

DIOCESE OF MANCHESTER MEMORANDUM

MEMO

To: Pastors with Cemeteries, Directors of Cemeteries, and Business Managers of Cemeteries
From: David Gabert, Director of Cemetery Operations
Date: March 27, 2020
RE: Update 3 - Cemetery Operations as Essential and the Coronavirus Pandemic

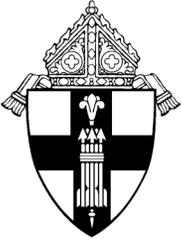
As you may know, effective March 27, 2020 at 11:59 p.m. the State of New Hampshire will be on a “stay at home” order. While this directive requires all non-essential employees to remain at home, it also identifies entities that provide essential services. Entities that provide essential services are to “continue to operate with necessary staff to complete critical and essential functions.” Included on the list of essential employees are ***“workers performing mortuary services and workers at funeral homes, crematoriums, and cemeteries.”***

Given this directive, we are to make every effort to keep our Catholic cemeteries operational. In doing so however, we must always be concerned for the health and welfare of our staff and others. Essential workers are “urged to follow social distancing protocols for employees in accordance with guidance from the Department of Public Health, including but not limited to:

1. Prohibiting all gatherings with more than 10 individuals;
2. Keeping all personnel six feet apart, and;
3. Encouraging employees to stay home when sick, and sending home those who report feeling ill or display symptoms.”

In addition to this, I continue to offer the following for cemetery personnel continuing in their ministries:

4. When possible, administrative staff are to be encouraged to continue their operations remotely. The executive order states that essential staff that ***can*** work from home cannot be required to report to the organization’s physical facility;
5. Limit public access to cemetery offices and other indoor facilities;
6. Gatherings are ***not*** to take place indoors in our cemetery chapels or facilities;
7. Everyone is to remain six feet from each other including independent contractors and funeral home personnel;
8. Limit lot sale presentations to “at need only” while keeping a six foot distance and encourage on-line or phone arrangements;
9. Suspend pre-need sales of lots and memorials unless they can be conducted on-line or by phone;
10. Continue wiping down surfaces, credit cards, pens, the interior of vehicles, equipment, tools and etc;
11. Continue to wash hands frequently (for at least 20 seconds or two Hail Mary’s), especially after blowing your nose, coughing, or sneezing; going to the bathroom; and before eating or preparing food;



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12. Keep families and staff informed of these precautionary measures – post friendly “reminder” signs in conspicuous locations;
13. Wear gloves when handling a casket, equipment, burial permits, lot licenses, body receipts, payment, and when opening mail;
14. For our larger cemeteries schedule staff in rotating shifts, with one group staying home to ensure coverage in the event of staff illness;
15. Limit staff from riding in vehicles together – including cemetery trucks and other vehicles, and;
16. Visit the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) site via the following link <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/faq.html#funerals>]. This site offers valuable information and is updated regularly.

Please know that we are indebted to you for carrying out one of the Church’s most essential ministries - to provide a sacred resting place for the faithful who await the Resurrection. While this is a difficult time for all of us, we remember that we are a community of faith, and together we will get through these difficult times. Let us continue to pray for all those affected by this virus.

As always, don’t hesitate to call or e-mail me with any questions or concerns at (603) 529-0481 or (603) 486-3038, or by email at dgabert@rcbm.org.