

Join us for Mass on Memorial Day

Archbishop Bernard Hebda
will dedicate
the "Gate of Heaven Preserve"
natural-burial section
at Resurrection Cemetery
following the 10 a.m. Memorial
Day Mass on Monday, May 27.
Please join us!

May 27, 10 a.m. Mass

After Mass, special ceremonies will recognize and honor veterans at Gethsemane, Resurrection, St. Anthony's, and St. Mary's cemeteries. Refreshments will be served at all of the cemeteries.

Mass will be held at 10 a.m. *rain or shine* at Calvary Cemetery, Gethsemane Cemetery, Resurrection Cemetery, St. Anthony's Cemetery, and St. Mary's Cemetery. *Continued on page 3*



Bridal Wreath (*Spiraea prunifolia*) at St. Mary's Cemetery in south Minneapolis.

The influences of weather, teamwork, and more

Preparing and Maintaining Gravesites

Most of us grew up playing in backyards or playgrounds. Now, as an adult, you may be tending your own yard. These experiences are a big contrast from managing the vast, grassy expanses of a cemetery.

Seasonal variables

You wouldn't be a Minnesotan if you didn't acknowledge the huge influence weather has on our lives. Naturally, weather impacts the activities at The Catholic Cemeteries, too. Using our recent winter as an example, Dave Kemp, strategic planning and project manager, described the impact of challenging weather conditions on cemetery activities.



Heat created by a metal hood that is connected to a 100-gallon tank of propane, thaws the earth for winter burials.

Dave explained that an early snowfall of three or four inches serves to insulate the ground, preventing a deep freeze. This past winter, heavy autumn rains were followed by fierce cold. The sodden soil froze to depths of four to four-and-a-half feet. (Freezing to depths of two-and-a-half feet is more typical. Surprisingly, frost may not be present in the first four to six inches of soil but is found at deeper levels.) Finally, a significant amount of snow fell – in February – with an accumulation of five times more than the average depth for that month.

Before a gravesite is prepared, the family or friends of *Continued on page 2*

Preparing and Maintaining Gravesites, *continued from page 1*

the deceased notify their parish and a funeral home. The funeral home contacts The Catholic Cemeteries to confirm the ownership and location of the plot, including the name of the person for whom the plot is reserved. When ownership and location are confirmed, the office staff sends a work order to the cemetery field staff.

During pleasant weather, field workers usually have between 48 hours to a week to prepare a grave. But conditions such as those we had during our recent winter require extra time for several reasons. After the cemetery roads are plowed, snow blowers are used to locate the gravesite and remove snow.



Workers identify the gravesite with pegs and fluorescent paint over which a tractor backs up a trailer. On the trailer is a metal heater hood that is placed over the grave. The edges of the hood are sealed with sand to prevent heat from escaping. The hood is then connected to a 100-gallon propane tank that provides fuel for a torch. The torch burns under the hood overnight to thaw the earth to a depth of about two-and-a-half feet. The field crew returns to the site, disassembles the heating equipment, removes the thawed soil, and digs deeper with a backhoe.

Occasionally the torch goes out before the soil is thawed. Field workers clear the air before re-lighting the torch. Thawing continues until field workers can dig the grave. Despite the cost of propane and extra labor for winter burials, the cost of a burial is the same throughout all seasons.

As welcome as spring is, that season presents special challenges for field workers. Dave acknowledges that a cemetery is not at its best until field staff have a chance to fill holes, prune damage to shrubs and trees, and look forward to “green-up” season when leaves unfurl and grass begins to grow. A significant challenge in the spring is rutting that happens when vehicle tires roll on water-saturated grass. Dave said, “Crews take every precaution to avoid leaving ruts made by vehicles in the soft soil when driving to a gravesite or involved in spring maintenance.”

Preparing a gravesite

With finesse, field workers guide equipment to dig the site between existing graves without disturbing the other interments. Crews must also be aware that the soil from adjoining graves can cave in toward the grave they’re preparing, especially when the ground is very wet. The soil that is removed from the site is placed on a surface nearby “...so as not to disturb nearby graves,” Dave explained.

After a cement vault is installed in the new grave, four-by-four pieces of lumber and sheets of plywood are placed around the grave. The resulting platform is often covered with artificial grass, providing a stable surface for people to gather as well as a position for the mechanical device that lowers the casket into the earth. Dave said field staff do everything they can “...to prepare the gravesite to be attractive for family and guests.” Usually two people are engaged in these preparation processes. One person locates the site while the other confirms it; one person operates the backhoe while the other hauls dirt with the dirt hauler.

