

Cemetery Rules and Regulations

St. Mary's and St. Patrick's Cemeteries

(Presented on March 29, 2026)

A Catholic cemetery is a place of hope which points to the promise of future resurrection (Ez 37:13-14). It is therefore fitting that the cemetery be well maintained and in good order. These rules and regulations are established to preserve the sacred character of the cemetery, ensure good order and uniformity, protect the safety of visitors, reduce long-term maintenance burdens, and limit legal and financial liability for the parish.

The Cemetery Committee of the Church of Saint Mary's, Melrose, together with the pastor, have approved and established the following rules and regulations for the cemeteries of Saint Mary's and Saint Patrick's.

All comments, questions, or concerns regarding these rules may be directed to the Cemetery Committee by contacting the Church of Saint Mary parish office.

GENERAL RULES

- All lots/niches **MUST** be paid for in full, and a purchase agreement ('Right of Burial') obtained, before:
 - A burial may take place
 - A monument, marker or footstone may be installed
 - Final dates added to existing monuments or footstones.
- The opening and closing of all graves for casket burials must be performed by a parish-approved grave digger. The digging of a grave for the burial of cremated remains may be done by an individual, with the prior approval of the parish, at a size of 2'x2'x3'.
- All monuments or footstones are to be set by a monument company.
- A temporary marker will be permitted for up to one year from the date of burial, by which time a permanent monument must be set by a monument company.
- A concrete vault is required for all casket burials. Structurally sound vaults are required for urn burials. No vault is required the interment of cremated remains in the columbarium.
- There will be **NO** planting of trees, shrubs or flowers on the cemetery grounds.
- The care of cemetery plots, monuments, markers and stones is permitted and, indeed, encouraged. However, any personal care given to the cemetery, or cemetery plots, may not restrict or obstruct the regular maintenance of the cemetery. Please speak to the parish office if there is any question concerning this.

- Special areas of the cemetery have been designated for infant burials. Flat footstones, at a minimum, are to be used to mark infant graves. These are to be no smaller than 1 ft. x 2 ft. Temporary markers are permitted for up to one year from the burial date.
- Because of the sacred nature of the Lord's Day (Sunday), pointing to the promise of future resurrection, burials and all funeral services on Sundays and some Holy Days are not ordinarily allowed. Exceptions may only be permitted at the discretion of the Pastor.
- Cemetery roadways are considered private property; traffic on these roadways will be limited to passenger vehicles and authorized trucks only.
- On cemetery grounds, motorized vehicles (e.g. - cars, trucks, ATVs and golf carts) must remain on paved roads at all times. These motorized vehicles are never permitted, for any reason, to drive over grave plots or between cemetery rows without prior permission from the parish office.
- The Parish will not assume any liability for lost or stolen items placed on burial sites. We recommend that families take this into consideration when selecting flowers or other decorations for graves.

MONUMENTS, MARKERS & DECORATIONS

- The parish office must be notified before a stone monument or temporary marker is added or removed from the Cemetery.
- All flower vases must be securely affixed to the monument base itself, or the concrete ribbon upon which the monument is set. These vases must be of a permanent material (e.g. – stone, steel, etc.). These may be obtained directly from the monument companies. Monument vases are intended for flowers, but may be used for other dignified decorations such as flags, ribbons, wreaths, crosses, solar lights, etc.
- No freestanding flower vases which are not affixed to a monument or concrete ribbon are permitted. Any wire support used must secure the decoration to the monument in a reliable way.
- No glass vases, crockery, or other similar containers which can become a danger if broken, are allowed on the cemetery grounds.
- No balloons or releasing of balloons are permitted on cemetery grounds.
- Decorations placed for Memorial Day or other such commemorative occasions are of course permitted and encouraged. However, all decorations must comply with the preceding cemetery regulations, particularly those regarding permanently affixed vases and approved materials. Any items that do not conform to these regulations—such as freestanding containers, fragile materials, balloons, or other decorations which are not permitted—may be removed during routine cemetery maintenance as they are noticed. If you believe a decoration was mistakenly removed from a headstone, please contact the parish office.
- Items are never to be set upon footstones, as these can be an obstruction to the lawn mower and string trimmer. However, items may be set on those footstones which are placed upon the raised concrete ribbons such as those located in the newest sections of the cemetery. At the expense of the holder of the Right of Burial, a single concrete

marker base may be installed beneath a footstone (even those footstones which are already inlaid) to elevate them. Any installation must be coordinated with the parish.

