

Ave Maria Parish Cemeteries

Revised July, 2023

Ever since the Sacred Body of the crucified Savior was laid in the tomb to await the hour of its glorious Resurrection, the Church has been most solicitous to surround the burial of those who hope to rise with Christ with an atmosphere of deep Christian faith and profound reverence. In the liturgy of the Mass and burial prayers, the Church gives voice to her belief in the Christian doctrine of the resurrection of the body, the communion of saints and life everlasting, but as a further seal and symbol of that faith, she sets apart and solemnly blesses the place in which the bodies of her faithful departed await the day of the Resurrection.

In the very earliest days, Mother Church found it necessary to make rules and regulations which would protect these sacred places and the relics laid therein. She could not and would not allow anything within the holy precincts which would desecrate them, lessen their beauty, or bring dishonor on the dead.

In accord with the mind and traditional practice of the Catholic Church with regard to the burial of her children, Ave Maria Parish provides these rules and regulations to help insure the sacred character of the cemetery operation as well as to establish and maintain good order.

Ave Maria Parish cemeteries include Old Saint Mary Cemetery, Carsonville, MI; Mount Hope Cemetery, Crosswell, Michigan; Saint Denis Cemetery, Lexington, MI; and New Saint Mary Cemetery, Washington Township.

Ave Maria Cemetery Board consists of the Pastor/Pastoral Administrator, representatives from Pastoral Council and Finance Council, a sexton of each cemetery and three (3) parishioners at large.

Definitions:

Sexton: is responsible for day-to-day operations of the cemetery, including but not limited to: grave space sales, grave opening and closing, enforcement of rules and regulations, contact with funeral directors, installation of marker monument foundations, cemetery maintenance, and public relations.

Cemetery Space: Space size is approximately 4' x 12'.

Marker: is a plaque flush with the ground indicating the given and/or family name(s) of the deceased. The location of the marker is at the discretion of the Cemetery Board.

Monument: is a stone extending above the ground indicating the given and/or family name(s) of the deceased. It is placed at a location approved by the Cemetery Board and/or Sexton.

Burial Rights Certificate: will be issued by the Parish Secretary which entitles the owner and their heirs to burial rights for human remains and upkeep of the space, subject to the rules and regulations hereinafter in effect.

Owner: is one who has burial rights. Not to be confused with ownership in real or personal property. Records of lot/space owners shall be made and kept by the Parish Secretary.

Perpetual Care: All burial spaces purchased in Ave Maria Parish Cemeteries include the endowment for perpetual care. Perpetual care includes mowing and trimming of cemetery, the seasonal cleaning of leaves and other debris and re-grading and seeding of graves. It therefore provides all the essential requirements of a well-kept cemetery without further expense to the space owner. It does not include special care of beds, plantings, or cleaning monuments or other special work.

Parishioner: is one who has been a registered member of Ave Maria Parish in good standing for at least one year.

Non-parishioner: is one who has not been a registered member of Ave Maria Parish in good standing for at least one year.

Immediate family: includes spouse, mother, father, children, grandchildren, step-parents, step-children, adopted children.

