

THE CATHOLIC PARISH CEMETERY

Meeting Challenges *e* Recognizing Opportunities

Cemetery Board of Directors

A number of weeks ago, I was reading *The Register*, the newspaper of the **Diocese of Altoona-Johnstown**, Pennsylvania and came across an article that was recounting the introduction of *The Leadership Roundtable*, a Catholic organization that is dedicated to increasing lay involvement and implementing best business practices in Catholic dioceses and parishes.

The article included a question/comment by Bishop Mark Bartchak citing the example of parish cemeteries as one area where lay people could be of tremendous assistance to pastors with parochial cemetery responsibilities, especially important since that diocese has approximately 80 such facilities. The statement sparked some interest as I am familiar with both the **Diocese of Altoona-Johnstown**, being originally from Johnstown, and *The Leadership Roundtable*, as that organization has, through the efforts of Jim Lundholm-Eades, reviewed and certified *The ToolBox for Parish Cemeteries* as qualifying under the umbrella of “**Best Practices**.” Consequently, I’m hopeful that *The Leadership Roundtable*’s work in that diocese will include *The Toolbox* as the hard work of documentation and creativity has already been organized.

Because of recent Catholic church sexual abuse scandals a clarion call continues to be made for complete openness or transparency in the various offices and ministries of the Catholic church. The Catholic parish cemetery is no exception, and as Bishop Bartchak indicated, these facilities are a great place to begin.

In order to do this, the first place to start is to define the relationship between the diocese and the cemetery. Is the cemetery owned/operated by one parish? Is it one cemetery designed to meet the needs of multiple parishes? Is the diocese working as a corporation sole? Or is the diocese comprised of many individual corporations, i.e. parishes, schools, cemeteries? Getting that issue addressed first

enables the parish/cemetery to proceed along the proper path toward developing a more transparent structure. If the cemetery is a separate corporation, it will require officers and a corporate board. If it falls under the corporate sole of the diocese, then an advisory board would be the proper structure. If a corporate board is required, it is also possible to have an advisory board.

Here I would like to focus solely on the Advisory Board as structures will already be in place where corporate boards are required. What are the necessary steps? How should they be sequenced? What all might be included for consideration in the process?

Let’s start with some fundamental questions: Will this be a new board? Or is this an attempt to awaken an existing board with new members and energy? Where does the pastor fit into this structure? Will the board be consultative or have autonomous authority? Is this movement toward a board the result of a parish restructure with multiple cemeteries now coming under the umbrella of one new parish?

These are all questions that need to be addressed first, but keeping certain fundamentals in mind. The first of these fundamentals is the issue of governing law/documents. There is the question of civil law and the parish/diocesan attorney needs to make sure how religious cemeteries fit or do not fit under civil law. Then there is the **Canon Law of the Catholic Church**, and that law gives particular responsibilities to the duly appointed pastor/administrator of a parish, under which will come responsibility for both parish facilities and ministerial services. This means that the pastor is in a position to establish the level of delegated responsibilities to a cemetery board. And it is best, within this structure, that the cemetery board be constituted as “**advisory**” with a commitment that the members of the board, including the pastor, are committed to working toward consensus-building in all decisions.

Then there is the question of membership. The first and best rule of thumb is that board members have a vested interest in the parish cemetery, i.e. either have family buried in it or own spaces themselves for future use. An important caveat, however, is that no one should be appointed to the board because of a single issue, i.e. a desire to change a particular rule or regulation.

How large should the board be? How long should people serve? Can an individual serve successive terms? How many? There should be officers, at least a chairperson and a secretary as board meetings should have minutes and be operated on regular rules of order/conduct. How often should a board meet? What sort of issues should they address? If there are employees, how does the board relate to them? And if there are multiple cemeteries because of a parish restructure, how many cemetery boards should there be?

