

Why the cemetery is so vital to our Catholic faith

BY THE MOST REVEREND HARRY J. FLYNN, D.D., ARCHBISHOP EMERITUS

I rarely pay a visit to upstate New York, where I was born, without going to Most Holy Redeemer Cemetery in Schenectady. It is there that my parents, brothers and sisters and many relatives are buried. I stop at each grave and fondly remember that person and the role he or she played in my life.

In fact, for most of my life, the cemetery has been a place of great comfort to me. My father died when I was six years old, and my mother and I would regularly visit the cemetery and pray there.

When I was 12, my mother died. By then, my older siblings had left home and I had gone to live with elderly aunts and uncles. Sunday after Sunday, I would ride one bus and then transfer to another to get to Most Holy Redeemer. Visiting the graves of my parents, I always came away nurtured and comforted.

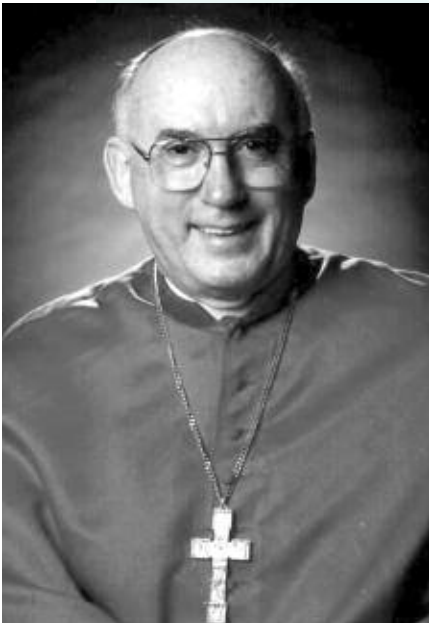
In more recent years, I said Mass on many Memorial Days at one of our Archdiocesan Catholic cemeteries. This has always been a beautiful experience for me. You can see the love in the hearts of those who attend, reaching beyond death to their loved ones buried at the cemetery. Truly, love is stronger than death.

The Catholic Cemeteries play a vital role in our Catholic faith. They are a symbol of the reverence we hold for the human body when the soul passes on to God. The cemetery says to the world, the body rests here in this sacred ground to be remembered and revered.

As a Christian community, we are called by Jesus Christ to comfort those who mourn. This mandate is the heart of the mission of The Catholic Cemeteries. In his own life, Jesus did it dramatically with Martha and Mary when Lazarus died. The Gospel writer called it a sign coming from the depths of his heart.

Mourning is a unique journey for each person. Yet there is a tendency in our modern-day culture to want to get things over with and move on quickly. This makes our ministry to the bereaved — reaching out, listening intently, being present — of more importance than ever.

I would encourage anyone who experiences loss to let the cemetery become a place of comfort where we reach back into a relationship with those who have died and be in conversation with them. As humans, we need and want ways to connect with and remember the past — indeed, we need the cemetery.



**Most Reverend
Harry J. Flynn, D.D.
Archbishop Emeritus**

Memorial Day 2009

Resurrection office building to be renamed

*Throughout his life, Archbishop Harry J. Flynn has expressed deep pastoral concern for families experiencing the loss of a loved one. To honor his service of compassion and care for the faithful of the Archdiocese of Saint Paul and Minneapolis, The Catholic Cemeteries announces a new name for the office building at Resurrection Cemetery — **Archbishop Harry J. Flynn Center**.*

On Memorial Day, May 25, 2009, the building, which also serves as the corporate offices of The Catholic Cemeteries and was constructed under his tutelage, will be officially renamed. Please join Archbishop Flynn at the Memorial Day mass at Resurrection as we recognize his many contributions to the Archdiocese.

Please turn to page 2 to learn about another way The Catholic Cemeteries is honoring the Archbishop.



The Archbishop Harry J. Flynn Center at Resurrection Cemetery is named to honor the contributions of a remarkable leader.

