

Contact our
Prepare Well
Counselors:

Phone: 301.871.1300

Email: preparewell@ccaw.org

Web: www.ccaw.org

Or visit our cemeteries:

All Souls Cemetery

11401 Brink Road
Germantown, MD 20876
301-428-1995
asc@ccaw.org

Gate of Heaven Cemetery

13801 Georgia Avenue
Silver Spring, MD 20906
301-871-6500
goh@ccaw.org

Mt. Olivet Cemetery

1300 Bladensburg Road, N.E.
Washington, D.C. 20002
202-399-3000
mto@ccaw.org

Resurrection Cemetery

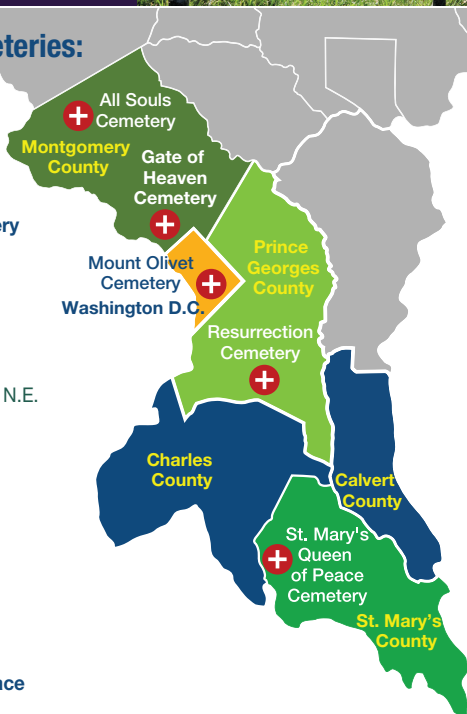
P.O. Box 151
8000 Woodyard Road
Clinton, MD 20735
301-868-5141
res@ccaw.org

St. Mary's Queen of Peace Cemetery

P.O. Box 497
38888 Dr. Johnson Road
Mechanicsville, MD 20659
301-475-5005
301-932-1766
qop@ccaw.org

And over 40 local Parish Cemeteries

See full list at <https://www.ccaw.org/parish-cemeteries>



Cemetery Office Hours

Monday through Saturday
8:00am to 4:00pm

Cemetery Grounds Visiting Hours

March 16 to November 2
7:30am to 7:00pm

November 3 to March 15
7:30am to 5:00pm

The Catholic Cemeteries of the
Archdiocese of Washington, Inc.
13801 Georgia Avenue
Silver Spring, Maryland 20906

The Catholic Way of Death and Burial



*"The cemetery is the 'place of rest', as we wait
for the final awakening....It is lovely to think
that it will be Jesus himself to awaken us."*

— Pope Francis

The Catholic Cemeteries of the Archdiocese of Washington, Inc.

Death is one of the greatest mysteries of human life.

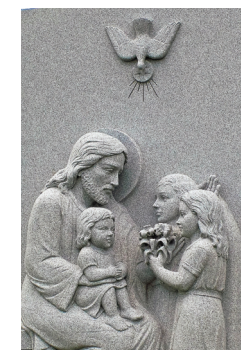
Whether the death of a loved one is sudden or follows a prolonged illness, the Church is here to offer you the living companionship of Jesus Christ, the Good Shepherd who has already passed through death and burial...and therefore, knows the Way. If you or a loved one are considering burial in the Catholic Church, following are the answers to some questions you may have.

Step One: Preparing for the Journey

What can I do to make the trauma of death and burial easier for my loved ones?

The Church approaches death and burial with faith in the power of the living God, hope in the Resurrection of the body, and love for every human person, created in the image and likeness of God. All of her rituals and actions are oriented toward the splendid truth in Christ that each deceased person has an eternal destiny, *fully alive*.

With this great certainty in the Risen Jesus, the Church helps families and friends plan for the Catholic Way: a several-day journey of vigil, funeral and burial, in anticipation of the resurrection of the body on the Last Day. Even if there are those in your family who do not share the fullness of the Church's beliefs, she is here to serve you, offering the care and embrace of Christ, who still speaks to men and women today: "Do not be afraid!" (Matt 28:10).



When do I start to plan for this Way?

Start now. Most people are unprepared for the flurry of quick, lasting decisions they must make when a loved one dies.

Try to begin the conversation with those closest to you. Thoughtful discussions and pre-need arrangements can help make the first days of grieving much less complicated for the bereaved. Since there is usually



one legal decision-maker (most often a spouse), some simple arrangements already set in place can ensure a smoother planning process after death, especially when there are differing views among family and friends.

Step Two: At the Time of Death

When the death of a loved one is imminent, contact a priest first. He will offer you and your loved ones the prayers, counsel and sacraments of the Church, when desired. Even if you are non-practicing, the Church welcomes you where you are, offers God's mercy and seeks to unite every dying person to the death and Resurrection of Jesus Christ.

The priest and parish staff will help you plan the funeral, arrange for music, and make suggestions for a repast meal.

What about the body?

