



DIOCESE OF MANCHESTER MEMORANDUM

To: Pastors/Administrators, Cemetery Directors, Cemetery Record Keepers, and Cemetery Staff
From: David Gabert
Date: February 14, 2024
RE: Aboveground Memorials (Monuments) with Niches for Cremains and Other Rules Pertaining to Monuments

Aboveground Memorials (Monuments) with Niches:

There are some monument companies promoting family monuments with niches that can house cremains aboveground. Catholic cemeteries are encouraged to **disallow** these types of monuments in our cemeteries for the following reasons:

- Because there is no need to prepare the ground for interment, the family can conduct their own interment and ceremony without receiving authorization from the cemetery;
- Disinterment or disturbance of the remains could easily happen without permission or knowledge of the cemetery management. There have been cases of family members requesting disinterment of cremains to place partial amounts in jewelry, place them on the mantle, or to spread the ashes; and
- Vandalism or accidents could not only cause harm to the monument, but additional pain to families should their loved ones be disturbed, or worse, spread on cemetery grounds.

Please inform the local monument companies that they are not to install aboveground niche monuments in our cemeteries and they are not to install any memorial/monument/marker (etc....) or do any work in our cemeteries without first receiving authorization from cemetery management. Cemetery managed aboveground columbarium and mausoleums are allowed because they can be secured and monitored by cemetery management ensuring that Catholic teachings are honored. If a cemetery wishes to incorporate these types of monuments in the cemetery, please contact me directly to discuss placement, security, and rules.

Rules Pertaining to Memorials (Monument, Markers etc.):

As you know, the cemetery management has an **obligation** to maintain the Catholic identity in all Catholic cemeteries. **Therefore, the cemetery management must authorize all memorials, monuments, and markers, prior to placement, including the location, position, the kind, size, symbolism, graphic design, craftsmanship, inscriptions, and the quality and material used. If symbolism is used, it is to be Christian.** If you are not currently providing authorization for monument installation, type, placement, size, etc... please contact the Cemetery Office for assistance with developing a monument authorization process.

Should you have any questions on any of this or on creating supplemental rules specific to monuments (sizes, types, etc.), please contact me in the Catholic Cemetery Office at (603) 663-0191 or email at dgabert@rcbm.org.