When the interment is complete, the field crew removes the platform and returns the soil to the grave, usually with a backhoe. A compactor on the backhoe

“tamps” down the soil to prevent the site from future sinking. Rich, black topsoil is placed in a three- to five-inch layer on top of the grave. This soil, too, is tamped in place, preparing it to receive specially developed grass seed.

Grass seed by trial

More than ten years ago, during a partnership with a seed company, The Catholic Cemeteries tested grass seed to develop a type that would be drought-tolerant, hardy, and would germinate and grow quickly.

One year into a three-year trial, Dave said The Catholic Cemeteries selected a seed “that meets our specifications.” The seed is packaged, along with fertilizer and a hydrogel product, in an amount that covers a gravesite measuring 3' by 10', which includes space for a marker. The premeasured amount of seeding material avoids waste while also ensuring that each site receives the same amount of the mixture. The hydrogel absorbs and slowly releases moisture, reducing the need for repeated watering. The newly seeded grave is covered with an “erosion blanket” that helps



retain moisture while also preventing birds from feasting on the seed. Within a week, grass sprouts; the erosion blanket breaks down over time.

Now that the winter’s snow and ice have melted and we are surrounded by growing grass, field crews at The Catholic Cemeteries’ five locations will be maintaining the grounds and preparing burial sites with care and special grass seed, but without the need for heating hoods. 🌱

From the Executive Director



Joan Gecik, Executive Director

Many people have asked me how I am doing in my new job as Director of Catholic Cemeteries. The bottom line is that I have been too busy to even think about an answer. I am still in the learning and listening mode but have also been very busy with prepping ourselves and the archdiocese for introducing natural burial.

Resurrection Cemetery in Mendota Heights will be the first Catholic cemetery in Minnesota to offer natural burial as an option for families. For the past eight years, we have been studying natural burial, talking with people at other cemeteries that offer natural burial, and holding focus groups with a variety of parishes and funeral homes to get a feel for the acceptance of this “old-but-new-again” practice.

Personally, I have always wanted to simply be buried in my alb, without make-up or embalming, and be present at a funeral mass followed by a simple burial. I like the idea of being shrouded, as Jesus was ... sort of going back to the earliest Christian disposition of the body. I like the idea that I will be placed in the good earth and that wildflowers will grow over me. I want to be remembered as a good steward of what I have done with my life and also in my death.

While there are many other things that occupy my day, the focus of natural burial gives me energy. I hope it can expand your ideas about burial and help you to begin to look at death in a new light. We came from earth and to earth we return. Cue the music to “Circle of Life.” 🌳

Join Us on Memorial Day, *continued from page 1*

Grave decorations for Memorial Day

During the days before and after Memorial Day, artificial flowers, potted plants, decorations and other ornaments are allowed. These types of decorations can be placed on graves beginning at noon on **Thursday, May 23**, and remain there until **Sunday, June 2**. Decorations should be removed by this date; otherwise, the cemetery staff will begin pickup on **Monday, June 3**. After that time, we request fresh-cut flowers only during the growing season.

Memorial Day flowers available for purchase

Over the Memorial Day weekend, a variety of floral bouquets will be available for purchase at Calvary, Gethsemane, Resurrection, and St. Mary's cemeteries, and at St. Anthony's on Memorial Day only. Sales booths will be located near the entrances of each cemetery while supplies last.

Recognizing veterans during Memorial Day weekend

Traditionally before Memorial Day, a local Boy Scout troop and a veteran's group volunteer to place American flags on the gravesites of veterans marked by the gravestones provided by the Veterans Administration (VA), at Resurrection and Gethsemane cemeteries, respectively. For families visiting the graves of veterans not marked with a VA-provided gravestone, flags can be purchased for a minimal charge at the outdoor flower stands in both cemeteries. In addition, a limited supply will be available in the cemetery offices one week prior to Memorial Day.

Commemorating veterans, living and deceased

At each of the Memorial Day Masses, at all the cemeteries, The Catholic Cemeteries will offer a special recognition of and prayer for all veterans.