Rules and Regulations

1. Alcoholic beverages are not permitted in the cemetery, except in conjunction with established burial customs.
2. Animals are not allowed in the cemetery, except leader dogs.
3. No person shall solicit contracts or orders for monuments, markers, memorials or other work within the cemetery boundaries. Ave Maria Parish and its employees shall not recommend any particular contractor or monument concern. However, only cemetery personnel and contractors who have been approved by the Cemetery Board may perform work at the cemetery. Advertising or posting of signs within the cemetery is prohibited.
4. The carrying or use of firearms within the cemetery is prohibited, except in connection with burial ceremonies or by a duly authorized police officer.
5. No entrance into the cemetery is to be gained except through established gates and only during established times.
6. The use of profane, loud, boisterous language is prohibited.
7. The speed limit within the cemetery is 10 mph.
8. Driving off the established roadways within the cemetery is prohibited,
9. Artificial flowers, plants and/or other grave decorations are allowed beginning in May and shall be removed by Labor Day of each year. Winter decorations shall only be allowed November 15 through April 15.
10. Boxes, shells, toys, cans, balloons, cards, etc, nor anything glass are not allowed anywhere in the cemetery. Vigil lights are allowed, directly in front of the marker, at grave sites only, They are not allowed around the columbarium.
11. Spring cleanup will take place after April 15, Fall cleanup after October 15. Anything left after April 15 and October 15 will be removed by cemetery personnel.
12. The Cemetery Board and/or sexton shall have the right to establish temporary rules or make exceptions to existing rules whenever, in their judgment, the best interest of the cemetery demand it.
13. The Cemetery Board and/or sexton is not responsible for frozen plants, nor for damage to plants, markers or monuments caused by hail, wind, thieves or other causes beyond their control. The Cemetery Board and/or sexton is not responsible for loss or damage of decorations.
14. No picnic lunches or parties of any sort, skateboarding, roller blading, ice skating, cross country skiing shall be permitted within the cemetery grounds. Any person who shall willfully damage or disturb any grave, tree, shrub, plant, memorial, monument, marker or other objects within the cemetery will be prosecuted.
15. Every grave space is sold subject to the rules and regulations now in force or that may be hereinafter adopted and to such changes of the present rules as deemed necessary by the Cemetery.
16. Upon purchase of grave space, the owner will be issued a Burial Rights Certificate which entitles the owner and his/her heirs to burial rights for human remains and upkeep of the burial space, subject to the rules and regulations hereinafter in effect. When payment is made in full, a Burial Rights Certificate will be issued. Grave spaces cannot be reserved without payment in full.

17. Grave spaces shall not be purchased for speculative purposes or for resale to third parties not defined as immediate family members. If a grave space is given to another family member, the Parish Secretary must update parish records prior to the transaction and burial.
18. Grave space is exempt from property taxes and cannot be seized on execution.
19. When a person has purchased grave space as a non- parishioner and later becomes a parishioner, no refund of the purchase price will be made.
20. In the event that someone no longer needs their grave space, they may donate it back to the parish in writing. If they wish to sell it to the parish and the Cemetery Board agrees to the transaction, they may receive the actual price paid for it, not the current rate.
21. **Correction of Errors:** The Cemetery Board reserves and shall have, the right to correct any errors that may be made by it either in making interments, disinterments, or removals or the description, transfer or conveyance of any interment property, either by canceling such conveyance and substituting any conveying in lieu thereof other interment property of equal value and similar location as far as possible, or as may be selected by the Cemetery Board, or in the sole discretion of the Cemetery Board, by refunding the amount of money paid on account of said purchase. In the event such error shall involve the interment of the remains of any person in such property, the cemetery reserves and shall have the right to remove or transfer such remains so interred to such other property of equal value and similar location as may be substituted and conveyed in lieu thereof.

Interments and Disinterments

1. Instructions for ordering grave openings have been given to area funeral directors. If your funeral director does not have these instructions, contact Ave Maria Parish Secretary or sexton. Generally, orders must be received at least 48 hours in advance of funeral services.
2. No burial shall take place unless grave space purchase price, the cost of any services required to open and close the space, and all other fees and charges have been satisfied in full.
3. The Cemetery Board/sexton shall not be responsible for errors in location of grave space arising from improper instructions from grave space owner. Orders from funeral directors shall be construed as orders from the owner.
4. Funerals arriving at the cemetery after 3:00 pm on weekdays and any Saturday funerals will be assessed an additional charge. No funerals will be allowed on Sunday or holidays without permission of the Cemetery Board and/or sexton.
5. A copy of the burial permit shall be required for all burials including cremains. The permits for cremains should include complete information, the same as regular burial permits, in order for the parish to keep complete records.
6. All burials shall be that of the grave space owner or his/her immediate family. The owner of a space may permit the burial of others than those of his/her own immediate family by giving written notice thereof to the Cemetery Board and/or sexton.
7. No more than one burial may be made per space, except in the case of a) mother/infant, b) two infants, c) two children buried at the same time, d) a regular burial and a cremation of the immediate family, or e) two cremains of the immediate family.
8. No burials shall be allowed for other than human remains.
9. All burials shall be in vaults, or except for cremations or infant burials in a casket size of two feet six inches or less. All vaults shall be installed only by authorized firms.
10. Vault firms are responsible for damage to turf, landscape, surrounding markers and monuments, even if cemetery staff assists in vault installation, and should use planking when and where necessary to protect the turf.
11. All interments and disinterments shall be performed by the sexton.