The best instruction to these and a multiplicity of other questions can be found in *Parish Cemetery Administration*, the first manual

IN THIS ISSUE:

CEMETERY BOARD OF DIRECTORS

ARCHBISHOP RAYMOND HUNTHAUSEN

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

WEB SITE—RELIGIOUS CONTENT

QUESTIONS/SUGGESTIONS/COMMENTS

COMMITTAL SERVICES

SECOND INTERMENT RIGHTS

EMAIL REGISTRATION

COLDSPRING MAUSOLEUM

Cemetery Board of Directors cont'd

in ***The Toolbox for Parish Cemeteries***, a collection of six manuals that provide the latest, most comprehensive information for Catholic parish cemeteries. In the best case scenario, each member of a parish cemetery board should have a copy of this first manual as it will provide comprehensive information on issues, unify board members, and guide decision-making. More information on ***The Toolbox*** is also found at www.sankovich.com and an order form is always included in this newsletter. As a second step, in the next Newsletter, we'll take up the second manual, ***Parish Cemetery Self-Evaluation*** as completion of the questions/tables in this document will identify the tasks ahead for the members of the ***Parish Cemetery Advisory Board***, i.e. how to have the best and safest parish cemetery.

Archbishop Raymond Hunthausen

The Catholic church radically changed its approach to cemeteries following the Second Vatican Council. Prior to the Council, the Catholic cemetery was a disciplinary tool of the church, and it was used to assure that Catholics and members of their families abided by certain rules or they could not be interred in the consecrated ground of a Catholic cemetery.

Among the rules: [1] Be a baptized Catholic; [2] If married, be married before a Catholic priest and two witnesses; [3] Make your Easter Duty; [4] Do not be a notorious sinner; [5] Be registered in a parish and support the work of the Catholic church. The pastor was charged with enforcement and issued 'priest lines' to grant admission to the Catholic cemetery for those who qualified. General Catholic perception if one didn't qualify, however, was that if one wasn't good enough to get into the Catholic cemetery, then chances at getting into heaven were also slim.

In 1985, when I accepted the director of cemeteries position in the Archdiocese of Seattle, Raymond Hunthausen was the Archbishop; he was one of the youngest bishops to participate in all sessions of the Second Vatican Council. In my first meeting with him, he questioned whether the Catholic church should be in the cemetery business, whether North American cemetery practices were theologically correct, and whether having a separate Catholic cemetery system might be seen as divisive in a new ecumenical era. He determined that the best way to address his concerns would be to form a task force of qualified theologians, of which I was a part. We were charged with addressing his issues/concerns.

The five of us came back to Archbishop Hunthausen with a ***Mission Statement for Catholic Cemeteries in the Post-Vatican II church***. He loved it, accepted it, promulgated it, and shared with all bishops in the United States, with more than 60 writing back to tell him how impressed they were, asking if they could use it in their own dioceses.

Archbishop Hunthausen died recently at the age of 96. Nothing in all the published information about the Archbishop addresses this monumental contribution to the Catholic cemetery apostolate. This seems to be a good place to celebrate that contribution. May he rest in peace!



About the author

Unless otherwise noted, articles appearing in this newsletter are written by Joseph B. Sankovich. He is semi-retired after a 45-year career in the Catholic cemetery apostolate, meeting the Catholic cemetery needs of 40 client (arch)dioceses. Additional biographic details are available at www.sankovich.com. [I replaced the picture in the first issue of the Newsletter (taken in the restaurant at One World Trade Center) with my more formal portrait.]

WEB SITE RELIGIOUS CONTENT

It is important to once again call attention to the web site for **Gate of Heaven Catholic Cemetery**, located in Hawthorne, NY. The web site for the cemetery is www.gateofheavenny.com. The reason for again calling attention to this web site is the content of six of the information tabs that are prominently displayed on the site.

The tabs are as follows: ***Catholic Cemetery Tradition, Order of Christian Funerals, Cremation, Pre-Need, Bereavement, and Eligibility for Interment***. The contents within each title provide a comprehensive treatment of the topic and this material is free to be copied and used by those with responsibility for parish cemeteries. These topics should/could be used on parish cemetery web sites, as bulletin articles, or even as handouts at parish cemetery offices.

I have a question/comment

The goal of this publication is to make it as responsive to the needs of those who administer or care in any other way for Catholic parish cemeteries. If you have a comment, suggestion, or question of general interest to pastors, managers, superintendents or board members, please submit it to Joe@Sankovich.com and every effort will be made to address it in a future edition of the newsletter.