Cards will be available to write the names of living and deceased veterans. The cards will be brought forward at the offertory and all will be remembered in the Mass intentions. Look for the tables and cards in or near the tents that are set up for Mass. There will be someone there to assist you. These cards will also be available in the cemetery offices the week before and during the Memorial Day weekend prior to Mass time on Memorial Day. 🌳

Memorial Day Weekend Office Hours

Calvary, Gethsemane, Resurrection, and St. Mary's cemeteries. (The office at St. Anthony's will not be open. Call Gethsemane for assistance.)

Saturday: 9 a.m.-4 p.m.

Sunday: 10 a.m.-2 p.m.

Monday: 8 a.m.-2 p.m.

Honoring 50 Years at The Catholic Cemeteries

Dave Kemp started his career with The Catholic Cemeteries as a part-time field worker in 1969. For 40 of these 50 years, he's also coached hockey and trained hockey referees. One could make a claim that Dave makes challenging situations better.

Dave acknowledges that one of the most visible activities at The Catholic Cemeteries is preparing graves, something that is done almost every day. But he remarked, "There's always a situation that arises. You have to solve that problem. My job is about people and property – from families to fellow workers, vendors, and contractors." He went on to say that he has "...always taken great pride in being able to achieve something during an uncomfortable time

such as a death and make it easier for someone; to provide temporary comfort – to relieve someone's mind from what's bothering them for just a little while."

Dave recounted the time a man and his wife came into the cemetery office to bury the man's father. At that time, Dave was among the office staff who were selling graves. When all of the decisions were finalized, the man admitted, "I dreaded this, but you helped make this go well."

A chosen longevity – and dedication

In his remarks at a recent gathering for retiring cemetery director John Cherek, Dave revealed that in 1989, he had been considering changing jobs but decided to stick around to see how things went with the then-new director. Dave

went on to say, "John was my boss and co-worker, but I always considered him my friend and almost like the brother I never had. We could talk about anything, and I loved doing what I could to make his job look good."

On John Cherek's part, Dave's high regard is reciprocated. "Having worked with Dave for the past 28 years, at first glance, there are many words that describe him, both professionally and personally: Extremely hard-working, creatively inventive, veritably a jack-of-all-trades, always humorous, authentically honest – positively a wonderful employee and friend. Upon further reflection though, the word that best describes him is *dedicated*. Every day of the year, whether he was on his hands

Continued on page 5

A Ministry for Early-pregnancy Loss

Unabashed joy is the predominant sentiment when parents learn they are expecting a baby. Profound sorrow accompanies the devastating news of a baby's death. When a miscarriage occurs, parents experience an immense range of emotions within the span of a few months.

"Too often, early pregnancy losses go unacknowledged..."

The elation of expectation plummets to grief that is accompanied by the social and practical aspects of the end of a life. Preparations for a new life are disbanded, and family and friends must be notified. Frequently, parents as well as people close to them, are unsure of how to acknowledge this type of death.

For many years, HealthEast Care System and Fairview Health Services have told grieving parents about the Prayer Service of Burial and Committal. The quarterly service began in 2007 and is held in the Resurrection Cemetery Chapel Mausoleum. Gill Brothers Funeral Services provides small white caskets for the fetal remains along with transportation. The remains are buried in the Children's Section at Resurrection Cemetery. Said Sr. Fran Donnelly, director of LifeTransition Ministries at The Catholic Cemeteries, "Too often, early pregnancy losses go unacknowledged and parents feel isolated in their grief. This ministry was started to provide a funeral service and a burial place specifically tailored for these families, to help them in their grieving journey,"

In one handwritten note Sister Fran received, a family expressed gratitude

for "a real burial." They wrote, "We felt very comfortable and at home with the prayers and scripture readings ... and are so thankful for having a marked grave to help us remember our little one. It's a gift to all those families, so thank you for your faithfulness in serving."

The Catholic Cemeteries ministry to bereaved families who have lost babies by miscarriage or other reasons prior to birth is supported through the Archbishop Harry J. Flynn Compassionate Assistance Fund. This fund covers the cost for the markers and other related expenses while also helping to defray some of the costs of a burial for families who are in need of special assistance. To support this ministry or to learn more, please visit our website at www.catholic-cemeteries.org 

Honoring 50 Years at The Catholic Cemeteries, *continued from page 4*

and knees working, driving a snow plow, planning a new burial section, overseeing a building project, managing and supporting other staff persons, responding to the concern of a family, or attending a meeting – and there were a lot of those – Dave was foremost dedicated to the mission of the Church and The Catholic Cemeteries. That dedication was the basis for every task he performed. If there were an award for *Mr. Cemetery*, Dave would certainly be the person to receive it. It was truly an honor and a privilege to have worked with Dave Kemp. I wholeheartedly congratulate him on 50 years of service to The Catholic Cemeteries!”

