

Parish Cemetery Seminar

Diocese of Madison
September 8, 2020
Nativity of Mary



Agenda

- Corporate Structure
- Financial Structure
- Operations
- Perpetual Care
- Insurance
- Wisconsin Statutes
- Evangelization
- Cremation
- Green Burial
- Headstone Policy



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Corporate Structure

- Cemeteries are ministries of the parish, similar to schools.
- Cemeteries should not be separately incorporated.
- When a parish merges, all the cemeteries become operations of that parish.
- The diocese has a list of parish sextons and cemetery committee chairs.



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Financial Structure

- Cemetery should have two dedicated accounts: an operating account and a perpetual care fund.
- Cemetery accounting should be on Quickbooks.
- Merged parishes may have several different parish cemetery accounts that can be merged into one operating account and one perpetual care fund.



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Operations

Ideally, a cemetery operations will run a balanced budget. As with other ministries like schools, occasionally the parish may need to help out.

Revenue ideas

- Review grave pricing.
- Charge for 2nd right of burial.
- Fifth Sunday 2nd collections for cemeteries.
- Mention cemetery endowment opportunities in the bulletin.



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Perpetual Care Funds

The perpetual care fund is the “retirement fund” of the cemetery.

Unlike your personal retirement fund, the cemetery retirement fund is intended to provide maintenance to the cemetery until the End of Time.

The perpetual care funds must be separate and protected from borrowing or raiding. They are not to be used as emergency funds.

Parishes are exempt from the investment requirements of WI Stat 157.19, but must determine annually the amount needed for the care and improvement of the cemetery (157.11(5)).



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Insurance

The top parish cemetery insurance concerns are:

- Tall headstones/monuments with crosses or steeples at the top that can deteriorate, detach, and fall.
- Broken up driveways or holes in the grounds.
- Dead trees and overgrowth.



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Wisconsin Statutes

THIS IS NOT LEGAL ADVICE. I AM NOT A LAWYER.

Most relevant WI Statutes: chapters 157 and 440.

Families may care for their own dead. (cf. 69.18(1)(a))

- Using a funeral director is not required.
- Embalming is not required.
- A casket is not required.
- No particular depth of burial is required.



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Wisconsin Statutes, continued

1. Grave ownership (157.10)
2. Licensing, Registration, and Reporting requirements – exempt. (157.62)
3. Record-keeping (157.62(5)) – required *in perpetuity*.



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Cemetery Evangelization Plan

Best practices:

- Cemetery contact listed in the bulletin weekly, along with school, DRE, etc.
- Cemetery prices in bulletin 2-3x/year.
- Cemetery information on the parish website.
- Homily on cemeteries 1x/year. Expand on: *I believe in the resurrection of the body.*
- Announce spring and fall clean-up dates for several weeks in the bulletin.
- Host an estate, funeral, and cemetery planning evening.
- In October, see the new CatholicBurialTraditions.org website for more.



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Parish Services

- Offer to keep funeral plans on file for parishioners.
- Occasional “funeral planning nights.”
- Funeral society to help with luncheons, etc.
- Accompaniment to funeral home when preplanning.



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Cremation Considerations

Sentire cum ecclesia - Think with the Church

“Through proper instruction and persuasion, Ordinaries are to ensure that the faithful refrain from cremation and not discontinue the practice of burial except when forced to do so by necessity.”

- Pope St. Paul VI, 1963

“The Church insistently recommends that the bodies of the deceased be buried in cemeteries or other sacred places... The Church continues to prefer the practice of burying the bodies of the deceased, because this shows a greater esteem towards the deceased.”

- Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, 2016



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Cremation Considerations, Continued

Congregation For The Doctrine Of The Faith, Instruction *Ad resurgendum cum Christo* (2016)

"When, for legitimate motives, cremation of the body has been chosen, the ashes of the faithful must be laid to rest in a sacred place, that is, in a cemetery."

"the conservation of the ashes of the departed in a domestic residence is not permitted."

"In order that every appearance of pantheism, naturalism or nihilism be avoided, it is not permitted to scatter the ashes of the faithful departed in the air, on land, at sea or in some other way, nor may they be preserved in mementos, pieces of jewelry or other objects."



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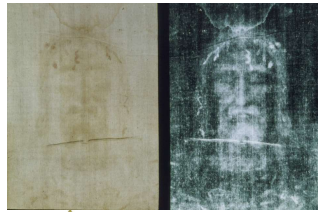
Green Burial

What is it?

Is it Catholic?

Is it Legal?

Is it Permitted?



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Headstone Policy – Why?

Headstones are placed on parish property, on consecrated ground, for a LONG time.

Headstones should reflect our faith well.

There is no obligation to allow an objectionable design to be placed on private property.

Once placed, it is a hard problem to fix.

If you don't have a headstone policy...

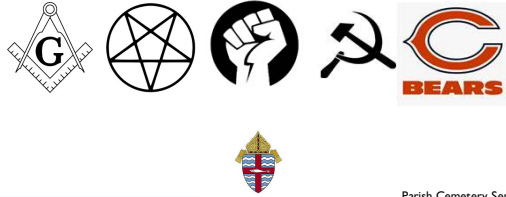


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Headstone Policy

If symbol, then Christian symbol predominant.

Nothing anti-Christian, offensive, racy, tasteless, or vicious, like:



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