12. Scattering of cremains over a grave space or anywhere in the cemetery is prohibited. Please refer to the statement by the USCCB on "Cremation and the Order of Christian Funerals."
13. Disinterment or transfers are prohibited except for due cause and then only with permission of the Health Department or by court order. Foundations where disinterment occurs will be moved and reset at owner's expense.
14. Graves cannot be opened for inspection except under court order.
15. Sexton will remove funeral designs and floral pieces as soon as they become unsightly and assumes no responsibility for their return.

Monuments and Markers

1. Family monuments are only permitted if placed in symmetrical alignment with markers in designated areas.
2. All monuments and markers shall be made of durable granite, bronze, or marble. Other materials, such as plastic, wood, cement or steel are not permissible.
3. The size of markers should correspond with size of space or spaces.
4. Markers should be kept in good repair by owner for safety and aesthetic value.
5. If a permanent marker has not been installed within one year, the temporary marker is no longer the responsibility of the cemetery.
6. Inscriptions on markers and monuments must not be offensive or improper as judged by the Cemetery Board. The owner of said monument or marker shall be responsible for all expenses for removal of same upon due notice. All monuments and markers must have foundations and shall not be delivered to plots until foundation have been installed and paid for. Orders for foundations shall be placed a minimum of four weeks in advance. Foundations will not be poured during the winter months. Foundation size must match size of marker or monument.
7. All foundations must be paid for in advance unless ordered by the monument company. All foundations shall be approved by the cemetery sexton.
8. Monument companies are responsible for all damages to cemetery grounds and surrounding monuments and markers occurring during installation.
9. All foundation installation fees are based on square inch or cubic inch.
10. The Cemetery Board and/or sexton assumes no responsibility for damage to markers or monuments.
11. Mausoleums and crypts are prohibited in the cemeteries.
12. Only one monument per burial site is permitted, if another marker is desired, it must be flush with the ground.

Lot Care, Maintenance and Improvements

1. Regular maintenance of turf and shrubbery shall be performed by cemetery personnel or space owners.
2. The removal of trees and shrubbery shall be done only on approval of Cemetery Board.
3. Flowers may be planted within 12 inches in any direction of the monument or marker, and under no circumstance will such plantings be allowed outside the boundaries of the owner's burial space(s). No sod is to be removed which is not next to marker or monument and then not more than 12 inches. Plants may be set out next to stone, but must be kept free from grass and weeds. Plants that have spread into other grave spaces will be removed.
4. Structures of wood or other perishable material, such as fences, curbs, hedges are not prohibited.
5. The placing of stone or limestone anywhere within cemetery spaces is not permitted

6. Permission must be obtained from the Cemetery Board before placing urns. Urns must be of durable construction and placed in line with markers and headstones.
7. Containers of any type used as urns are not allowed and will be removed by cemetery personnel.
8. The mounding of graves is prohibited.
9. No ring stands, baskets, potted plants or vases may be placed in the concrete walking area surrounding the columbarium.
10. The Cemetery Board and/or sexton reserves the right to remove and dispose of, without notice to the owner, any unsightly, deteriorated, neglected or prohibited items except monuments and markers.
11. No person shall remove shrubs, trees or plants, or any portion thereof, or pick or break any part of the same therefrom within the cemetery.
12. No trees or shrubs or other such items shall be planted in the cemetery.

Columbarium

For Columbaria inurnments after 2022

1. All niches will be opened and closed only by cemetery personnel.
2. All niche fronts will have the name of the deceased, the year of birth and death in uniform style in conformity to that designated for the particular columbarium and no other lettering or designation will be permitted.
3. No item may be glued, taped, or in any other way affixed directly to a niche front or in the spaces between individual niche shutters. Such placement will be removed immediately.
4. Up to two urns in any niche is permitted; all cremated remains must be in sealed metal, fiberglass, plastic, wood or stone containers.
5. All cemetery rules and regulations apply to the columbarium, unless it is obviously inappropriate or where specifically deleted or superseded by an applicable regulation pertaining to columbarium use.

