



DIOCESE OF MANCHESTER MEMORANDUM

To: Pastors/Administrators, Cemetery Directors, Cemetery Record Keepers, and Staff
From: David Gabert
Date: April 26, 2023
RE: Opening for the Season and the Importance of Memorial Day for Catholic Cemeteries

It is hard to believe that another Memorial Day is just five weeks away! 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 remember 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. They are places where individuals come not only to mourn and remember their deceased family and friends, but to find hope and peace.

Thousands of visitors will come to our cemeteries on Memorial Day weekend. With that in mind, now is the time to properly plan for this weekend. The following are some ideas on cemetery operations to consider. **It should be noted that cemetery management cannot and are not expected to implement all of these ideas.** In addition, consider just implementing one or two new ideas each year:

- 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;
- 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 essential that spring cleanup and cutting/trimming the lawn occur prior to this weekend;
- Make sure all equipment has been maintained and is properly working;
- Have a back-up independent contractor that can be used in case the equipment fails or someone is unable to complete the pre-Memorial Day maintenance;
- Talk about the cemetery at all Masses the weekend before Memorial Day and incorporate the importance of Catholic Cemeteries into homilies. Contact the Cemetery Office website for the most current materials, resources, and talking points;
- Ask volunteers to plant flowers at entrances and in conspicuous locations around the cemetery;
- Make entrances inviting by improving the landscaping, repairing signs, fences and entrance archways;
- Fill in sunken graves and potholes, regrade the roads where possible, trim trees and shrubs, fix monuments/markers that are down, power wash statues and benches, and clean up unsightly views (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;



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- Support local veteran groups in their efforts to honor the deceased service members at the cemetery;
- Make sure all flagpoles are operational, flags are in good condition, and that they are properly displayed;
- Use the Diocesan standardized forms and templates on the Cemetery Office website including ideas for rules that can be posted on cemetery grounds; and
- Hand out the Diocese of Manchester Cemetery Rules and Regulations and Cemetery Specific Supplemental Rules to all individuals purchasing a Lot License.

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. 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) 663-0191 or dgabert@rcbm.org for any reason – I stand ready to support and assist you in this important ministry.

I wish all of you a Blessed Memorial Day Weekend!