



Preparing for a Catholic Funeral



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## Practical Preparation

*Details to Address • Your Will  
Social Security • Veteran Benefits*

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Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ Jesus,

The Catholic Cemetery Conference (CCC) strives to provide information, training, best practices and guidance for Catholic Cemeteries throughout the United States and Canada. CCC's mission is to promote, to educate and to inculcate a culture of Catholic burial. Burying the dead is a Corporal Work of Mercy and an essential part of the Church's mission.

We live in the hope of the resurrection promised by Christ who spoke of the human person as a temple of the Holy Spirit. For that reason care and respect for the deceased matters greatly. The Church strives to assist grieving families in laying their loved ones to rest and provides support and comfort to the family and loved ones of the deceased.

These materials and videos presented by the CCC spell out what care and respect needs to look like through the whole burial process. From pre-planning for death to the Vigil, to the Funeral Mass and the Rite of Committal, these materials and videos provide information on how Catholic Cemeteries accompany families in this difficult time.

Likewise, lesson plans are presented in order to introduce children and young people to the Rites of Christian Burial, outlining how and why the Church treats the human body in death with the utmost respect and dignity.

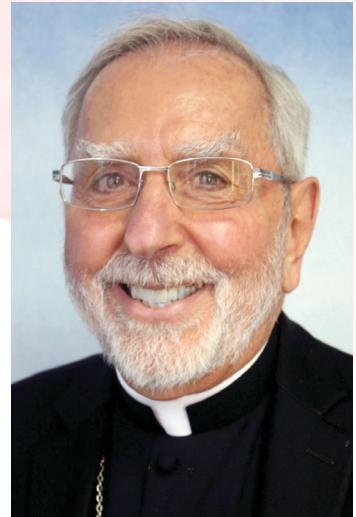
The burial or entombment of the deceased person's body or cremated remains is central to the Church's mission. The hope of CCC is that these materials will assist bishops, priests, Catholic cemeterians and pastoral educators to inform our Catholic people of the Church's approach to death and burial of loved ones.

Choicest blessings!

Sincerely yours in Christ,



Most Rev. Gerald F. Kicanas  
Episcopal Advisor for the Catholic Cemetery Conference  
Bishop Emeritus of the Diocese of Tucson



# COPYRIGHT ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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# PRACTICAL PREPARATION

## Details to Address

Prepare a list of family and friends to be notified.

- † Names
- † Relationship
- † Addresses
- † Telephone
- † Email

## Gather your vital statistics

- † Legal name
- † Address
- † Date of birth
- † Place of birth
- † Occupation  
(or former occupation)
- Kind of business or industry
- † Education completed and degrees received
- Names of educational institutions
- † Dates of military service
- Branch of military service
- Military service number
- Location of discharge papers
- Names of wars in which you participated
- † Marital status
- Legal name of spouse
- Your mother's maiden name
- Her place of birth
- Your father's name
- His place of birth

## Decide on the funeral instructions

- † Vigil Service
- Readings and Songs
- † Funeral Mass
- Readings and Songs
- † Committal Service
- Readings and Songs

## Type of service

- † Traditional or cremation?
- † Graveside, church or chapel?
- † Military?
- † Active pallbearers' names
- Addresses
- Telephone numbers

## Name of funeral home

- † Address
- † Telephone number
- † Type of casket
- Wood or metal?
- † Viewing (visitation)
- Open or closed casket?
- Day and /or Evening?
- Number of Days (Viewing)
- † Clothing
- Your own or new?
- † Newspaper notice
- † Notice to organizations to which you belong
- † Memorial contributions
- † Flowers/preferred florist
- † Clergy
- † Special instructions
- Jewelry, music, flowers, hairdresser

## Decide on the burial instructions Catholic Cemetery

- † Committal Service
- Readings and Songs
- † Type of burial
- † Ground, mausoleum, crypt or other
- † Cemetery
- Name
- Lot, space number, section
- Vault (may be required by cemetery)
  - Concrete, steel or other?

