

attitudes possible. This led to Dutch Catholics no longer experiencing processions and various other public rituals as essential for their position and identity. These new attitudes permitted a deconstruction of the ban on processions, and therefore of the processional question.

Faith in cremation liturgy: A pastoral-liturgical research on cremation liturgy within a Roman-Catholic context*

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The liturgy for cremation is from various perspectives a specific phenomenon of christian communication. First of all it is a ritual concerning the human experience of *death*. It deals with handling death in a meaningful way. Secondly cremation liturgy is one of the so called life cycle liturgies. The participants of these rituals differ in religious profile from participants at the sunday mass. Thirdly there has been no empirical research concerning cremation liturgy. These aspects motivated us to choose cremation liturgy as our research object.

In the Roman Catholic Church cremation is allowed for catholics only since Vaticanum II and the National Conferences of Bishops have published models for cremation liturgy. Recently an investigation brought to light that these church approved models are not fully in use in parishes in the Netherlands any longer. Pastors create their own models from various components, according to their own convictions and to the situation of the deceased and the relatives. This situation raises the question of adequacy: what is from a pastoralliturgical point of view a good liturgy of cremation? In our study we report an empirical research project concerning cremation liturgy in a Dutch Roman-Catholic context.

The first chapter sketches the context of Roman-Catholic cremation liturgy today. From several perspectives the cultural situation of death and mourning, death rituals and cremation liturgy is outlined. What are the consequences of the process of modernisation of society for the construction of meaning in the situation of death? Is death still hidden from public discourse? Processes of rationalisation, medicalisation, compartmentalisation, desacralisation and individualisation are discussed. We stress that mourning has become a process which lays a heavy burden on the shoulders of the individual. Also the construction of a meaningful ritual of cremation is complicated by the pluralistic composition of the group of participants in view of their religious attitudes and praxis. Moreover the attitudes of priests and other pastors to cremation and to the wishes of participants who are at a distance to the church and the eucharist are not always the same. Many mourners who request a catholic funeral feel insecure about the ritual of cremation, the christian faith and the attitude of the pastor. We argue that the church has to fulfil an important task in supporting mourners by giving them the opportunity to construct a meaningful christian ritual for cremation in which they can express their religious identity.

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The second chapter develops a pastoral-liturgical point of view from which an empirical research trajectory is designed. Two criteria for adequacy are proposed. First of all liturgy is described as symbolic human action which expresses religious identity. True cremation liturgy expresses the religious convictions and feelings of the participants. Secondly cremation liturgy should meet with the wishes and expectations of the relatives and intimate friends of the deceased. These two criteria are motivated by concepts from the Scripture and systematic theology. In order to answer the question to what extent the praxis of Roman-Catholic cremation liturgy deals with these criteria a research design was constructed based on insights from symbolic interactionism. In this design cremation is described as a social act, with the aspects impulse, perspective, manipulation and consummation.

The third chapter describes the empirical research in detail. Questions are formulated, methods are discussed. Twelve celebrations are analysed and twenty-four participants were subject to an in-depth-interview. They were asked about their wishes and expectations concerning the cremation liturgy, their relation to the deceased, their experience of the funeral and their religious identity. These facts were compared with the description of the celebrations. Can the factual liturgy be seen as an expression of the religious identity of the participants? Did the participants get what they wanted? These questions were answered at an individual level. More general conclusions were drawn about the adequacy of the cremation liturgy in a concluding paragraph. The wishes and expectations of participants were brought together in a profile of expectations with respect to the cremation liturgy. People expect a personal celebration with the possibility of a dialogue about the details of form and contents of the liturgy. Generally spoken most of the participants are satisfied with the way in which pastors deal with their wishes. We must say, however, that the liturgy for cremation is to a lesser degree adequate with respect to the second criterion. The expression of religious identity at the aspects of liturgical model, prayer, concepts of life after death, blessing of the deceased and personal feelings was insufficient in most of the cases. Most of the attention was paid to the person, biography and religious identity of the deceased. The focus of the pastors and of the mourners is to model the service to the religious identity of the person who passed away. The deceased is the most important reference other in the construction of the definition of the situation of cremation liturgy.

In the fourth chapter we reflect on the results of the empirical investigation from a pastoralliturgical point of view. We mean that the primary goal of cremation liturgy is to sustain mourners in their grief and mourning. Leading question is in what way the praxis of cremation liturgy can become more adequate, especially with regard to the expression of religious identity. First we reflect on the profile of expectations: can a pastor give the participants all they want? Secondly we stress the importance of the expression of the religious identity of the relatives and intimate friends, and present some suggestions in order to improve the expression of religious identity in relation to the five aspects: liturgical model, prayer, concepts of life after death, blessing of the deceased and personal feelings. In a concluding paragraph we suggest pastoral diagnostics as a tool for the preparation of cremation liturgy. This pastoral diagnostics should contain a social diagnosis, an investigation in the expectations of het participants and a religious diagnosis. These suggestions lead to a reflection on church policy about who should preside in cremation liturgy. Our plea is to increase the role of well trained volunteers.