



CEMETERY ACTIVITY

DIOCESE OF MANCHESTER

INTRODUCTION

There are 67 Catholic cemeteries in the Diocese of Manchester, all operated by parishes. In 2011, Bishop McCormack established a diocesan Catholic Cemetery Committee to study the current financial situation involving cemeteries and to make recommendations to assist parishes in facing the many challenges related to operating cemeteries. Specifically, the Bishop asked for recommendations on the following matters:

- How to organize the Catholic cemeteries for more efficient operations
- How to coordinate with local municipalities and third-party contractors to maintain cemeteries
- How to update and revise diocesan policies, including *Rules & Regulations for Cemeteries*
- How to utilize all Catholic-approved methods for burial to maximize cemetery space
- How to energize the ministry of providing Catholic burial services through more visible and tangible resources

Mission Statement

The Catholic Cemeteries within the Diocese of Manchester carry out the sacred duty of providing a dignified Christian burial for all of our beloved faithful.

We dedicate ourselves to the reverential function of burying the dead and ensuring the respectful care for the grounds in which their mortal remains rest.

We are committed to comforting the sorrowful and promoting a spirit of Christian compassion and counsel through liturgical celebrations and other opportunities for traditional Catholic prayer in the cemetery.

We confirm our responsibility for stewardship of the resources of our Cemeteries, and our fulfillment of the Church's mission under the direction of the Bishop of Manchester.

We proclaim through our words and actions, the sacredness of the human body, our belief in the Resurrection, and our hope in Our Lord's promise of eternal life.

COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Very Rev. Daniel O.
Lamothe, VF

Rev. Michael E. Gendron

Rev. Marcel I. Martel

Rev. Robert E. Gorski
Moderator of the Curia

Kevin C. Cody
Superintendent
Mt. Calvary & Holy Cross
Cemeteries

Diane Murphy Quinlan
Chancellor

Paul F. Harrington
Cabinet Secretary
for Real Estate

Steven R. McManis
Consultant and
Project Manager

SEPTEMBER 2012

STATUS REPORT

Cemetery Survey

Last summer, a survey was sent to each pastor responsible for cemeteries. We very much appreciate that 100% of pastors completed and returned these forms. The survey captured information in the following six categories:

♦Organization ♦Finance ♦Operations ♦Personnel ♦Marketing ♦Development

The entire summary report is available upon request, but several of the informational highlights from the 67 surveys returned are below:

30% of parishes with a cemetery have digitized records; 70% use written records or cards

20% list cemetery contact information on their parish bulletin

73% employ the diocesan Rules & Regulations as their operating standard

66% use parish or cemetery staff for maintenance; 34% use a third-party contractor

39% use parish or cemetery staff for burial operations; 61% use a third-party contractor

30% have written procedures for burials

47% perform less than 10 traditional interments per year

57% perform less than 10 cremation interments per year

75% do not advertise the cemetery in any manner

75% offer pre-need sales of lots and other services

85% produce an annual financial statement

24% produce an annual operating budget

19% have a long-range funding plan

30% of cemeteries with staff have written job descriptions

15% have developed a long-range master plan for the cemetery

35% hold a Memorial Day Liturgy at their cemeteries

The data from this survey helped the Committee prioritize key issues and focus on areas of need. The Committee is in the process of formulating a plan to identify action items and initiate work with pastors and their cemetery operations.

Rules & Regulations

A review of the diocesan Rules and Regulations pertaining to cemeteries indicated an update was appropriate at this time. The Committee is in the process of standardizing these operating procedures. Once completed and adopted, they will serve as the foundation for all Catholic cemeteries within the Diocese of Manchester. While some parishes may wish to supplement this document with additional provisions unique to their cemetery operations, the diocesan *Rules and Regulations* will serve as the consistent diocesan policy for general cemetery guidelines. The Committee expects to publish and distribute the revised version in the fall of 2012.

Cemetery Forum

In 1999, the Diocese of Manchester conducted a day-long forum on cemeteries. The topics discussed at the forum included *New Directions for Catholic Cemeteries, Guidelines for Burial in Catholic Cemeteries, Concerns in Managing Cemeteries, and Cemeteries Working Together*. While many of those same agenda items are pertinent today, there are certainly additional topics that have arisen in the context of this ministry which are necessary to address in order to operate successfully in the 21st century and meet the needs and desires of our faithful. The Committee believes a forum would be beneficial at this juncture, and is in the process of planning a day-long program with expert speakers and opportunities for pastors to voice their experiences and concerns related to operating cemeteries. More details on the timing and agenda for this session will be forthcoming.

Communication

In an effort to further educate and inform our faithful about the benefits of a Catholic burial, the availability of Catholic cemeteries in our diocese, and the Church's teaching on Catholic funerals, cremation, and burial, the Committee is developing a new section of the website of the Diocese of Manchester that highlights these topics. The webpage will include, but will not be limited to, a directory of all Roman Catholic cemeteries in the Diocese of Manchester, a map showing geographic locations by deanery, a copy of the diocesan *Rules and Regulations for Cemeteries*, as well as the *Guidelines for Funerals, Cremation and Burial* from the Office for Worship. The Committee believes that the availability of material in this format will coordinate with efforts each parish may have already implemented on their own websites. Links can easily be established to create an enhanced library of resource information and up-to-date guidelines.

Other

If you have any information or comments that you believe may be helpful to the committee in completing its work, please contact Steve McManis at smcmanis@riskmgmt.rcbm.org.