## List your documents and personal papers

- † Bank accounts
- † Bank names
- † Account numbers and types of accounts
- † Safe deposit box
- Location
- Location of keys
- † Important document locations
- Birth certificate
- Social Security
- Children's birth certificates
- Marriage certificates
- † Deeds and titles
- † Mortgages and notes
- † Will and/or living will
- † Medical power of attorney
- † Military discharge
- † Income tax records

## Make or update your will

- † Preserve your will
- Name of executor
- Address
- Telephone number
- Probation of your will
- † Legal assistance
- Name
- Telephone number

## Provide your insurance instructions

- Insurance companies
- Policy numbers
- Amounts
- Purposes

## Your Will<sup>1</sup>

A will is a document used to distribute a deceased person's property. There are two types of property, real property and personal property. Real property is real estate. All other property is personal property (cash, stocks, bank accounts, furniture, cars, etc.). However, a will may not apply to all of a deceased person's property. For instance, it usually does not apply to insurance benefits, nor a retirement plan when a beneficiary has been named. And it may not even apply to a deceased person's interest in joint property if the property is jointly held "by the entirety" (a legal term).

A will can also be used to appoint a legal guardian for one's minor children. Without such appointment, a court will decide who will care for the deceased's child in the event that the other parent is deceased, unavailable or unfit. One should consider naming an alternate guardian in the will in case the first choice cannot or will not accept responsibility for the minor's care.

All persons over 18 years of age should have a will. You should make a will as soon as possible because no one can plan for a sudden illness or accident. If you are a parent, you should have a will even if you do not have many assets. The reason is so that you can appoint a guardian for your minor children.

The following should be noted when making a will:

- The testator (i.e. person making the will) must be clearly identified in the will.
- The testator should revoke all prior wills.
- The testator should be at least 18 years old and of sound mind and body at the time the will is signed.
- The testator should sign and date the will.
- The testator's signature should generally be witnessed by at least two adults, who also sign but who are not beneficiaries under the will.
- The testator should state his/her wishes clearly.

Many "homemade" wills are declared invalid by the courts. State laws set forth the specific requirements for wills. Therefore, preparation and execution of a will should be handled in most cases by a competent attorney.

Often wills are prepared to obtain maximum benefits under the tax laws. Wills should be reviewed every few years, since there might be changed circumstances, i.e. adopted children, etc. Also, if you change residence to a different state after you have executed your will, it is always a good idea to have your will reviewed by an attorney in the state of your new residence.

**How are the intentions expressed in my will carried out upon my death?** The court process in which a deceased person's intentions in the will are carried out is called "probate." During probate, the executor of your will (a person you designate) collects your property, pays all your debts and taxes, and distributes the property according to your will.

**Should I include funeral instructions in my will?** No. It is usually better to leave separate instructions and tell your relatives or close friends where to find the instructions in case of death.

## Planned Gifts

As Christian Stewards, we have an obligation to pass on to the next generation, the Catholic Faith and Life we have received. Making a Planned Gift is a way to say thank you to God for the many blessings He has bestowed upon us. Planned giving can enable the Church to continue the mission entrusted to it by Christ. It can continue to witness the generosity one has shown through life.

The most common planned gift is a bequest in a will. Bequests can be made to a specific parish or to a specific endowment. Another frequently used planned gift is the Archdiocesan Charitable Gift Annuity. This annuity provides immediate tax deductions, lifetime income and a gift to the church. Retained Life Estates, Charitable Remainder Trusts and Charitable Lead Trusts also provide alternative methods of giving, based on the size and complexity of an estate. Contact an attorney for the best method for your estate.

## Social Security<sup>2</sup>

Social Security should be notified as soon as possible when a person dies. In most cases, the funeral director will report the person's death to Social Security. You will need to furnish the funeral director with the deceased's Social Security number so he or she can make the report.

Some of the deceased's family members may be able to receive Social Security benefits if the deceased person worked long enough under Social Security to qualify for benefits. You should get in touch with Social Security as soon as you can to make sure the family receives all of the benefits to which it may be entitled. Please read "Contacting Social Security" below.

