



ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH IN THE STATE OF HAWAII
DIOCESE OF HONOLULU
WITNESS TO JESUS

Decree Promulgating Norms for Catholic Parochial Cemeteries

His Holiness Pope Francis said when visiting a cemetery: “A cemetery is sad, it reminds us of our loved ones who have passed on. It also reminds us of the future, of death. But in this sadness, we bring flowers, as a sign of hope, and also, I might say, of celebration ... and remembrance of the future, of the journey that we will make, with certainty, security; that certainty comes from Jesus’ lips: ‘I will raise him up on the last day’” (Visit to Prima Porta Cemetery, All Souls Day 2016).

Remembering our beloved departed, mindful of our own mortality, and filled with hope that comes from our faith in the resurrection of Jesus from the dead, many of the parishes in the Diocese of Honolulu have long made places for the burial of the dead. In our current times, in an effort to cherish the remains of those who, for acceptable reasons, choose the cremation of their bodies, we expand that effort into columbaria to accommodate cremated remains, for they too are the remains of a human person.

We appreciate those in the Hawaii State Legislature who passed H.B. no. 2202, signed into law on September 15, 2020 by Governor David Ige, and those who supported its passage. This law will more readily allow our parishes, with oversight and guidance from the diocese, to achieve our spiritual goals in tangible ways. To assist in this effort, I hereby promulgate the *Norms for Catholic Parochial Cemeteries in the Diocese of Honolulu*. These norms are to be made available by being posted on the diocesan website, distributed through the diocesan eNews, and printed in the *Hawaii Catholic Herald*.

Given at the Office of the Bishop on the 1st day of October 2022 effective immediately.

Most Reverend Clarence (Larry) Silva
Bishop of Honolulu

Deacon Keith Cabiles
Chancellor

Norms for Catholic Parochial Cemeteries in the Diocese of Honolulu

Introduction

1. “In the face of death, the Church confidently proclaims that God has created each person for eternal life and that Jesus, the Son of God, by his death and resurrection, has broken the chains of sin and death that bound humanity.”¹ Therefore, for the faithful, life is changed, not ended, and when our earthly dwelling turns to dust, an eternal dwelling is made ready for us in heaven.²

2. “Tobias, the just, was praised for the merits he acquired in the sight of God for having buried the dead (Tobit 2:9, 12:12), and the Church considers the burial of the dead one of the corporal works of mercy. ... By burying the bodies of the faithful, the Church confirms her faith in the resurrection of the body, and intends to show the great dignity of the human body as an integral part of the human person whose body forms part of their identity.”³

3. “Burial in a cemetery or another sacred place adequately corresponds to the piety and respect owed to the bodies of the faithful departed who through Baptism have become temples of the Holy Spirit. ... The burial of the faithful departed in cemeteries or other sacred places encourages family members and the whole Christian community to pray for and remember the dead.”⁴

4. By his own three days in the tomb, Jesus has hallowed the graves of all who believe in him, and so made the grave a sign of hope that promises resurrection even as it claims our mortal bodies.⁵ As a result of this belief, the Church designates places for the burial of the faithful as sacred places by a blessing which the liturgical books prescribe for this purpose.⁶ “The rite [of blessing a cemetery] should preferably be celebrated by the bishop of the diocese, but he may entrust the responsibility to a priest, particularly one who assists him in the pastoral care of the faithful who have established the cemetery,”⁷ namely, the pastor.

5. Canon 1243 of the *Code of Canon Law* directs that norms be established regarding ecclesiastical cemeteries, especially with regard to protecting and fostering their sacred character.⁸ This document fulfills this directive and is to be promulgated by publication in the *Hawaii Catholic Herald* and posted on the diocesan website.

6. The parochial cemeteries in the Diocese of Honolulu are part of the juridic person of the parish.⁹ However, the parish is to entrust the administration of certain aspects of its cemetery to the administrative offices of the Diocese of Honolulu, with the parish

¹ Introduction, *Order of Christian Funerals*, n. 1.

² From the *Roman Missal*, Preface I for the Dead.

³ Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, Instruction on Burial of the Deceased and the Conservation of the Ashes in the Case of Cremation *Ad resurgendum cum Christo*, 15 August 2016, n. 3.

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ From the *Order of Christian Funerals*, Rite of Committal, blessing of a grave.

⁶ *Code of Canon Law*, canons 1205–1207.

⁷ *Book of Blessings*, n. 1419.

⁸ See also canons 1240 §1 and 1241 §1.

⁹ The King Street cemetery is canonically owned by the Diocese of Honolulu and is not subject to these norms.

compensating the diocese for its services. The details of this arrangement are to be established in an agreement between the diocese and each parish.

