



## Diocese of Manchester

**To:** Pastors/Administrators, Cemetery Directors, Cemetery Record Keepers, and Staff

**From:** Deacon Kevin Cody, Director of Cemetery Operations

**Date:** April 15, 2026

**RE:** Importance of Memorial Day for Catholic Cemeteries

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Having just celebrated the great Feast of Easter, it's hard to believe that another Memorial Day will soon be upon us (some of you still have snow on the ground)! We all know that Memorial Day is a time to solemnly honor all men and women who have died in service of our country. It is also a time to remind Catholics that there are 66 Roman Catholic Cemeteries across the Diocese of Manchester that are more than burial grounds; they are sacred places of worship, prayer and meditation, monuments to our faith, and witness to life everlasting!

There will be thousands of visitors that will come to our cemeteries on Memorial Day weekend – some for the first time. First impressions are extremely important because they tend to be lasting, even if they are not 100% accurate. Remember, a first impression is made only once - make it a good one. With that in mind, now is the time to properly plan for this weekend. The following are some ideas that can help prepare for this day along with some best practices that can be implemented throughout the year. It should be noted that cemetery management cannot and are not expected to implement all these ideas for the upcoming Memorial Day weekend:

- Publicize important Cemetery Specific Supplemental Rules such as for decorations, flags and flowers. Define where/when these items can be placed down, and when they must be picked up. Complaints can be mitigated if these rules are written in parish bulletins, local newspapers, websites, social media accounts and explained after Masses.
- Publicize any Memorial Day Services that you plan on having. Are you having a Mass at the cemetery; what time and where? What happens when it rains; what is the backup plan? Invite people/groups to your cemetery such as veteran groups, the Knights of Columbus, women's groups, youth groups and other parish organizations.
- As a veteran, one of the first things I notice when visiting cemeteries, especially at Memorial Day, is any Flag that is displayed from the Flagpoles. Has winter taken its toll on it? Is the flag tattered or torn or faded; does the cemetery need a new flag or rope on the pole? What about the flags that families have left at the graves; are they in good condition or should they be cleaned up? As a reminder, any worn flag should be retired properly. There are many veterans' groups that can help with this.
- Walk through the cemetery using a critical eye to identify all maintenance needs and begin to consider what improvements will be necessary prior to Memorial Day weekend, the rest of the year, and for the next few years. Set your priorities as to what

needs to be done immediately for safety and aesthetics and what will be part of the cemetery's future capital plans.

- As people enter the cemetery, the first thing that is seen is the entranceway itself. Make entrances inviting by improving the landscaping, repairing signs, repairing fences and entrance archways as well as picking up any trash in and outside of the cemetery.
- Meet with all employees and independent contractors to ensure that they will be able to perform their general duties prior to Memorial Day. It is vital that spring cleanup and cutting/trimming the lawn occur prior to this weekend.
- Make sure all equipment has been maintained and is properly working. Now is the time to do this.
- Have a back-up plan if your cemetery workers or independent contractor are unable to get the job done. Is there another contractor that can be used in case the equipment fails or someone is unable to complete the pre-Memorial Day maintenance?
- You can ask volunteers or have staff plant flowers at entrances and in conspicuous locations around the cemetery.
- Fill in sunken graves and potholes, fix the roads where possible, trim trees and shrubs, reset monuments/markers that are down, clean statues and benches that belong to the cemetery and clean up unsightly views (including dirt piles and scattered debris).
- Prepare written processes for employees, independent contractors, funeral homes, and memorial/monument companies.
- Ensure that all cemetery contact information is on the parish website and bulletin and is up to date.
- Support local veteran groups in their efforts to honor the deceased service members at the cemetery.
- Review and use the Diocesan standardized forms that can found on the Cemetery Office website at [Resources for Cemetery Staff - Diocese of Manchester \(catholicnh.org\)](https://www.catholicnh.org/resources-for-cemetery-staff).
- Hand out the Diocese of Manchester Cemetery Rules and Regulations and Cemetery Specific Supplemental Rules to all individuals purchasing a Lot License or visitors that have questions.
- Post and put out remaining Catholic cemetery flyers that were provide by the Cemetery Office in fall of 2025.
- Present information on the cemetery at all Masses the weekend before Memorial Day and incorporate the importance of Catholic Cemeteries into homilies. Go to [Resources for Cemetery Staff - Diocese of Manchester \(catholicnh.org\)](https://www.catholicnh.org/resources-for-cemetery-staff) for talking points on the importance of Catholic cemeteries.

Finally, please know I appreciate all you do to comfort those suffering loss in a compassionate manner and that all of us are mindful of our responsibility to respect the dignity of the deceased individuals in our care. If I can be helpful in anyway, please don't hesitate to contact me directly at 603-663-0158 or [kevin.cody@rcbm.org](mailto:kevin.cody@rcbm.org) for any reason – I stand ready to support and assist you in this important ministry. I look forward to speaking with you with any concerns or questions.

I wish all of you a Blessed Memorial Day Weekend!