

SS. Cyril and Methodius Catholic Church

Diocese of Victoria in Texas

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Father Bryan Heyer
Pastor

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Dear Beloved,

From the earliest times, Christians have desired that the faithful departed become the objects of the Christian community's prayers and remembrance. Their tombs have become places of prayer, remembrance and reflection. The faithful departed remain part of the Church who believes "in the communion of all the faithful of Christ, those who are pilgrims on earth, the dead who are being purified, and the blessed in heaven, all together forming one Church".

Ad resurgendum cum Christo, 5

Our parish is blessed to have 16.5 acres of land on the West side of town in which over 130 years of families and parishioners have buried their loved ones after physical death. It is a place that is preserved so that the entire parish and others may go to pray and pay their respects to the faithful that have gone before them and into eternal life. It is a place of hope. It is the one place that the pilgrim church is united to bodies of the purgatorial and glorified souls. Though each family has their individual or groups of graves that they visit, it is a place without division or separation. We are reminded that we all are equal in the grave and in dignity. It is very important that we as a parish be reminded that the, corporal work of mercy to bury the dead not only includes the funeral service but the care of their final resting place regardless of location or time passed since the funeral.

While being blessed with such a large cemetery, it comes with some significant challenges. I want to say first, as pastor of the parish, I apologize for not giving the cemetery enough attention or care and I ask your forgiveness. I, along with our cemetery committee, have been trying to address a myriad of issues and I wish to share some of the solutions that we are enacting in the near future.

The first thing that was needed to be able to correct any of the big issues was funding. The cemetery costs us on the average of \$1500 a month (mowing, trash, chemicals). In order to break even, the cemetery must sell 4 graves a month in order to cover this expense. We have some cemetery funds in reserve but not enough to cover the expensive updates and corrections that are needed. Therefore, for the last three picnics, I have taken 10% of the profits and earmarked them for the cemetery.

(OVER)

Mowing and trimming, will always be laborious and slow due to the patchwork way the graves have been placed, curbed, or not curbed. Couple this with the soil and (OVER) topography of the land itself. The hills of our cemetery most notably the area nearest to the pavilion chapel lacks any topsoils and is almost entirely of sand rock. It grows really only one thing well and that is grass burrs. The soil is so bad that many of the "weeds" that do grow have most of their roots exposed on top of the ground. It is not a beautiful sight and not the dignified conditions that the deceased or their families deserve. The cemetery committee is going to do something about it. In this cemetery section, we are going to cover it with 3 inches of topsoil. It is going to require 440 cubic yards of soil (80 truckloads). We will then seed first with ryegrass and then overseed it with Panama Bermudagrass. We have secured the soil through Werner Materials and the labor through Renken's Nursery in Victoria. The project is going to cost \$32,000. The start date for this work will begin on February 24th. I know that many people have personalized graves with mementos, statues and benches. In order to spread soil and seed we will need to have the graves completely clear. I understand and want to remain respectful of the grieving process. My goal is to grow and establish a good turf so that all of the families in this section may benefit from this beautification project and to ultimately eliminate the grass burrs. Please, remove everything from the graves so that this work may be done expeditiously. The ryegrass should grow rapidly in the short term holding the soil in place while the bermuda (which requires consistent temperatures of 70 to germinate) establishes. Half of the cost of the project is the labor. We can reduce this cost by volunteering the week of February 24th to help spread the soil. If you are available, your help would be greatly appreciated. After all of the seeding taken place and the work is done we are entrusting our project to God. The seeds will germinate as long as there is moisture; but not too much moisture (causes runoff). We trust the Lord but we can also help participate. One of the completed projects we have done is extend water points along the road. If you would want to water your loved ones plots feel free to do so. We will be running some soaker hoses but we can use all the help we can get. By God's providence and the attention and care of the people of God, we can have a nice lawn which brings beauty and dignity to all the resting places of our loved ones.

We have other projects on the horizon that will be addressed at a later time; sunken graves, water runoff from the county road, inner driveways, and more. I assure you we are paying attention now more than ever to our whole cemetery. Again, I apologize for the lack of focus in the past and I beg your help and patience as we seek to dignify and improve our parish cemetery land. *Eternal rest grant to them, O Lord, and let perpetual light shine upon them.*

Oremus pro Invicem,



Rev. Bryan Heyer