- Flowers, memorial wreaths or artificial flower decorations which are prone to deterioration, will be cleared from cemetery monuments and burial plots each year in the Fall, the 3rd Saturday of October. While only the clearing of these items is to occur on these days, other decorations which are clearly damaged or show signs of severe neglect may also be removed at the discretion of the parish.
- Shepherd hooks and flowerpot stands are permitted which are attached to, or hang from, a headstone. They may also be installed alongside headstones or footstones provided they are within a concrete ribbon or footing. Concrete footings may only be installed with the permission of the parish office.
- At this time, the erecting of personal/family mausoleums is not permitted.
- Christian messages, symbols and images are strongly encouraged. Examples of Christian symbols include, but are not limited to, Cross/Crucifix, Dove, Holy Spirit, fish, Lamb of God, the Chi-Rho, Alpha and Omega, Sacred Heart, and Blessed Virgin.
- Non-Christian symbols, inscriptions, images, and all other decorations are permitted provided they are not contrary to Catholic teaching, or inconsistent with the sacred character of a Catholic cemetery. Examples include but are not limited to: images of farms, vehicles, items of affection, etc.). Any questions about a proposed decoration or design should be directed to the parish office for prior approval before installation.

ONGOING STRUCTURAL CARE AND MAINTENANCE OF MOUNMENTS, MARKERS AND FOOTSTONES

- Structural care and maintenance of monuments, markers and footstones are the responsibility of the holder of the Right of Burial or the heirs of the deceased.
- If a monument, marker, footstone, or grave becomes sunken, damaged, unsafe, or otherwise in disrepair, the parish will make reasonable efforts to notify the holder of the Right of Burial or the heirs of the deceased to request correction within a reasonable period of time.
- If such conditions create a safety hazard, interfere with regular cemetery maintenance, or detract from the dignity and good order of the cemetery, and no responsible party can be located or fails to act within a reasonable time after notice, the parish reserves the right to reset, repair, stabilize, or remove the monument, marker, or grave improvement as deemed necessary.
- Any corrective action taken by the parish because the conditions of the monument create a safety hazard, interfere with regular cemetery maintenance, or detract from the dignity and good order of the cemetery, may be performed by the parish at the expense of the purchaser of the Right of Burial or the heirs of the deceased, when a responsible party can be identified.
- If no responsible party can be identified or located, the parish may take such action as it deems necessary to preserve safety, order, and the sacred character of the cemetery.

CREMATIONS

- A certificate of cremation must be presented by the time of burial or interment.
- Two sets of cremated remains may be buried on the same grave, but only one headstone is allowed. A footstone may be added if needed to better indicate a subsequent burial.
- One set of cremated remains, along with one casket burial, may be on the same grave (in this case, the burial must be first with cremation second). Cremation burials on top of a previous casket burial are required to be in an urn and vault. The vault is not to be made of metal and must be structurally sound, with a maximum height of twenty inches (20").
- All burials of caskets and cremated remains are required to be in a vault and urn (cremated remains).
- A variety of urns may be used for the ashes of the baptized deceased provided they befit the dignity of a human body which has been consecrated to the Lord in baptism, and is intended for entombment in a sacred place. Prohibited examples which fail to honor this dignity, or enable prohibited practices like division, scattering, or domestic retention of ashes include but are not limited to:
 - Jewelry or wearable mementos (e.g., pendants, lockets, or necklaces containing ashes);
 - Divided or portioned containers (e.g., small vials distributed among family members);
 - Home display urns for permanent keeping (e.g., decorative vases or shelves);
 - Novelty urns (e.g., sports memorabilia, coffee containers, boots, and other such secular objects not suited for sacred burial).
- The commingling of cremated remains is not permitted. However, the cremated remains of two individuals may be placed in the same urn if done in a way that ensures they remain separate.
- The scattering of cremated remains anywhere is contrary to Catholic practice.
- Burial of cremated remains within this cemetery, without consent of the parish, is illegal (Minnesota Statute § 307.08).

All official burial records of the cemeteries are preserved at the St. Mary's Parish Office. A certificate will be issued to the purchaser of a grave site indicating placement and location. Copies of these guidelines will be given to the purchaser at the time of purchase; they will also be published parish-wide and available at our parish office. An abbreviated presentation of these rules may also be found on signs at the main cemetery entrances.

The parish reserves the right to enforce these regulations in order to preserve safety, good order, and the sacred character of the cemetery. The parish may remove, reset, repair, or correct any monument, marker, decoration, or improvement that violates these regulations here stated. Reasonable efforts will be made to notify the holder of the Right of Burial or heirs, when possible, prior to corrective action. The parish reserves the right to amend these regulations as needed. Copies of these regulations may be found in the parish office.

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