Committal Services

My sister Gina died in January 2005. Her Vigil and Funeral Mass was celebrated in Johnstown, and her committal took place at St. John the Baptist Catholic (Parish) Cemetery in Central City, both in Pennsylvania. Now thirteen years later, and living 2,000 miles away from that cemetery, I have no opportunity to visit and pray at her grave. But I do have a very strong memory of the Committal Service and every once in a while I think about it and it brings me incredible comfort and peace.

As our parents were already deceased, I called my two other sisters and two brothers to join me at the casket suspended on the lowering device over the open grave. As the celebrant was beginning the Committal Prayer, Gina's surviving siblings placed our hands on top of her casket and held them there while both the prayer was being recited and the casket was being lowered into the grave. We literally laid her to rest. We combined prayer with action, the absolute best form of liturgical prayer.

Because God has chosen to call Regina from this life to Himself, we commit her body to the earth, for we are dust and unto dust we shall return.

But the Lord Jesus Christ will change our mortal bodies to like His in glory, for He is risen, the firstborn of the dead.

So let us commend Gina to the Lord, that the Lord may embrace her in peace and raise up her body on the last day.

A person who sees things as they truly are and sympathizes with pain and sorrow is capable of touching life's depths and finding authentic happiness."

Order of Christian Funerals Rite of Committal, Committal Prayer

For those who celebrate **Committal Services**, there is real power in this act of participating in the lowering of the beloved into the grave when the **Committal Service** is celebrated at the open grave site. This action, however, neither can nor should be taken without consent of both the family members (best obtained following the **Vigil Service**) who will take part and the cemetery authority who will be responsible for the actual lowering of the casket into the grave. This is just one added value that makes the parish cemetery a powerful witness to Catholic belief in resurrected life after death.

SECOND INTERMENT RIGHTS

With the relaxation of the prohibition of cremation for Catholics, many Catholic cemeteries are seeing a significant increase in cremation interments. Some parish cemeteries, along with most diocesan cemeteries, permit the interment of one or more cremated remains on an existing grave. There are complications that accompany this permission and the parish cemetery administrator needs to be aware of the potential pitfalls. The following comments should be helpful:

1. The first issue is who has the right to allow the interment on an existing grave space? Of course, the original owner(s) of the easement for interment rights would have the right to permit this. When the original owner(s) is/are deceased, however, permission needs to drop down to all survivors in the next generation,

unless there are multiple spaces included in the easement and the easement has passed by inheritance or other legal means to one of the survivors; then that survivor would have the ability to grant permission. It is always good, however, to be assured that there is no conflict among family members when this type of action is requested.

2. The charges would be the second issue. If the original easement does not specify a number of interments on an individual ground space, then the cemetery is in the position to assess a charge for a second or more interment rights on the space. The typical charge for this second or multiple interment rights is half the cost of an interment right for a full body in the section where the request is being made. Additionally, there is a legitimate charge for the opening/closing and registration of the interment information. Consultation with

one's diocesan cemetery program for typical interment charges would be a good source of information on this matter.

3. The third issues would be the use of an outside container/vault for cremated remains, the standard location of the interment of cremated remains, and the number of cremated remains that would be permitted on an existing grave space with a body already interred. The outside container is highly recommended and there are multiple sources for small units made of fiberglass or concrete that meet this need; the cemetery can market these units and cause them to be required. The cemetery should determine a standard location for interment of cremated remains on an existing interment and document that location on each lot card/lot electronic information. Finally, the cemetery has the right to limit the number of cremated remains that are interred on an existing grave space and this should be included in the cemetery Rules & Regulations.

4. Finally, among the other issues common today is the placement of cremated remains within the casket of another, i.e. a spouse who desired full body burial. What is appropriate in this instance? First, the cemetery must record this interment and is entitled to assess fees; these would include second interment rights and a reduced charge for the opening/closing as this could/should be referenced as a recording fee.

All of these are items/issues that manifest a need for all parish cemeteries in a diocese to be on the same page and conduct their responses to the request for second or multiple interment requests on an existing grave in the same fashion. The information above is not a complete list of items/issues, but it should be a good starting point.