7. These norms also apply to the King Street Cemetery, which is part of the juridic person of the diocese, except that the responsibilities of the parish will be fulfilled by the diocesan office responsible for overseeing cemeteries.

Those Who May Receive Interment in a Catholic Parochial Cemetery

8. Priests, deacons, or, if necessary, trained lay ministers who have been properly prepared are appropriate ministers to officiate at the committal services in a parochial cemetery. Depending on the availability of space, burial accompanied by the Catholic Rite of Committal is open to baptized Catholic members of the parish to which the cemetery belongs, with the following exceptions:

- a. Children whom the Catholic parents intended to have baptized but who died before Baptism may receive burial in a parochial cemetery.¹⁰
- b. Those who have been received into the Order of Catechumens in the parish may receive burial in a parochial cemetery.¹¹
- c. Those who have become candidates for full communion with the Catholic Church in the parish may receive burial in a parochial cemetery.
- d. Other baptized members of a non-Catholic Church or ecclesial community who are members of the immediate family of a Catholic parishioner (living or deceased) may receive burial in a parochial cemetery, unless the will of the deceased was to the contrary.¹² In this event, the clergy of a non-Catholic Church or ecclesial community may conduct burial rites according to their own customs.¹³ As an alternative, if the person's own minister is not available and if it is not contrary to the wishes of the deceased, the Catholic Rite of Committal may be celebrated at the request of the family.¹⁴ (Generally speaking, if the baptized non-Catholic is the spouse of a Catholic and has regularly attended Mass with the Catholic spouse and therefore has no active affiliation of his or her own, it can then be presumed that the conditions have been met.)
- e. "In their cemeteries, therefore, Christians bury and show due honor to the bodies not only of their brothers and sisters in faith, but also of those to whom they are bound by the ties of a common humanity." Consequently, with the permission of the pastor, non-baptized members of the immediate family of a Catholic parishioner (living or deceased) may receive burial in a parochial cemetery, unless the will of the

¹⁰ Canon 1183 §2 states that the local Ordinary can permit this. In the Diocese of Honolulu, pastors, parochial vicars, and chaplains have the faculty to permit this.

¹¹ Canon 1183 §1.

¹² Canon 1183 §3 states that the local Ordinary can permit this. In the Diocese of Honolulu, pastors, parochial vicars, and chaplains have the faculty to permit this.

¹³ Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity, *Directory for the Application of Principles and Norms on Ecumenism*, 25 March 1993, n. 137.

¹⁴ Canon 1183 §3.

deceased was to the contrary.¹⁵ Catholic funeral rites are not celebrated as the wording of the rites presume the reception of the sacrament of Baptism. The prayers and customs of another religion may be carried out, provided that they are not contrary to Catholic doctrine or practices.

- f. Letters a., d., and e. also apply to the remains of miscarried or stillborn infants. Such a reverent and proper disposition is in accordance with the Catholic faith and appropriate respect for human life.
- g. “Unless they gave some signs of repentance before death, the following must be deprived of ecclesiastical funerals: notorious apostates, heretics, and schismatics; those who chose the cremation of their bodies for reasons contrary to Christian faith [i.e., to deny belief in the resurrection of the body]; other manifest sinners who cannot be granted ecclesiastical funerals without public scandal of the faithful. If any doubt occurs, the local Ordinary is to be consulted, and his judgment must be followed.”¹⁶

9. If the pastor has concerns about space limitations in his parochial cemetery, he has a right to impose further limitations at his own discretion.

10. Amputated extremities of the same individuals may also be given burial in a parochial cemetery, although without the usual rites or accompanied only by a simple blessing or prayer.

Interment of Cremated Remains in a Catholic Parochial Cemetery

11. Although the Church retains its preference for full body burial over cremation,¹⁷ “the Church raises no doctrinal objections to this practice, since cremation of the deceased’s body does not affect his or her soul, nor does it prevent God, in his omnipotence, from raising up the deceased body to new life.”¹⁸

12. “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.”¹⁹ Therefore when, for legitimate motives, such as sanitary, economic or social considerations,²⁰ “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 or, in certain cases, in a church or an area, which has been set aside for this purpose, and so dedicated by the competent ecclesial authority.”²¹

13. “The cremated remains of a body should be treated with the same respect given to the human body from which they come. This includes the use of a worthy vessel to contain the ashes, the manner in which they are carried, the care and attention to the appropriate

¹⁵ *Book of Blessings*, n. 1418.

¹⁶ Canon 1184.

¹⁷ *Order of Christian Funerals*, nn. 413, 415; *Ad resurgendum cum Christo*, n. 4.

¹⁸ *Ad resurgendum cum Christo*, n. 4.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, n. 7.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, n. 4.