Growing into a role

Since August 2006, Dave has flourished in his role in strategic planning and as manager for special projects. He’s responsible for the infrastructure of the five cemeteries – the buildings, roads, storm sewers, plumbing, curbs, and more. In some ways, he’s overseeing “a miniature city.” The “project manager” portion of Dave’s job title entails large-scale improvements or new projects such as the mausoleums, columbaria, the creation of a new section within a cemetery such as the development of the natural-burial section at Resurrection Cemetery, or a new feature for a family.

As new executive director, Joan Gecik, collaborates with Dave, she declared, “I am amazed at the knowledge and history that Dave possesses. He is a wealth of information as to where we have been and he creatively thinks about our future.”

A spirit of collaboration

Dave recalls with pride the relationships and friendships he has developed while collaborating with families on the construction of the dreams they envision for honoring a loved one. From the initial idea to design, fabrication,

construction, and installation, Dave “... took on the development as my own to make sure everything was perfect for the family.” Those collaborative relationships have resulted in custom sidewalks, crypts, benches, walls, sculptures, fountains, plantings, and lasting friendships.

Dave’s collaborative energy extends to fellow staff. Sister Fran Donnelly, Director of LifeTransition Ministries at The Catholic Cemeteries for the past 11 years, commented, “One might not realize that a sense of humor is a mainstay for people who work at a cemetery. In the midst of serving families who are struggling with grief and the challenges of logistics at the time of death, it is helpful to keep a balance. That is one of Dave’s key gifts – a sense of perspective, sprinkled with puns, bad jokes, and crazy emails. Dave does make coming to work in the morning fun. When he is out in the field or at one of the other cemeteries, life is way more serious in the office.

“The other outstanding gift Dave brings is his willingness to assist in any situation. There is nothing that he would not do for a customer or a co-worker. You put that all together with 50 years of experience and you have one of the most outstanding co-workers that I have ever been blessed to have.”

Time with family and for fun

When Dave is asked about his “spare” time, that, too, is all about people and property. He and his wife spend most of their time together and with their three sons and their families. When the first grandchild was born, they committed to drive monthly to Kansas City to be with that granddaughter as she grew up, and now her younger brother. That was six years and 60,000 miles ago. Adding to the joy of the travels is spending time with two grandsons and their family who live in Iowa.



Dave Kemp says, “I care about people and I still enjoy the work.”

Dave and his wife also spend time on home-improvement projects at home and with family, working with their hands while spending time with the people who mean the most to them.

Hockey has also been a big part of Dave’s life. He played and coached hockey, transitioning to become an instructor to referees, as well as being a supervisor, for a district that has 12 hockey associations. For years, Dave and several colleagues ran hockey camps that would attract scouts and supervisors from other leagues. Three or four former instructors from those camps are now National Hockey League (NHL) referees or are training NHL or Olympic referees.

Dave acknowledged that over the years, he has been “hands-on” with people and projects, and he has used a lot of humor, even though situations were often uneasy. When asked what feels important about his work, Dave responded, “I care about people and I still enjoy the work.” 🌳

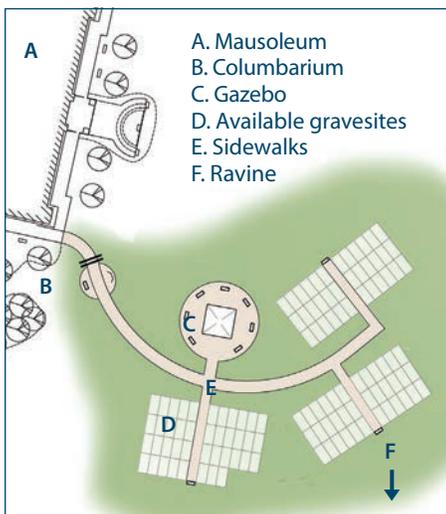
Natural Burial Available at Resurrection Cemetery

The questions about natural burial that have come to us during the past few years range from, “When will natural burial be available?” to “Why are you creating a space for natural burial?”