MAILING LIST INFORMATION

Your parish has received this Newsletter in hard copy format based on a list of all Catholic Parishes in the United States that have either a parish cemetery designation [PC] or joint parish cemetery designation [JC] in the P.J. Kenedy **Official Catholic Directory**, most recent edition. If the listing is incorrect, the only way to remedy the situation is to contact the office in your own diocese that prepares/submits/maintains the files submitted to P.J. Kenedy each year. Should you wish only to receive the digital notice, an email to Joe@Sankovich.com.

THE CATHOLIC PARISH CEMETERY

7273 East Shoreward Loop
Tucson AZ 85715

[Sign up for an electronic version of *The Catholic Parish Cemetery Newsletter* at: www.catholicparishcemeteriesus.com]

Coldspring Granite

OFFERING FAMILIES YOU SERVE OPTIONS WITHOUT HUGE CAPITAL INVESTMENTS

Many families today are looking for more options than traditional ground burial when considering a final resting place. Cremation and above ground burial spaces can be offered by you without tremendous investment and inventory. With proper planning, including the site, future development considerations, and an understanding of today's memorial trends, you can serve your families with the options they are seeking!

Coldspring is the industry leader in providing a quick, financially sound, Garden Crypt Mausoleum that includes cremation niches. When properly planned and executed, these projects are cash-flow positive, enhance the beauty of your cemetery and provide the families with both above ground mausoleum and cremation options. Having a well-rounded product offering will allow you to serve your families now and for generations to come.

Contact: Coldspring at parishcemetery@coldspringusa.com or call **1-888-322-2997** and reference *Parish Cemetery Program*.



Don't let dated tools or technology hinder your mission.

Pontem serves hundreds of Parishes and Diocese with affordable cemetery management software, mapping, and online search.

www.PONTEM.com





WHEN A FAMILY REACHES OUT TO YOU, GIVE THEM SOMETHING TO HOLD ON TO.

