolis, please be apprised of the following:

1. Cremation: Because the Orthodox Faith affirms the fundamental goodness of creation, it understands the body to be an integral part of the human person and the temple of the Holy Spirit, and expects the resurrection of the dead. The Church considers cremation to be the deliberate desecration and destruction of what God has made and ordained for us. The Church instead insists that the body be buried so that the natural physical process of decomposition may take place. The Church does not grant funerals, either in the sanctuary, or at the funeral home, or at any other place, to persons who have chosen to be cremated. Additionally, memorial services with kolyva (boiled wheat) are not allowed in such instances, inasmuch as the similarity between the “kernel of wheat” and the “body” has been intentionally destroyed.

2. Suicide: Suicide, the taking of one’s own life, is self–murder and as such, a sin. More importantly, it may be evidence of a lack of faith in our loving, forgiving, sustaining God. If a person has committed suicide as a result of a belief that such an action is rationally or ethically defensible, the Orthodox Church denies that person a Church funeral, because such beliefs and actions separate a person from the community of faith. The Church shows compassion, however, on those who have taken their own life as a result of mental illness or severe emotional stress, when a condition of impaired rationality can be verified by a physician.

3. Autopsy: When a person dies for reasons that are uncertain, a qualified medical examiner may, with the permission of the next of kin, perform an autopsy to determine the cause of death. In some

states, this is required by law. In all cases, however, the Orthodox Church expects that the body of the deceased be treated with respect and dignity.

4. Funerals: Concerning the funeral service itself, our Parish Priests are often approached to include hymns from other traditions, both Christian and non-Christian. Some families have even requested that secular songs be permitted during the funeral service. This practice is foreign to the ethos and tradition of the Orthodox Church. Therefore, non-Orthodox hymns are not permitted prior, during or following the funeral service held in Parishes of the Metropolis of Boston.

At the end of the funeral service, the priest will offer the eulogy. Laymen are not permitted to speak. Those wishing to offer reflections are welcome to do so at the funeral home, the gravesite or at the memorial meal following services.

Priests and Parishes in the Metropolis of Boston are required to abide by these guidelines.

January 27, 2012