We will respond to both questions, starting with the first by announcing that the “Gate of Heaven Preserve” natural-burial area at Resurrection Cemetery will be dedicated by Archbishop Bernard Hebda on Monday, May 27th, following the Memorial Day Mass. The preserve is an open, almost-two-acre, prairie-like setting to the southwest of the Chapel Mausoleum, between the birch-garden columbarium and a wooded ravine.



A covered wicker casket used for natural burial will decompose over time in the earth.



The site

Two portions of the natural-burial area, named for St. Francis and St. Clare, accommodate a total of 44 graves. Sidewalks wind through the whole space and granite boulders will list the name of the deceased, along with birth and death years. The position of that information on the boulder corresponds with the location of the body. A wooden cart, pulled by family members and others, will transport the body of the deceased to the gazebo that is a gathering place for the committal service as well as for other prayer, rest,

and reflection. From there, the body will then be wheeled to the gravesite.

The plan for the preserve includes planting native wildflowers and grasses. As the gravesites become occupied, native plants will be replanted to continue creating a prairie that will be attractive to bees, butterflies, and pollinators.

Our field staff will prepare the grave to a depth of about four feet. The body will be wrapped in a natural-fiber shroud or clothed in non-synthetic garments that are free of zippers, buttons, and other materials that do not decompose.

Although a casket is not required for a natural burial, a selection of natural caskets that are constructed from plain wood or from woven wicker or bamboo is available. The family of the deceased may assist in lowering the body into the grave. Family may place a portion of the soil back into the grave, or cemetery staff will complete this activity. The grave will be mounded, with the soil settling during the passage of several years. The family will receive native-plant seeds to sprinkle on top of the grave and/or to take home to plant in honor of their loved one.

Decisions by the deceased and their family

Many of us are familiar with the detailed planning that produces a memorable wedding, but few of us plan for another of the Church’s sacred rites – a funeral. However, practicality and state law require that some planning precedes a natural burial. If the body is not embalmed, it must be buried within three days, before decomposition advances. A body may be stored for up to six days in a funeral home’s refrigeration system to accommodate the arrival of out-of-town relatives and friends. State law specifies that only family members can view a non-embalmed body.

The Catholic Cemeteries is working with parishes and funeral-home directors to assist with planning a natural burial. (Pre-planning sessions may be available at your parish, and we host several seminars each year at Resurrection and Gethsemane cemeteries.)

Because of the time-related regulations described above, it is helpful for a

Continued on page 7

Natural Burial Available at Resurrection Cemetery, *continued from page 6*

family to have decisions in place that are related to the Order of Christian Funerals. Says Vicki Klima, parish director at St. Olaf Catholic Church in downtown Minneapolis and former Archdiocesan worship director, “People do better with the grieving process if there are after-death rituals. The church plays a very important role in the grieving and healing process.”

Why natural burial?

You’ve probably heard the statement, “Things that were old are new again.” This perspective aptly represents an increasing desire among people to return to a simpler, more-organic, less-industrialized approach to death and burial. Natural burial is the norm in other religious traditions and in other parts of the world. Christ was buried in this manner. When His body was removed from the cross, it was washed, wrapped in a cloth shroud, and placed in a tomb.

People are also interested in our shared environment. The embalming fluid, traditional casket, and concrete vault that are related to a traditional burial are not compatible with the environment. Embalming fluids gained acceptance when used to prevent decomposition of Civil War soldiers’ bodies during transport to their families. Cement vaults became necessary to prevent soil from sinking over a casket, especially due to the pressure of large lawncare equipment.

With natural burial as an option for full-body burial, the deceased and the environment become one. This also means that cremated remains will not be buried in the natural-burial section. Options for cremated remains are in-ground (in other sections of the cemetery) or in a mausoleum or columbarium. Chemicals are not involved in preserving the body nor enhancing its resting place.

A commitment to nature

The natural-burial movement was initiated in the U.S. by Dr. William Campbell and his wife, Kimberly. They opened the first “green” cemetery in North America at the Ramsey Creek Preserve near Westminster, South Carolina, in 1998. In 2005, the Green Burial Council was founded as a non-profit business organization that provides a certification process for burial providers seeking qualification, proving that their practices adhere to a set of standards for green cemeteries.

The Catholic Cemeteries will implement the Green Burial Council certification standards whenever practical, with one exception being that field staff will use machinery when necessary. And the cemetery will continue to bury in the traditional manner in other sections.

