



St. Thomas Catholic Cemetery

Rules and Regulations

~ Cemetery location ~

300 Sunset Road, Ann Arbor, MI 48103

~ Office location ~

530 Elizabeth Street, Ann Arbor, MI 48104

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All information in this booklet has been adapted from The Diocese of Lansing Catholic Cemeteries Rules and Regulations Book. A complete copy of these Rules and Regulations are available for examination at the Cemetery Office during regular business hours.

Our Mission Statement

The Church is commissioned by Christ to proclaim the Good news. Catholic cemeteries reflect this mission by maintaining and expressing Catholic teaching and tradition in their endeavor to serve the many needs of those requesting Catholic burial. The Diocese of Lansing Cemeteries, owned and operated by the Roman Catholic Diocese of Lansing, provide for the family and friends who seek the healing and consoling presence of Christ and His Church in a Catholic setting.

Definitions of Commonly Used Terms:

- **The Diocese of Lansing Catholic Cemeteries:** Those cemeteries within the Diocese of Lansing which the Catholic Bishop of Lansing has identified as diocesan cemeteries
- **Grave/Grave Space:** A space of sufficient size to accommodate one human interment
- **Lot:** Numbered divisions as shown on the cemetery map which consists of one or more adjoining graves
- **Lot/Grave Holder:** The person or persons who hold the original “Right of Burial” to a given cemetery lot or grave as recorded in the cemetery’s records
- **Management:** The St. Thomas Business Manager or other person designated by the pastor, who has the authority to contract the sale of burial plots and oversees the work of the Cemetery Sexton.
- **Markers:** A memorial placed flush to the ground on a grave identifying a particular grave site.
- **Memorial:** This term includes a monument, marker, tablet, headstone, private mausoleum or tomb for a family or individual use.
- **Monument:** A tombstone or memorial of granite or marble which will extend above the surface of the ground.
- **Sexton:** The person responsible for the following: opening and closing of graves, foundation work for headstones or grave markers, and general maintenance of the cemetery grounds.

Management Rights

Good Stewardship of cemetery land and the work of burying the dead, maintaining the graves and today's legal, statutory and regulatory environment demands that the Diocese of Lansing Catholic Cemeteries develop policies and procedures to guide employees in their day-to-day activities. Thus, we reserve certain rights and privileges exclusively to the Diocese of Lansing Catholic Cemeteries, which are listed below.

- **The Right to Replat**
- **The Right to Reclassify and Restrict**
- **The Right to Ingress and Egress**
- **The Right of Easement**
- **The Right to Substitute (with just cause)**
- **The Right of Exceptions to the Rules**
- **The Right of Rule Making**
- **The Right to Amend Rules**

Burial

“In committing the body to its resting place, the community expresses the hope that, with all those who have gone before marked with the sign of faith, the deceased awaits the glory of the resurrection. The rite of committal is an expression of the communion that exists between the Church on earth and the Church in heaven: the deceased passes with the farewell prayers of the community of believers into the welcoming company of those who need faith no longer but see God face to face.” (Rite of Christian Burials #206)

General Requirements:

- ***Arrangements for Interments.*** We request that the Cemetery Sexton is notified in advance for all interments to give the cemetery ample time to prepare the burial/entombment space.
- ***Supervision of Funerals.*** All funerals will be subject to and comply with the direction of cemetery personnel while they are within the cemetery
- ***Permit Required.*** A Michigan Department of Community Health Burial Transit Permit is required for all burials within the cemetery.
- ***Viewing Prohibited.*** The casket may not be opened at any time within the cemetery without the express permission (and in presence) of the Cemetery Manager.
- ***Right of Scheduling.*** We reserve the right to designate the hour and manner in which interments, dis-interments and removals will or will not be permitted.
- ***Delayed Burials.*** The cemetery will in no way be liable for any delay in the interment of a body where a protest has been made, where the rules and regulations have not been complied with, when weather conditions hinder the burial or where such burial is prohibited.
- ***Outer Burial Container Required.*** It is required that all in ground burials have a container constructed of a permanent material.
- ***Vault Liability.*** Cemetery Personnel will not be held liable for any damages or injuries resulting from burial containers thereof when they set or seal said containers or maintain the same.

Burial (cont.)