The Comfort Cross

800.952.3412 ■ sales@holylandstone.com ■ www.HolyLandStone.com



Holy Land STONE
Innovative Stone Gifts



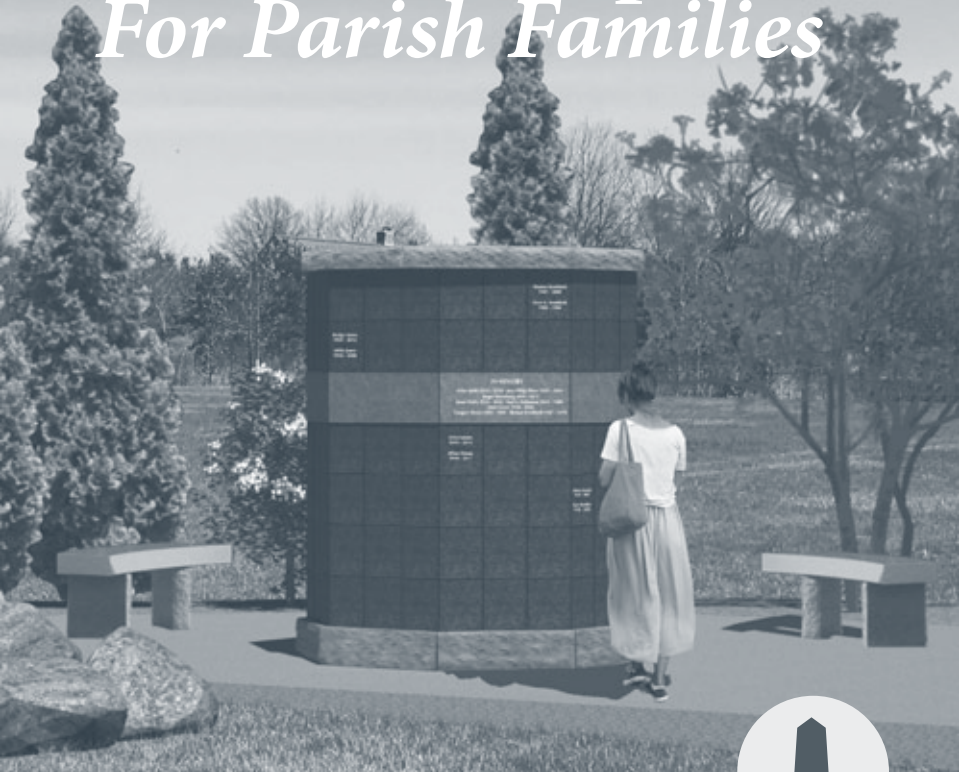
COLDSRING


Your property needs are unique, and Coldspring can partner with you to provide the right solution to meet those needs.

A partnership with Coldspring offers a full range of solutions to support memorialization including community mausoleums, columbariums, Private Estates®, cremation gardens and a variety of other products.

For more information contact your representative by calling 888.322.2997 or e-mail parishcemetary@coldspringusa.com

A Better Cremation Option For Parish Families





Eickhof Columbaria

1200 Bruce St., Crookston, MN 56716

800.253.0457

info@eickhofcolumbaria.com | eickhofcolumbaria.com

THE TOOLBOX FOR PARISH CEMETERIES ORDER FORM

To place an order, complete and return this form by mail or email:



Catholic Funeral and Cemetery Services
4750 Willow Road, Suite 200
Pleasanton, CA 94588
info@cfcsmission.org

| | Qty | Subtotal |
|---------------------------|-------|----------|
| Administration Handbook | \$80 | |
| Cemetery Self-Evaluation | \$50 | |
| Cemetery Workbook | \$70 | |
| Endowment Care Calculator | \$40 | |
| Policies & Procedures | \$50 | |
| Rules & Regulations | \$50 | |
| SUBTOTAL | \$340 | |
| Shipping & Handling | | |
| individual book | \$10 | |
| 2-5 books | \$20 | |
| full sets | \$20 | |

DISCOUNT SCHEDULE

| | |
|------------|-------|
| 2-9 sets | \$325 |
| 10-24 sets | \$300 |
| 25+ sets | \$275 |

CUSTOM ORDER DISCOUNTS

| | |
|------------------|-----|
| orders > \$1,000 | 5% |
| orders > \$2,500 | 10% |

PAYMENT METHOD

By check, please payable to CATHOLIC FUNERAL AND CEMETERY SERVICES

By credit card please select card below and provide card information:

☐ VISA ☐ MASTERCARD ☐ DISCOVER ☐ AMEX

Card number _____ Exp. Date _____

Signature _____ CV _____

ORDER/SHIPPING INFO

NAME _____

PHONE _____

ADDRESS _____

GREYER & WARD

CEMETERY PLANNING



PLANNING CEMETERY DEVELOPMENTS SINCE 1939

GREYER & WARD INC.
CEMETERY PLANNERS
3802 N. BUFFALO ST.
ORCHARD PARK, NY 14127-1840

PHONE 716-662-7700 FAX 716-662-0125 TOLL FREE 800-952-0078

EMAIL: info@GREVERANDWARD.COM

WWW.GREVERANDWARD.COM

- COMPREHENSIVE MASTER PLANS
- CONSTRUCTION PLANS & SPECS
- SECTION LAYOUT PLANS
- CREMATION GARDEN PLANS
- PLANTING PLANS & SPECS
- LOT LAYOUT & SALES MAPS
- SPACE RECOVERY PROGRAMS
- SITE EVALUATIONS & FEASIBILITY STUDIES

KRYPROTEK

Mausoleum Protection

You Have a Tough Job. Let Us Make It Easier.
(Like we've done nearly 30,000 times over the past 20 years)

Protect Your Operations

- Significant time, labor and cost savings.
- Controls moisture, pests, and stains.

Protect Your Families

- Dignified presentation from start to finish.
- Confident, calm staff provides better service.

Protect Your Bottom Line

- Clean, aesthetically pleasing facilities sell more quickly.
- Ideal for temporary storage, disinterment, relocation, and other risky situations.



One way valve prevents gas build up

End Loading Design

www.kryprotek.com
mb@kryprotek.com

800-826-9406