



ARCHDIOCESE
OF
SAINT PAUL &
MINNEAPOLIS

Effective Date: 10/11/2019

Number: 213

Subject: Parish Cemeteries and Columbaria

Scope: Archdiocese Parishes Schools

Reference:

Archbishop Signature:



Purpose

To address the administration of all cemeteries and [Columbaria](#) administered by a [Parish](#) in the [Archdiocese Territory](#).

Policy

I. CEMETERIES

- 1) Each cemetery should be dedicated and blessed as a sacred space according to appropriate liturgical ritual.
- 2) Minnesota Statute, Chapter 307.01, requires all cemeteries owned by religious corporations to be surveyed and a plat thereof made by the surveyor; further, the law requires this plat to be filed with the County Recorder of the county in which the cemetery is located. (This procedure is sometimes described as the “civil dedication” of a cemetery). The language of the statute makes the preparation and filing of this plat mandatory. In addition, the filing is necessary to preserve the exemption enjoyed by religious cemeteries from assessments for local improvements such as abutting public road, water and sewer installations.
- 3) If not already completed, it is recommended a competent real estate attorney be engaged to arrange for this platting and filing to be certain the details of this law are satisfied.
- 4) It is recommended that each [Parish](#) adopt rules and regulations for its cemetery. Rules and regulations should be readily accessible to the public.
- 5) It is recommended that the cemetery administered by a [Parish](#) be publicly identified with appropriate signage including the name of the cemetery, the name of the associated [Parish](#), and a manner for contacting the [Parish](#).
- 6) The record of burials in the cemetery must be kept up to date and a cemetery plat should be readily accessible to the public. For security purposes, cemetery records should be physically located in a secure container and maintained at the [Parish](#).

- 7) Cemetery funds must not be commingled with other [Parish](#) funds and must be reported on the [Annual Parish Financial Report](#) to the [Archdiocese](#). Cemetery funds may not under any circumstances be used or borrowed by the [Parish](#) for any purpose unrelated to the cemetery.
- 8) All cemetery transactions must be documented and receipted, including the sale of burial rights and the acceptance of funds for any related cemetery service.
- 9) The Minnesota laws of cemetery descendency (MN Statute 525.14) are to be followed in order to ensure lot ownership is properly determined and proper authorization is given for the burial of persons on a respective cemetery lot.
- 10) While the cemetery may have its own board or committee (Board) for its operation, all properties and funds belong to the [Parish](#). The [Pastor](#) must be a member of the cemetery Board, if one is formed, and must be a signor on all cemetery accounts. It is recommended that the cemetery Board operate in accord with the standards established for other [Parish](#) ministries and report to a designated [Parish](#) body, e.g., the [Parish Pastoral Council](#) or [Parish Finance Council](#). The cemetery Board should meet at least annually and be presented with fiscal year accounting for the cemetery for review. It may be necessary to meet more frequently based on cemetery needs.
- 11) When full body interments are made, burial permits must be obtained from the state; the applicable funeral director normally delivers these at the time of burial.

II. COLUMBARIA

- 1) [Columbaria](#) may not be constructed within [Parish](#) church buildings or other sacred spaces designated for divine worship. [Columbaria](#) are to be treated in the same manner as cemeteries regarding liturgical use.
- 2) A [Parish](#) may not have a [Columbaria](#) without a cemetery. The cemetery must provide options for the burial of both bodily remains and cremated remains.

III. APPROPRIATE BURIAL PRACTICES AND TREATMENT OF CREMATED REMAINS

- 1) Out of respect for the dignity of the body, deceased members of the Christian faithful should be buried in a sacred space or gravesite that has been blessed.
- 2) In the case of cremated remains, the remains are to be treated with the same dignity as the body, and so may not be divided into separate receptacles and buried in multiple locations. Cremated remains may not be commingled with the remains of another person. Cremated remains may not be scattered or retained outside of a legitimate burial place.

IV. PROVISION OF PERPETUAL CARE AND MAINTENANCE

- 1) Given the fact that cemeteries are sacred grounds for the burial of the dead, they should be cared for with dignity, thus implying a moral obligation to maintain cemeteries. Cemeteries administered by a [Parish](#) should always be properly maintained to reflect respect for our honored deceased.
- 2) All [Parish](#) cemeteries must maintain a perpetual care fund.

V. RESOURCES FOR CEMETERY QUESTIONS

The *Catholic Cemeteries of the Archdiocese* can be a resource for responding to cemetery questions. The Office of the Chancellor for Civil Affairs can also provide some assistance on cemetery needs.