²¹ *Ibid.*

placement and transport, and the final disposition. The cremated remains should be buried in a grave or entombed in a mausoleum or columbarium.”²²

14. There is no moral objection to Catholics making prior arrangements to donate their bodies or parts of them to advance medical science. The only limitation is that, upon eventual disposition of the body or its parts, there be some reasonable assurance that the remains will be disposed of in a reverential manner. Ordinarily the remains of the body are returned to the family in the form of cremated remains. The parish should then be contacted to arrange for the burial or interment of the remains, which may take place at a parochial cemetery.

Procedure and Costs

15. In order to assure proper perpetual care and compliance with civil law, parishes with cemeteries must entrust the construction, sale, mapping, and management of plots, mausoleums, and columbaria to the diocesan office responsible for overseeing cemetery operations. The diocesan office will bill the parish for its services as determined by the bishop.

16. Pastors of parishes with space available for body burial and columbaria with space available for the interment of cremated remains are to establish a committal ministry to assist with the responsibilities of the parish set out in these norms.

17. The parish is responsible to maintain the cemetery, including the columbaria, in the same manner as the rest of the parish campus, in terms of cleaning, repair, other maintenance, moving lawns, and so on.

18. Parishes with cemeteries are encouraged to offer prearrangements with parishioners and families. When inquiries are made, parish staff are to refer interested parties to the diocesan office.

19. When prearrangements have not been made and death occurs and the family is interested in burial or interment in the parish cemetery, the parish staff or the mortuary itself may refer the family to the diocesan office.

20. Upon referral to the diocesan office, the person or family may purchase a burial right connected to an associated plot or niche. The schedule of prices and locations will be determined on the basis of what is available. In making a purchase, the right to interment is acquired which does not involve the purchase of real property. The proceeds from the sale of the burial right are divided, in accord with the formula approved by the bishop, between the parish which canonically owns the property and the diocesan office in exchange for the services it provides. Proof of ownership of the burial right is the signed contract. Resale is not permitted. Purchase of the right of burial includes perpetual care. If persons want to cancel their contract, this will be possible, and this will be handled pursuant to the terms and conditions in the contract.

²² *Order of Christian Funerals*, 417, which further states: “The practice of scattering cremated remains on the sea, from the air, or on the ground, or keeping cremated remains in the home of a relative or friend of the deceased are not the reverent disposition that the Church requires.”

21. At the time of burial or interment, the diocesan office will assist the parish in fulfilling the requirements of the State of Hawaii Department of Health's Administrative Rules.

- a. It is the responsibility of the parish to oversee the opening and closing of a grave for body burial, including the lowering of the casket into the ground. The choice of vendor for such services must be suggested or approved by the diocesan office.
- b. It is the responsibility of the parish to open and close a niche for the interment of cremated remains. The diocesan office will provide training as to how this is done.

22. "Whenever possible, appropriate means for recording with dignity the memory of the deceased should be adopted, such as a plaque or stone which records the name of the deceased."²³ This custom encourages prayer for the deceased and the hope of reunion in heaven.

- a. For full body burials, local vendors for foundations and stones may be used. The choice of vendor for such products must be suggested or approved by the diocesan office. In addition to the names, relationships, and dates, the stones and markers may include traditional Catholic symbols, sayings, or Scripture verses. Secular symbols, epitaphs, and photos require the permission of the pastor. Anti-Catholic or anti-Christian sayings or symbols (e.g., the Masonic square and compass) are entirely prohibited.
- b. For niches, the diocesan office offers engraving on the shutter, which would be included in the contract. Because of space, this is typically limited to the person's name, dates of birth and of death. If space allows, a favorite bible verse or epitaph, a small framed photo (head shot), or a religious symbol only may be included. While the family may choose the photo and religious symbol, the placement of the photo tile and symbol will be predetermined for the sake of consistency across the unit.

23. The *Decree Regarding Offerings for Sacraments, Sacramentals, and Funerals* of April 17, 2015, issued by the metropolitan for the San Francisco Province, limits the amount that a parish can request for funeral services to a \$300 maximum. However, an inability to provide an offering to the parish of domicile will not deprive the person of the funeral rites to which that person is entitled by their Catholic baptism (canon 848). This offering to the parish is distinct from the cost associated with the purchase of the right of burial in a parochial cemetery.

24. The poor may not be denied Catholic burial services or burial in a parochial cemetery due to an inability to afford the cost. The parish is to set aside a portion of the income from the sale of burial rights into a St. Joseph of Arimathea Fund, which would be available to help defray the costs for those unable to pay the full amount. The pastor will coordinate with the parish's social ministry in responding to specific requests for assistance.

²³ *Order of Christian Funerals*, n. 417.