- ***Correction of Errors.*** We reserve the right to correct any errors within the cemetery.
- ***Burial Fee.*** All interments are subject to a fee as set forth in the price guidelines as fixed by St. Thomas the Apostle Cemetery Committee.
- ***Funeral Flowers.*** Funeral Flowers will be left at the final burial spot for up to three days after the final committal.

Cremation

“The cremated remains of a body should be treated with the same respect given to the human body from which they came. 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 placement and transport, and the final disposition.” (Order of Christian Funerals #417)

- ***Cremated Remains Permitted.*** Interment of cremated remains is permitted in accordance with the provisions of Canon Law and Diocesan Statutes.
- ***Cremation Urn or Urn Vault.*** For in-ground burials, cremation urns are not required if the cremated remains arrive at the cemetery in a non biodegradable container or approved urn. Urns or urn vaults must fit within the cremation burial plot. Cremation Vaults are not required.
- ***Scattering.*** Scattering of cremated remains is prohibited within the Diocese of Lansing Catholic Cemeteries.
- ***Multiple Interments Permitted.*** We reserve the right to permit the interment of more than one human remains in a space with the purchase of an additional burial right fee and opening and closing fees for the gravesite.

Entombments

The first cemeteries established by the early Christians were crypts in the catacombs outside of Rome or in the early churches, especially those erected over the graves of martyrs. The Diocese of Lansing Catholic Cemeteries community mausoleums offers both crypts for casket burials and niches for the repose of cremated remains.

- **Casket Required.** Entombments must be made in an approved casket which complies with the regulations of the controlling Department of Health.
- **General Requirements.** All rules listed under the general requirements in the St. Thomas Cemetery Rules and Regulation Book must be adhered to.
- **Memorialization:** All engravings on headstones must be respectful of the deceased person and appropriate for a Catholic cemetery. The same guideline applies to photos and decorations.

Removals/Disinterments

During the committal rite at the cemetery, the deceased is placed in the custody of the Church for the spiritual protection of the body while awaiting the Last Day. Once interred, the remains of all the faithful are in their final resting place. Disinterments, exhumations, and/or removals should never be made without just cause.

- **Disinterment Permitted.** **NO** disinterment or removal will be allowed except with the authorization of the St. Thomas Business Manager and with the authorization of the grave or lot holder(s).
- **Arrangements for Disinterments.** All arrangements for disinterments should be directed to a funeral home first.
- **Cost.** The family petitioning the removal will bear all costs involved with the disinterment as set forth by the price guidelines in the St. Thomas Catholic Cemetery Rules and Regulations Handbook and any funeral home expenses.
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Removals/Disinterments (cont.)

- ***Scheduling for Disinterments.*** Scheduling for all disinterments is solely at the discretion of the St. Thomas Business Manager.
- ***No Liability for Damage.*** We will exercise due care in making a disinterment and removal, but we will not assume liability for the damage to any casket, burial container or memorial incurred when making the disinterment and removal.
- ***Removal for Profit.*** The removal of the bodies of a deceased lot owner and his immediate family for profit to their heirs is repugnant to the ordinary sense of decency and is absolutely forbidden.

Infants, Stillborns and Fetuses

Each cemetery will have an appropriate Infant Burial Area. This area is designated as a permanent gravesite for the final resting place of an infant, stillborn or fetus. All life is sacred and the remains of fetuses and stillborns of Catholic parents should be given a reverent Christian burial.

- ***Infant Burial Spaces.*** The cemetery has a specially designated infant burial section within the cemetery. This section has been set aside for the sole purpose of burial of infants, stillborns and fetuses. Burial in this section will follow a “next available space” procedure.
- ***Burial in Family Lot.*** Burial of an infant is allowed in a family lot. This may be in the same grave reserved for a family member. The cemetery will check the lot to ensure there is space in the grave in question. A second burial right purchase is not required.
- ***Transfers or Dis-interments.*** Transfers and dis-interments will be handled in the same fashion as an adult. A Funeral Home must be contacted prior to any arrangements at the cemetery.

Non-Catholic Burials

The Diocese of Lansing Catholic Cemeteries exists for the burial of the faithful. On occasions, non-Catholic relatives of Catholic families have asked to be buried in our cemeteries. These cases will be discussed on a person-by-person basis.