Benefits which may be available include a one-time payment of \$255 to the surviving spouse if he or she was living with the deceased; or, if living apart, was receiving certain Social Security benefits based on the

deceased's record. If there is no surviving spouse, the payment may be made to a child who is eligible for benefits based on the deceased's record in the month of death.

Certain family members may be eligible to receive monthly benefits, including:

- A widow or widower age 60 or older (age 50 or older if disabled);
- A surviving spouse at any age who is caring for the deceased's child who is under age 16 or disabled;
- An unmarried child of the deceased who is:
  - Younger than age 18 (or age 18 or 19 if he or she is a full-time student in an elementary or secondary school); or
  - Age 18 or older with a disability that began before age 22;
- Parents, age 62 or older, who were dependent on the deceased for at least half of their support; and
- A surviving divorced spouse, under certain circumstances.

If the deceased was receiving Social Security benefits, you must return the benefit received for the month of death and any later months. For example, if the person dies in July, you must return the benefit paid in July and any month thereafter. If benefits were paid by direct deposit, contact the bank or other financial institution, and request that any funds received for the month of death or later be returned to Social Security. If the benefits were paid by check, do not cash checks received for the month in which the person dies or later. Return the checks to Social Security as soon as possible. However, eligible family members may be able to receive death benefits for the month in which the beneficiary died.

## Contacting Social Security

For more information and to find copies of Social Security publications, visit the Social Security Administration's website at [www.socialsecurity.gov](http://www.socialsecurity.gov) or call toll-free (800) 772-1213 (for the deaf or hard of hearing, call (800) 325-0778). Social Security can answer specific questions and provide information by automated phone service 24 hours a day. A Social Security representative can tell you what benefits may be payable and set up an appointment, if necessary, to file a claim, or accompany the urn of a deceased veteran who served honorably in the U. S. armed forces. It is furnished to honor the memory of a veteran's military service to his or her country. Section 517 of Public Law 105-261 added eligibility for former members of the Selected Reserve.

## Veteran Benefits

As an honorably discharged veteran, you or your family may be entitled to various death benefits. You must apply for veteran benefits as they are not paid automatically. Contact the VA at [www.va.gov](http://www.va.gov) or toll-free 800.772.1213.

To facilitate receiving veterans benefits for which you may be eligible, you will need the following:

- Proof of the veteran's military service
- Service serial number
- Marriage license (if applicable)
- Children's birth certificate (if applicable)
- Certified copy of death certificate

## Veterans Burial Allowance

The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) furnishes a partial reimbursement of eligible veteran burial and funeral costs. When the cause of death is service-related, the reimbursement is generally described as two payments:

(1) a burial and funeral expense allowance and (2) a plot interment allowance.

You may be entitled to a VA burial allowance if:

- You paid for a veterans burial or funeral  
AND
- You have not been reimbursed by another government agency or some other source, such as the deceased veteran's employer AND

2. This information is provided solely as a public service. The Catholic Cemetery Conference disclaim all liability for the accuracy and substance of the information contained herein. You should consult the Social Security Administration or your own attorney regarding the matters noted herein.

3. This information is provided solely as a public service. The Catholic Cemetery Conference disclaim all liability for the accuracy and substance of the information contained herein. You should consult with the Veterans Administration or your own attorney regarding the matters noted herein.

- The veteran was discharged under conditions other than dishonorable.

In addition, at least one of the following condition must be met:

- The veteran died because of a service-related disability OR
- The veteran was getting VA pension or compensation at the time of death OR
- The veteran was entitled to receive VA pension or compensation but decided not to reduce his/ her military retirement or disability pay OR
- The veteran died in a VA hospital or while in a nursing home under VA contract.

The VA will pay an allowance toward burial and funeral expenses along with a plot interment allowance for a service-related death. If the death is non-service related, the VA will pay an allowance toward burial expenses. Burial allowances are paid toward burials at veterans cemeteries only.

## **Headstones and Markers**

The VA furnishes upon request, at no charge to the applicant, a government headstone or marker to mark the unmarked grave of an eligible veteran in any cemetery around the world.

Flat bronze or granite markers and upright marble headstones (at VA cemeteries only) are available.