The human body is a gift, given by God, created by God, and destined for an eternal glorified future in Christ (Catechism of the Catholic Church, 364). For baptized Christians, the body is the temple of the Holy Spirit and the instrument through which we offer and receive divine life and love (CCC 2519). This understanding of the body as God's gift is the reason why the Catholic Way of death and burial reverences the deceased body in all of her liturgies, and blesses the place in which the body will be interred. It is also why the Church prohibits practices that treat the body as a disposable object to be manipulated, desecrated or scattered.

Whom else should I contact?

When death occurs, a funeral director can help you coordinate the times of funeral and burial with the Church and cemetery. Since not all funeral directors can offer a full understanding of the Catholic Way, call a priest or a Catholic cemetery manager if you need counsel or clarification when making arrangements.



“To those who feel far from God and the Church, to all those who are fearful or indifferent, I would like to say this: the Lord, with great respect and love, is calling you to be a part of his people!” — Pope Francis

Step Three: The Vigil

During an experience of loss, it is natural to gather together. A formal vigil fulfills this deeply human need. The vigil with the body, also known as the “viewing” or “wake”, is an important time of prayer both for the deceased person and for those who are mourning him or her.

What happens at the Vigil?

The vigil may be held in a funeral home, church or private residence. Friends and family gather to look upon the body with love, to console one another and pray for the soul of the deceased. The casket may be open or closed during viewing hours. A priest or parish minister may conduct a vigil service, or recite the Rosary. Brief rites may also be said when the family first gathers in the presence of the body, or when the casket is closed in preparation for the funeral.

Step Four: The Funeral

The celebration of a Funeral Mass, also called the Mass of Christian Burial, is a sacred ministry of the Church, and the right and privilege of every baptized Catholic, even those who are no longer affiliated with a parish. The Church’s funeral rites also may be celebrated for a baptized member of another Church or ecclesial community, after consultation with a priest (Order of Christian Funerals, 18).

Why is a Funeral Mass encouraged?

With the body of the deceased present in Church at the foot of the altar, the priest offers to God the Father in the Holy Spirit the sacrifice of the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. In this way, the Funeral Mass seeks to purify this deceased child of God from his or her sins and their consequences. In the Mass, we ask God to admit the deceased loved one to the fullness of eternal life. For Catholics and non-Catholic family members, a Mass for the Dead may be said if the body is not present, or a service of prayers can be chosen, although the Church encourages the celebration of the Funeral Mass.

Step Five: Committal at the Cemetery

The Committal Rite of prayers and blessings at the cemetery is the final destination of the deceased along the Catholic Way. Since Christ was buried in a tomb, in-ground burial or entombment in a mausoleum have been the preferred methods of committal since ancient times. Catholics believe that burying and caring for the resting place of the dead is a corporal work of mercy. Therefore, the sacred ground at Catholic cemeteries is treated with great respect by the Church.

What if the body has been cremated?

The Church allows for cremation of the body, but asks that the cremated remains be treated in the same manner as full body burial and interred with the Rite of Committal immediately following the funeral. Catholic cemeteries have niches and in-ground burial for cremated remains. The Church also warmly welcomes those who have not interred the remains of a cremated body, and are now hoping to do so.



“Remembering the dead, caring for their graves and prayers of suffrage, are the testimony of confident hope, rooted in the certainty that death does not have the last word on human existence, for man is destined to a life without limits, which has its roots and its fulfillment in God”

— Pope Francis

What makes Catholic cemeteries different from for-profit cemeteries?

Catholic cemeteries are a part of the Universal Church. Catholic cemetery managers approach this important ministry by ensuring fair, reasonable costs for rich and poor alike, charity assistance when necessary, perpetual care of the gravesite, and a commitment to a Catholic tradition in ministry that is founded on justice, integrity and compassion.

Step Six: Prayer & Remembrance

Monthly masses are said for the souls of the dead in the Catholic cemetery chapels. All souls are remembered in prayer every time there is a new burial in the cemetery. Religious images are placed throughout the grounds to remind visitors of their share in Christ’s victory over death, encouraging prayer and remembrance during visits by family and friends.

Why is praying for the dead so important?

The Catechism teaches that although some sins can be forgiven

after death, all souls must be pure before they can fully be with God. This state of purification after death is called Purgatory (CCC#1030-1). The Church has always honored the memory of the dead and offered Masses, prayers and sacrifices for them so they can reach their fulfillment in Heaven. We believe that prayers, alms, indulgences and works of penance performed by the living can help souls join the fullness of divine life offered to us by God through faith in Jesus Christ. We also believe that the souls of the dead—as members of the communion of saints—can pray for us, just as we can pray for them.

How can the Church help me through my grief?

Both before and after a family death occurs, a priest and local parish community can provide you with the sacraments of the Church, friendship, pastoral counseling and information on resources for the bereaved. Remember, too, the importance of prayer during your grief. Even if you have been out of the habit of talking to God, only one small conversation can get you started again. For additional resources on bereavement, visit the Catholic Cemeteries website, ccaw.org.