Archbishop Flynn Fund assists grieving families

We invite you to honor Archbishop Flynn by making a contribution to the **Archbishop Harry J. Flynn Compassionate Assistance Fund**, named to honor the archbishop emeritus and dedicated to serving two critical needs:

- Ministry to bereaved families who are unable to pay for all or some of the associated costs of burial for a deceased loved one. The Catholic Cemeteries provides burial space and related interment services to ensure a sacred resting place for all regardless of their economic status or religion.
- Ministry to bereaved families who have lost children by miscarriage or other reasons prior to birth. The Catholic Cemeteries provides burial of fetal remains in the Children's Section at Resurrection Cemetery and now hosts a quarterly funeral and committal service for families. The goal of the fund is to widen accessibility to more hospitals in the metro area and provide common grave markers for these special gravesites.

To make a gift to support these ministries, please send your tax-deductible contribution to The Catholic Cemeteries, 2105 Lexington Ave. S., Mendota Heights, MN 55120, or call 651-228-9991.

Remembering a beloved child: A special opportunity

The Children's Memorial and Prayer Garden at Gethsemane Cemetery offers a special way for bereaved families to memorialize a beloved child. Paving bricks that border the

walkway leading to the Memorial are available for inscription of the child's name and years of birth and death. A contribution of \$250 covers the cost of the memorial brick and inscription and supports the endowment for the care and maintenance of the Memorial, which was dedicated in 2008. For more information, please call 651-228-9991.



Jules Bobst, family service counselor at Gethsemane Cemetery, meets with families referred to Gethsemane by Helen Williams in her outreach to families unable to pay for cemetery space.

Volunteer funeral organizer works behind the scenes with grieving families

She's been called a rock of support, a guardian angel, a guiding light. But above all, Helen Williams is a woman with a mission — a passionate belief that every person deserves dignity in death.

During a family's darkest hour, Williams steps in to help grieving relatives through the ordeal of burying a loved one. Since 2006, she has assisted with approximately 300 deaths in north Minneapolis.

What all of her families have in common is a lack of resources to cover the myriad costs of a funeral and burial. With money available from state and county sources and donations from churches, businesses and charities, she pieces together a budget and helps families prioritize spending and make arrangements — funeral home, casket, funeral service, burial. (Williams noted that cremation is not part of the tradition of the black community.)

Her work started in 1996 when she tried to send flowers to a funeral for a 13-year-old boy, but discovered no funeral arrangements had been made. The family had no money and no idea what to do. "That was my first experience doing this. It was trial and error," said Williams, who owns a business with her husband of 35 years and is active in the north Minneapolis community.

A decade later, in 2006, a series of tragic events propelled Williams deeper into the role of volunteer funeral organizer. A boy from the neighborhood and best friend of her grandson was shot to death while coming home from a community event. Williams went to visit the bereft mother, who had no money for funeral expenses and no idea what to do. Williams jumped in, made phone calls, found resources, coordinated arrangements and helped plan a funeral service that drew 1500 mourners.

Just a month later, another young neighbor was shot to death. "The family knew I had helped with Brian. They knocked on my door and asked if I could help," said Williams. "I didn't want to do it — Brian's death had taken a huge toll on me — but my husband said they needed me."

Williams did help and since then, she's never turned away any family in need.

In 2008, Williams got connected with The Catholic Cemeteries, which has provided free burial space for a number of her families at St. Mary's and Gethsemane cemeteries.

"It's been a blessing to work with The Catholic Cemeteries," said

Williams, who was honored with a KARE 11 *Eleven Who Care* award in 2007. "My families are so grateful to have their loved ones buried in these beautifully maintained cemeteries. I am impressed with how each family is treated with such respect and care by The Catholic Cemeteries' staff."

The oldest of 12 children raised by a single mother in Louisiana, Williams has known hard times herself. "When you grow up poor as I did, you know what it's like to be on that side of the fence and to be the recipient of someone's help," she said. "I live in a community of people who live paycheck to paycheck. It's been a blessing to be able to help my people. It comes from my heart."

The Archbishop Harry J. Flynn Compassionate Assistance Fund (see sidebar) provides burial space for low-income families. To make a tax-deductible contribution, please call 651-228-9991. For more information about Helen Williams and her ministry, call 612-521-6611.

"It's been a blessing to be able to help my people."