The style chosen must be consistent with existing monuments at the place of burial. The cemetery must certify that the type chosen is permitted on the grave of the deceased.

Niche emblems are also available to mark the columbariums used for inurnment of cremated remains.

## **Burial Flags**

Most veterans are eligible for a burial flag. Reservists who are entitled to retirement pay are also eligible to receive a burial flag.

A United States flag is provided, at no cost, to drape the casket or accompany the urn of a deceased Veteran who served honorably in the U. S. Armed Forces. It is furnished to honor the memory of a Veteran's military service to his or her country.

For additional veteran benefits information, please contact the VA at [www.va.gov](http://www.va.gov) or toll-free 800.772.1213.

## **Commemoration of Veterans at Catholic Cemeteries**

Catholic cemeteries of the Archdiocese of Newark honor and cherish our fallen heroes and veterans, and remember them throughout the year during monthly Masses, Veteran's Day, Flag Day, and certainly, on Memorial Day. Flags fly daily in designated areas over all Archdiocesan Cemeteries to honor those presently serving and those who have served. Additionally, we place more than one thousand American flags at the memorials of veterans interred at our Catholic Cemeteries for Memorial Day, and those flags remain through Flag Day. All are invited to visit the graves of our fallen heroes as we pray for all our departed loved ones at Memorial Day Mass on Memorial Day.

- **Memorial Day /“Serving God and Country: A Memorial Day Salute to Our Heroes”** is a national program developed by the Catholic Cemetery Conference to honor members of the military who died in combat and recognize veterans and current service men and women. Active military personnel and veterans are invited to participate in Memorial Day Mass at select Archdiocesan Catholic Cemeteries locations to serve as flag or candle bearers during the opening and closing processions, as Lectors, as participants in the Presentation of Gifts, and to recite uniform intercessions followed by a moment of silence. This program also is an ideal time for Catholics in the community and throughout the country to unite, remember, and pray for those who made the ultimate sacrifice for our country. Visit your local Catholic cemetery website for details.

- **Veterans Day “An American Moment”**

Each year on Veterans Day, one moment of silent prayer is observed to thank our military for their service, to pray for the peaceful repose of those who have died, and to pray for the intentions of those still living. This event takes place at noon in each Archdiocesan Cemetery on Veterans Day.

- **American Flags** are permitted on individual graves from Memorial Day thru Flag Day and on Veteran's Day. Veteran's Day flags may be placed three (3) days prior to the holiday and remain one (1) week after the holiday. All flags must be presentable and will be removed and disposed of according to the norms of the Quartermaster General of the United States Army.

## Flag Half-Staff Dates

In addition to the dates listed below, the flags may be flown at half-staff on other solemn occasions, as directed by the President and/or Governor.

- Peace Officers Memorial Day– May 15th (Sunrise to Sunset) Unless that day is also Armed Forces Day, then flags are to be flown at full-staff.
- Memorial Day– Last Monday in May (Sunrise to Noon)
- Patriot Day– Sept 11th (Sunrise to Sunset)
- National Fire Fighters Memorial Day– Oct 7th (Sunrise to Sunset)
- Pearl Harbor Remembrance Day– Dec 7th (Sunrise to Sunset)

For more information, visit your local Catholic cemetery website.

## VETERAN'S PRAYER

Rev. Msgr. William B. Naedele

*Almighty God, Father and Protector of all, we ask that You grant a speedy reward to all Veterans who have passed out of this mortal life. In Your infinite and loving mercy, forgive their failings and faults that they may join with You for eternal happiness. Your Son, Jesus Christ, suffered death on the cross and gained for them a share in His victory over sin and death. Grant the veterans who have gone to rest in Christ that they may share in the joy of His resurrection. Amen.*

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## INFORMATION FORMS

*The following forms are provided as a public service. The Catholic Cemetery Conference disclaim all liability with respect to these forms, the categories of information involved, and the use of the forms. If you have any questions regarding these forms, the use of the forms, or the content, you should consult your attorney and/or your funeral director.*

*NOTE: These forms include a space for your Social Security number and certain background information which, if it gets into the wrong hands, might result in identity theft. Therefore, once completed, you should safeguard these forms in the same way that you safeguard other very important personal financial information. However, please note that if you place these forms in a safety deposit box, the information may not be available in time for your personal representative.*