Cremation And The Order Of Christian Funerals

From the January 2012 Newsletter of the Committee on Divine Worship

© 2012, United States Conference of Catholic Bishops

In April 1997, the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments granted an indult for the United States to allow the diocesan bishop to permit the presence of the cremated remains of a body at a Funeral Mass. Later that year, the Congregation confirmed the special texts and ritual directives (Prot. n. 1589/96/L for both indult and texts), which were then published as an appendix to the Order of Christian Funerals. Frequently the Secretariat of Divine Worship receives requests for clarification or suggestions for best practices regarding the presence of cremated remains and funerals and their appropriate final disposition or committal.

The practice of cremation has grown and become more commonplace in the United States, and it is often presented as a more affordable alternative to traditional burial. What is often overlooked is the Church's teaching regarding the respect and honor due to the human body. **The Order of Christian Funerals' Appendix on Cremation states:** "Although cremation is now permitted by the Church, it does not enjoy the same value as burial of the body. The Church clearly prefers and urges that the body of the deceased be present for the funeral rites, since the presence of the human body better expresses the values which the Church affirms in those rites" (no. 413).

Ideally, if a family chooses cremation, the cremation would take place at some time after the Funeral Mass, so that there can be an opportunity for the Vigil for the Deceased in the presence of the body (during “visitation” or “viewing” at a church or funeral home). This allows for the appropriate reverence for the sacredness of the body at the Funeral Mass: sprinkling with holy water, the placing of the pall, and honoring it with incense. The Rite of Committal then takes place after cremation (see Appendix, nos. 418-421). Funeral homes offer several options in this case. One is the use of “cremation caskets,” which is essentially a rental casket with a cardboard liner that is cremated with the body. Another is a complete casket that is cremated (this casket contains minimal amounts of non-combustible material such as metal handles or latches).

When cremation takes place before the Funeral Mass, and the diocesan bishop permits the presence of cremated remains at the Funeral Mass, the Appendix provides adapted texts for the Sprinkling with Holy Water, the Dismissal for use at the Funeral Mass (or the Funeral Liturgy outside Mass), and the Committal of Cremated Remains. The introduction provides further specific details about how the funeral rites are adapted. In all, the rite notes:

The cremated remains of a body should be treated with the same respect given to the human body from which they come. This includes the use of a worthy vessel to contain the ashes, the manner in which they are carried, and the care and attention to appropriate placement and transport, and the final disposition. The cremated remains should be buried in a grave or entombed in a mausoleum or columbarium. The practice of scattering cremated remains on the sea, from the air, or on the ground, or keeping cremated remains on the home of a relative or friend of the deceased are not the reverent disposition that the Church requires. (no. 417)

For some families, the choice of cremation is based on financial hardship, so this choice often means also that there is no plan for committal or burial of the cremated remains. As a means of providing pastoral support and an acceptable respectful solution to the problem of uninterred cremated remains, one diocese offered on All Souls’ Day in 2011 an opportunity for any family who desired it the interment of cremated remains. The diocese offered a Mass and committal service at one of its Catholic cemeteries and provided, free of charge, a common vault in a mausoleum for the interment of the cremated remains. The names of the deceased interred there were kept on file, though in this case they were not individually inscribed on the vault.

As cremation is chosen more frequently, there will be many who are unaware of the Church’s teaching regarding this practice. It is important for bishops and pastors not only to catechize the faithful, but to collaborate with funeral directors in providing helpful and accurate information to families planning the funeral of loved ones. Offering opportunities to family members for the respectful burial of their loved ones, who were not interred after funeral services and cremation, would give effective witness to the importance of Christian burial and our belief in the resurrection. In all, pastors are encouraged to show pastoral sensitivity, especially to those for whom cremation is the only feasible choice (see Appendix, no. 415).