HELEN WILLIAMS

Ministry of Consolation training held

As part of its new strategic direction to become the archdiocesan resource for ministry to the bereaved, The Catholic Cemeteries hosted Ministry of Consolation training in January 2009 at St. Peter Claver Parish. Twenty-seven lay ministers and deacons from the Archdiocese along with two deacons and a laywoman from the Archdiocese of Chicago participated in the two day training seminar conducted by the National Catholic Ministry to the Bereaved (NCMB). Linda Cherek and Ingrid Seunarine, both members of the national training faculty of NCMB, facilitated the training sessions. For further information about training opportunities, please contact Sister Fran Donnelly, Director of LifeTransition Ministries of The Catholic Cemeteries, 651-228-9991.

Mission Day 2009: Funeral directors share with staff

At the annual Mission Day in January, funeral directors Dan Delmore and Jim Bradshaw addressed The Catholic Cemeteries staff on the future of cemeteries and funerals. "Our employees found their message to be sobering, yet hopeful, as well as challenging and informative. Our mission has not changed but the times and culture that we now live in are definitely impacting the role of funeral and

cemetery service, both in society and in our church," said John Cherek, director of The Catholic Cemeteries. In the afternoon, employees viewed the PBS documentary about funerals, entitled *The Undertaking*.

Cherek named to Catholic Cemetery Conference board

John Cherek, Director of The Catholic Cemeteries has been named to the Board of Directors of the Catholic Cemetery Conference (CCC), headquartered in Chicago, IL. He will serve as the representative for the Midwest region of the United States. The Catholic Cemetery Conference currently serves Catholic cemeteries in North America, Australia, and some Pacific islands.

Memorial Day flags at Resurrection Cemetery

A local Boy Scout troop traditionally visits Resurrection Cemetery just before Memorial Day to place flags on the graves of veterans whose graves are marked with a Veterans Administration-provided gravestone. The Scouts do not mark graves of veterans if the graves are not immediately identifiable as such. For those families visiting the graves of veterans *not marked with a VA provided gravestone*, flags can be purchased at the outdoor flower stand in the cemetery.

Recession impacts The Catholic Cemeteries

The Catholic Cemeteries has been significantly affected by the current economic crisis. "Our investments, of which we are dependent upon for a portion of our operating income, have lost a significant amount in asset value. Unfortunately, to meet this challenge a number of employees have been laid off and remaining employees have had to assume their duties. In addition all areas of cemetery expense are being scrutinized and modified according to need," said The Catholic Cemeteries director John Cherek.

"Our priority in this process is to maintain our mission to bury the dead and to provide high quality care and maintenance of the cemetery grounds. As families visit our cemeteries during the spring and summer months, every effort is being made to keep our service level at its highest capacity," he said

Also, in the recent months a project team has been working on a redesign of The Catholic Cemeteries web site. While this project is now on hold due to financial constraints, the current site — www.catholic-cemeteries.org — provides information about upcoming events and other news. Please feel free to contact the cemetery offices with ideas or suggestions for ways to improve the web site.

Funerals are for the survivors

By Sister Fran Donnelly, *Director of LifeTransition Ministries, The Catholic Cemeteries*

Occasionally one reads in an obituary, "At the deceased's request, there will be no services."



Sister Fran Donnelly

Or the obituary is published after the fact, "No services were held at the deceased's request."

Earlier this spring, this trend was documented when The American Religious Identification Survey released its findings. In the survey, when respondents were asked, "When you die, do you expect to have a religious funeral or service?", 27% of respondents answered "no."

What is lost when no funeral or memorial service is held?

As Catholic Christians, we believe that gathering with the body of the deceased is a way to recognize that person and to celebrate our central belief in the resurrection. The

sense of family and friends coming together is so important that the Church has an entire "rite" for it. The "Order of Christian Funerals" calls for at least three distinct rites: the Vigil, the Funeral and the Committal. The strength that is gained by the church community coming together cannot be minimized.

The truth is that the practice of gathering after death is for the survivors. Not gathering to remember, to pray, to support, to say good-bye, can only exacerbate the grief and loss.

For some, the decision to not have a church service is intended as a distancing from organized religion or the Church. Yet in so many instances, it becomes an opportunity to re-connect, to be welcomed back to the community.

In making your own plans, think of those who will remain, and their need for the faith community to be there for them, as well as the comfort of having the Church gather to pray for you.