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# Information for Relatives or Personal Representative

Name \_\_\_\_\_  
Last \_\_\_\_\_ First \_\_\_\_\_ Middle (or initial) \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_  
Street \_\_\_\_\_ City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone \_\_\_\_\_ Social Security # \_\_\_\_\_

Date of Birth \_\_\_\_\_ Birthplace \_\_\_\_\_  
City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Citizen of \_\_\_\_\_  
Country \_\_\_\_\_

Resided in \_\_\_\_\_ for (how long) \_\_\_\_\_ Years

Single \_\_\_\_\_ Married \_\_\_\_\_ Divorced \_\_\_\_\_ Separated \_\_\_\_\_ Widowed \_\_\_\_\_

Name of Spouse \_\_\_\_\_ (If deceased) Date of Death \_\_\_\_\_

Wedding Date/Anniversary \_\_\_\_\_

Email Address: \_\_\_\_\_

## Professional Statistics

Occupation and Title (or retired from) \_\_\_\_\_

Kind of Business/Employer \_\_\_\_\_ How Long \_\_\_\_\_

Father \_\_\_\_\_  
Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date of Birth \_\_\_\_\_ Birthplace \_\_\_\_\_

Mother \_\_\_\_\_  
Maiden Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date of Birth \_\_\_\_\_ Birthplace \_\_\_\_\_

## Persons to Notify: Next of Kin Other than Spouse

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Address \_\_\_\_\_ Phone \_\_\_\_\_ Relationship \_\_\_\_\_

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Address \_\_\_\_\_ Phone \_\_\_\_\_ Relationship \_\_\_\_\_

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Address \_\_\_\_\_ Phone \_\_\_\_\_ Relationship \_\_\_\_\_

## Other Persons/Organizations

Parish \_\_\_\_\_ Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Doctor \_\_\_\_\_ Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Funeral Director \_\_\_\_\_ Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Personal Representative/Attorney \_\_\_\_\_ Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Organization \_\_\_\_\_ Name \_\_\_\_\_ Address \_\_\_\_\_ Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Organization \_\_\_\_\_ Name \_\_\_\_\_ Address \_\_\_\_\_ Phone \_\_\_\_\_

# Financial Information & Important Records or Documents

Location of Records \_\_\_\_\_ Social Security Number \_\_\_\_\_

## Will

I have a will. Yes No Will Dated \_\_\_\_\_ Where Located \_\_\_\_\_

Executor \_\_\_\_\_ Name \_\_\_\_\_ Address \_\_\_\_\_ Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Attorney \_\_\_\_\_ Name \_\_\_\_\_ Address \_\_\_\_\_ Phone \_\_\_\_\_

## Banking /Financial Institution

Bank \_\_\_\_\_ Name \_\_\_\_\_ Address \_\_\_\_\_ Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Type of Accounts Checking# \_\_\_\_\_ Savings# \_\_\_\_\_ Other \_\_\_\_\_

Bank \_\_\_\_\_ Name \_\_\_\_\_ Address \_\_\_\_\_ Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Type of Accounts Checking# \_\_\_\_\_ Savings# \_\_\_\_\_ Other \_\_\_\_\_

Safety Deposit Box \_\_\_\_\_ Number \_\_\_\_\_ Key Location \_\_\_\_\_ Bank \_\_\_\_\_ Address \_\_\_\_\_ Phone \_\_\_\_\_

## Insurance Policies

Name Policy Number Company/Union/Organization/Agent Phone \_\_\_\_\_

## Pension/Investments

Pension \_\_\_\_\_ Name/Number Administrator Address Phone \_\_\_\_\_

401K/Plan \_\_\_\_\_ Name/Number Administrator Address Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Investments \_\_\_\_\_ Name/Number Administrator Address Phone \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ Name/Number Administrator Address Phone \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ Name/Number Administrator Address Phone \_\_\_\_\_

## Veteran Information

Service Identification/Serial Number \_\_\_\_\_ Rank & Branch of Service \_\_\_\_\_

