



## THE CATHOLIC CEMETERIES

# Christian Symbols

One of the requirements that we have at The Catholic Cemeteries is that a Christian symbol is part of every memorial. What are possible symbols that fit into the category? The following symbols are those that are used most often.



### **Dove**

The dove is traditionally seen as a sign of peace, especially when carrying an olive branch. It is also a symbol of the Holy Spirit.



### **Water**

Water is a symbol of baptism and new life. In Baptism we die to sin and rise to new life in Christ.



### **Butterfly**

Butterflies are a symbol of new life. They begin as caterpillars, make a cocoon for themselves and through a transformative process, metamorphosis, emerge as butterflies. They are a symbol of our transformation from death into new life.



### **Cross**

The cross is a universal symbol for the Christian faith and a reminder of Christ's death and resurrection. There are many types of crosses that have been used throughout history, many having regional/ethnic origins.



### **Fleur De Lis**

The fleur de lis is an age old symbol for the lily, a sign of the resurrection. The whiteness and purity of the lily is said to represent Mary, the mother of Jesus. The three petals also represent the Holy Trinity: Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

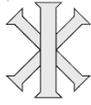
**Christograms** are all monograms for Jesus' name



- **IHS:** These letters are the shortened form of the Greek spelling of Jesus



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- **IH:** This monogram is comprised of the first letter of Jesus (I) and the first letter of Christ (X) using the Greek spelling: These are often overlaid on top of each other.



- **CHI RHO:** This is the oldest of Christograms. The symbol is made up of the first two letters of Christ in Greek, X (chi) and P (rho). The letters are often overlaid on top of each other.



- **TAU RHO:** This symbol, also known as a Staurogram, is made using the Greek letter T (tau) superimposed on the Greek letter P (rho). It is an abbreviated form of the Greek word for cross.



- **INRI:** These letters were inscribed on the sign that hung over Jesus when he was crucified. It's short for the Latin phrase meaning, "Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews."



- **Fish:** The fish was a sign of the Christian Faith for early Christians, those meeting in secret for fear of Roman persecution. The Greek word for fish is ICHTHUS.

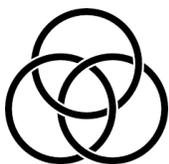


- **Alpha & Omega:** These are the first and last letters of the Greek alphabet, a symbol that God is first and last, the beginning and the end.



### **Anchor**

Christians adopted the anchor as a symbol of hope in future existence because the anchor was regarded in ancient times as a symbol of safety. For Christians, Christ is the unfailing hope of all who believe in him.



### **Borromeo Rings**

This represents the symbol of the Trinity in Christianity. The Borromeo Rings, a concept taken from mathematics, are three interlocking circles that signify the divine trinity. A Borromeo Ring falls apart if any one of the rings is removed. The trinity



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represents the belief that God is of one Being made up of three distinct Persons who exist in co-equal, co-eternal communion as Father, Son and Holy Spirit.



### **Candles/flames/lamps**

These are common symbols of Christianity. Light represents the presence of God. It also represents the direction and guidance of God.



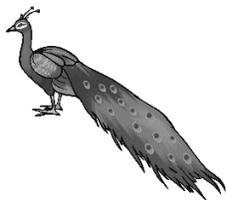
### **Cross and Crown**

This symbol represents the reward awaiting in heaven (crown) that believers will receive after suffering the trials of life on earth (cross).



### **Lamb of God**

The Lamb of God represents Jesus Christ, the perfect sinless sacrifice offered by God to atone for the sins of the world.



### **Peacock**

Ancient Greeks believed that the flesh of the peacock did not decay after death and so it became a symbol of immortality. The peacock is still used in the Easter season, especially in the East. The "eyes" in the peacock's tail feathers symbolize the all-seeing God and, in some interpretations, the Church. A peacock drinking from a vase is used as a symbol of a Christian believer drinking from the waters of eternal life.



### **Rainbow**

The Christian rainbow is a symbol of God's faithfulness and God's promise to never again destroy the earth by flood. The rainbow shows the all-embracing expanse of God's faithfulness through his work of grace. The gospel of salvation, like a rainbow, is all-encompassing, and everyone is invited to behold it.



### **Rose**

The rose of Sharon symbolizes love, beauty and healing to both Jews and Christians. It is also considered a symbol for Christ.



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### **Shamrock**

The symbol of the Trinity and the original sign of Christianity in Ireland.



### **Star of David**

The Star of David is a six-pointed star formed by two interlocking triangles, one pointing up, one pointing down. It is named after King David. While predominately recognized as a symbol of Judaism and Israel, many Christians identify with the Star of David as well. The five pointed star is also a symbol of Christianity associated with the birth of the Savior, Jesus Christ. In Revelation, Jesus is called the Morning Star.



### **Tree of Life**

The Tree of Life is referenced in the scripture several times. Many spiritual writers have used this imagery. Pope Benedict XVI has said that "the Cross is the true tree of life." Saint Bonaventure taught that the medicinal fruit of the tree of life is Christ himself. Saint Albert the Great taught that the Eucharist, the Body and Blood of Christ, is the Fruit of the Tree of Life. Augustine of Hippo said that the tree of life is Christ.