Resurrection Cemetery contains a mix of full-body traditional graves and interment for cremated remains, resulting in Resurrection being regarded as a hybrid cemetery. Weather-related considerations and other factors may also dictate the need for the use of machinery or other practices not embraced by the Green Burial Council.



The gazebo, with the mausoleum in the background, creates a gathering place for the committal service as well as for other prayer, rest, and reflection.

Costs of natural burial

Like cremation, which the Catholic Church began permitting in 1963, natural burial does not require the expense of embalming, a traditional casket, or a cement vault. However, the costs for a natural burial compared to those of a conventional burial are similar. In both instances, a grave must be prepared, closed, and maintained forever.



The body of the deceased may also be lowered into the earth in an uncovered wicker tray.

Our mission

The mission of The Catholic Cemeteries is to bury the dead. The Catholic Church treats the whole body and cremated remains with equal respect. We see natural burial as a service to the families who request a simpler, more natural way to bury a loved one.

Natural burial is also consistent with the teachings of the Church. Pope Francis, who chose his papal name in honor of St. Francis of Assisi, said this about the environment in his Encyclical 139, *On Care for Our Common Home*: “When we speak of the ‘environment,’ what we really mean is a relationship existing between nature and the society which lives in it. Nature cannot be regarded as something separate from ourselves or as mere setting in which we live. We are part of nature, included in it and thus in constant interaction with it.”

We invite your questions about the natural-burial option now available at Resurrection Cemetery. Please call 651-288-9991 or visit our website: www.catholic-cemeteries.org/natural_burial.aspx 



HERITAGE

Non-Profit Org.
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
TWIN CITIES, MN
PERMIT #32674

2105 Lexington Avenue South
Mendota Heights, MN 55120

A newsletter for friends of The Catholic Cemeteries ✚ SPRING/SUMMER 2019

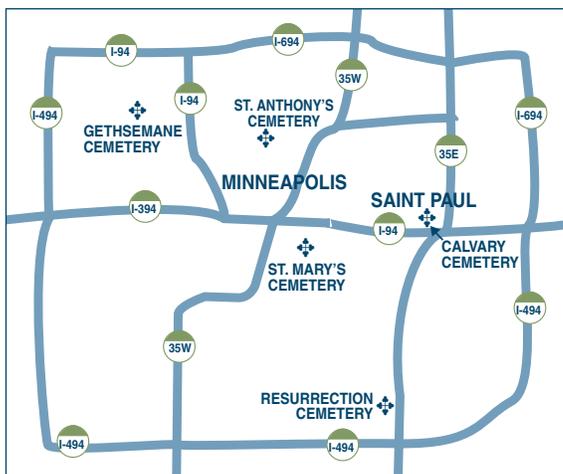
ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

Join us on Memorial Day

Monday, May 27
10 a.m. Mass

After Mass, special ceremonies will recognize and honor veterans at Gethsemane, Resurrection, St. Anthony's, and St. Mary's cemeteries.

Refreshments will be served at all of the cemeteries.



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, 9 a.m. to noon at Resurrection and Gethsemane.

Visit our website: www.catholic-cemeteries.org

Follow us on Facebook: TheCatholicCemeteries

GETHSEMANE CEMETERY

8151 42nd Avenue North
New Hope, MN 55427
763-537-4184

ST. ANTHONY'S CEMETERY

2730 Central Avenue NE
Minneapolis, MN 55418
763-537-4184

ST. MARY'S CEMETERY

4403 Chicago Avenue
Minneapolis, MN 55407
651-488-8866

CALVARY CEMETERY

753 Front Avenue
St. Paul, MN 55103
651-488-8866

RESURRECTION CEMETERY

2101 Lexington Avenue South
Mendota Heights, MN 55120
651-454-5072

Archbishop Bernard Hebda will dedicate the "Gate of Heaven Preserve" natural-burial section at Resurrection Cemetery following the 10 a.m. Memorial Day Mass on Monday, May 27. Please join us!

Heritage is published by
The Catholic Cemeteries
2105 Lexington Ave S
Mendota Heights, MN 55120
651-228-9991

info@catholic-cemeteries.org

Joan Gecik, Executive Director

To receive *Heritage* by email, go to www.catholic-cemeteries.org fill out the "Contact Us" form, and check the "electronic newsletter" option. Thank you.