Location of Veteran's Office to Notify \_\_\_\_\_ Address \_\_\_\_\_ Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Entered Service \_\_\_\_\_ Discharged \_\_\_\_\_ Date/Place \_\_\_\_\_ Date/Place \_\_\_\_\_

Wars Fought \_\_\_\_\_ Medals/Awards/Honors \_\_\_\_\_

# Information for the Funeral Home & Parish Church

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Last \_\_\_\_\_ First \_\_\_\_\_ Middle (or initial) \_\_\_\_\_  
Address \_\_\_\_\_ Street \_\_\_\_\_ City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_  
Telephone \_\_\_\_\_ Social Security # \_\_\_\_\_  
Date of Birth \_\_\_\_\_ Birthplace \_\_\_\_\_ City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Citizen of \_\_\_\_\_ Country \_\_\_\_\_  
Resided in \_\_\_\_\_ for (how long) \_\_\_\_\_ Years  
Single \_\_\_\_\_ Married \_\_\_\_\_ Divorced \_\_\_\_\_ Separated \_\_\_\_\_ Widowed \_\_\_\_\_  
Name of Spouse \_\_\_\_\_ (If deceased) Date of Death \_\_\_\_\_  
Wedding Date/Anniversary \_\_\_\_\_

## Professional Statistics

Occupation and Title (or retired from) \_\_\_\_\_  
Kind of Business/Employer \_\_\_\_\_ How Long \_\_\_\_\_  
Father \_\_\_\_\_ Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date of Birth \_\_\_\_\_ Birthplace \_\_\_\_\_  
Mother \_\_\_\_\_ Maiden Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date of Birth \_\_\_\_\_ Birthplace \_\_\_\_\_

## Veteran Information

Service Identification/Serial Number \_\_\_\_\_ Rank & Branch of Service \_\_\_\_\_  
Location of Veteran's Office to Notify \_\_\_\_\_ Address \_\_\_\_\_ Phone \_\_\_\_\_  
Entered Service \_\_\_\_\_ Discharged \_\_\_\_\_ Date/Place \_\_\_\_\_  
Wars Fought \_\_\_\_\_ Medals/Awards/Honors \_\_\_\_\_  
I would want an American flag for my family \_\_\_\_\_ and military honors (if available) \_\_\_\_\_

## Floral Request \_\_\_\_\_

**Memorial Gifts** Instead of flowers, I would prefer that my friends make memorial gifts

Name	Address			
Name	Address			
Final Disposition of My Body	Burial-In-ground	Above-ground	Cremation	Donation for Research
at				
Cemetery			Town	

I have \_\_\_\_\_ I have not consulted with the above-named cemetery regarding:  
a cemetery plot \_\_\_\_\_ a vault \_\_\_\_\_ crypt \_\_\_\_\_ niche for created remains \_\_\_\_\_ memorial marker \_\_\_\_\_ services  
Location of Ownership Certificate (Deed for cemetery property, Certificate of Interment)

The location or number of my burial plot (cemetery, mausoleum, columbarium niche) or other instructions

Open Casket: Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_ Type of Casket \_\_\_\_\_ Color \_\_\_\_\_ Interior \_\_\_\_\_  
Metal, Wood, Fiberglass exterior \_\_\_\_\_

Clothing: Current Wardrobe \_\_\_\_\_ New \_\_\_\_\_ Other \_\_\_\_\_

Jewelry: \_\_\_\_\_ Stays on \_\_\_\_\_ Return to: \_\_\_\_\_

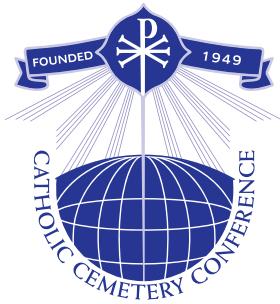




# Preparing for a Catholic Funeral



## Acknowledgments



Catholic  
Communication  
Campaign  
CONNECT WITH CHRIST



## Catholic Cemeteries

A Ministry of the Archdiocese of Newark  
For Our Catholic Community For Over 160 Years



[www.catholicburialtraditions.org](http://www.catholicburialtraditions.org)