THE CATHOLIC CEMETERIES OF THE ARCHDIOCESE OF SAINT PAUL AND MINNEAPOLIS

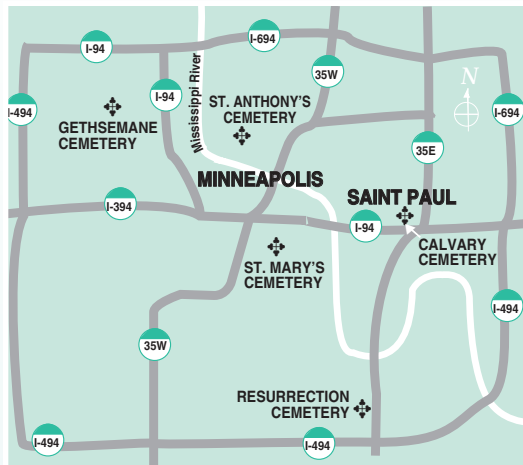
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Pictured with St. Mary's new processional cross are Knights of Columbus members Phil Harr, Albin Bernard and George Ritchie.

Knights of Columbus donates processional cross to St. Mary's Cemetery

The Hennepin-Minneapolis Council #435 of the Knights of Columbus has a special way of memorializing deceased members. The names of those who have died in the past year are inscribed on a beautiful processional cross, which is then donated to a Catholic parish or church-related agency.

In 2008, St. Mary's Cemetery in Minneapolis was selected as the recipient of the cross, which will be used periodically in liturgical processions and at graveside services. "The cross honors the long relationship we've had with St. Mary's, where so many of our members are buried," said council member Phil Harr.

Each Memorial Day at St. Mary's for many years, the Council has led a procession of veterans, Knights of Columbus, Auxiliary Ladies of Columbus and other dignitaries into the cemetery before the 10 a.m. Mass. Following the Mass, the Knights present memorial wreaths in memory of the veterans of past wars.

The Council has been donating processional crosses for the past 36 years. Recipients have included parishes in Minneapolis and St. Paul, church-related organizations such as Our Lady of Good Counsel Cancer Home, De La Salle High School and Christ the King Retreat Center, and overseas missions in Uganda, Mexico, Hungary and Venezuela.

"We are delighted to receive this beautiful cross," said John Cherek, director of The Catholic Cemeteries. "It represents the good work of the Knights of Columbus and will enhance our ministry to bereaved families."

Join us on Memorial Day, May 25, 2009

Memorial Day Mass will be celebrated at each cemetery at 10 a.m. on Monday, May 25. Please plan to stay for refreshments at the conclusion of Mass.

In the event of rain, Mass will be at 10 a.m. at the churches listed below:

ST. MARY'S CEMETERY
Church of Holy Name
3637 11th Ave. S., Minneapolis

ST. ANTHONY'S CEMETERY
Church of St. Clement
911 24th Ave. N.E., Minneapolis

Mass will be held RAIN OR SHINE at:

GETHEMANE CEMETERY
8151 42nd Ave. N., New Hope

RESURRECTION CEMETERY
2101 Lexington Ave. S., Mendota Heights

CALVARY CEMETERY
753 Front Ave., St. Paul

Office Hours on Memorial Day Weekend

During the Memorial Day weekend, each Cemetery office has extended hours as follows:

Saturday: 8 a.m. - 4 p.m.
Sunday: 10 a.m. - 4 p.m.
Monday: 8 a.m. - 4 p.m.

Grave Decorations for Memorial Day

During the days before and after Memorial Day, artificial flowers, potted plants, decorations or other ornaments are allowed. These types of decorations can be placed on graves beginning at noon on Thursday, May 21, and remain there until Sunday, May 31. Decorations should be removed by this date; otherwise, the cemetery staff will begin pickup on Monday, June 1. After that time, we request fresh-cut flowers only during the growing season.

CEMETERY HOURS

Every day of the year, cemetery grounds are open from 8 a.m. to dusk (generally 5 p.m. in the winter). All cemetery offices are normally open Monday through Friday, 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. and on Saturday, 8 a.m. to noon at Resurrection and Gethsemane.



Heritage

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