- **Interment.** Interment of non-Catholics will be permitted in the Diocese of Lansing Catholic Cemeteries under the conditions required by the regulations of the Diocese of Lansing.
- **Final Committal.** On those occasions when a non-Catholic is invited to be buried in our cemeteries, the deceased person's minister may conduct the burial service according to his own ritual.
- **Memorialization.** Members of non-Catholic and non-Christian faiths welcomed for burial in a Catholic cemetery may be allowed appropriate symbols of their faith.
- **Solicitation of non-Catholics.** It is the policy of the Diocese of Lansing Catholic Cemeteries not to solicit to the general public nor imply explicitly or implicitly on our advertisement that the cemeteries owned and operated by the Diocese of Lansing (or its parishes) exist for other than the Catholic faithful.

What is a Burial Right?

The purchase of Burial Rights in a Catholic cemetery is not ownership in the sense of real estate, but an easement or license for the use of graves, crypts, and niches for the interment of human remains. Cemetery sections, contiguous sites, grave sites, walkways, and roads are established by plan. This plan provides for proper access for the public and for efficient cemetery operations. All sites are identified and marked before burial rights privileges are granted. The purchases of these rights also include funding for the future care of all graves.

- **Access to Plots.** Plot or lot holders, their heirs and descendants have a right to access the graves during hours when the cemetery is open to the public by the shortest route from the roadway or walkway to the grave.

Burial Right (cont.)

- ***Usage of Plots Restricted.*** No lot or grave, or any other spaces within the St. Thomas Cemetery will be used for any other purpose than for the burial of human remains.
- ***Right to Memorialize.*** The right of burial in a cemetery lot carries the right to provide an approved memorial to identify the buried.
- ***Sale on a per-person basis.*** The sale of a burial right is on a per-person basis. There are times when a second burial right may be purchased for the burial of cremated remains or infant burial.
- ***Unused plots.*** St. Thomas Cemetery will buy back your plot(s) at the original purchase price. Resale of burial rites by lot holders of record or their descendants is prohibited. If the original purchaser is no longer living then Inheritance Laws of the State of Michigan apply unless other written arrangements have been made with the cemetery.

Grave Decorating

The burial of your loved ones with dignity, and the ongoing care of their graves are the main mission of the Diocese of Lansing Catholic Cemeteries. It is quite natural to want to leave tangible evidence of devotion to the lot of a loved one. However, there are incidents when decorations become damaged or missing during our mission. These incidents are not deliberate nor show a lack of compassion for the deceased. We regret that we cannot guarantee to safeguard the grave decorations from damage or disappearance, and we also regret that we cannot accept the responsibility for their damage or loss.

Permitted

The following are permitted during our spring and summer growing season.

- ***Potted Plants or Perennial Flowers .*** Potted plants are permitted if placed *ON* the grave marker or within 12” of the monument. Perennial flowers are permitted within 12” of marker and must be maintained. No glass containers are allowed. Plants which interfere with the orderly mowing of the cemetery will be removed.

Permitted (cont.)

The following are permitted during our winter season

- **Grave Decorations:** appropriate winter decorations are permitted

Grave decorations are important to us. We recognize that for many, decorating a grave shows respect, sorrow over the lost and allow a moment for cherished thoughts. Some decorations, however, when placed in contact with cemetery equipment, pose a danger not only to cemetery workers, but to the visitors and memorials around them. Other decorations actually hinder our ability to effectively keep the cemetery clean, mowed and trimmed. We thank you in advance for not placing the following items in our cemetery.

Not Permitted:

The following are not permitted during our spring and summer growing season.

- **Artificial Flowers.** Artificial flowers planted or left in the ground. Wires used to create these flowers can cause serious damage or injury if projected by the lawnmower.
- **Perennial Planting.** Perennial planting is discouraged. The activities in the cemeteries simply cannot protect permanent plants from damage.
- **Stones or Rocks.** These items can cause serious injury to visitors and memorials when projected by a lawnmower.
- **Decorative Borders.** Decorative borders, the use of fencing, etc. hinder the ability for the cemetery to be mowed and trimmed effectively.
- **Glass, China or Porcelain.** Glass, China or Porcelain of any kind which when broken present a serious safety hazard.
- **Temporary Pin-type Vases.** Temporary pin-type vases and the use of tin cans should not be used on a grave. Only pots approved by the cemetery, which can easily be placed flush to the ground when not in use, are allowed.

Not Permitted (cont.)

- ***Lawn Decorations and Statues.*** Experience has shown that placing such objects on graves encourages theft and vandals in the cemetery.
- ***Ramblers, Vine Plants or Ground Cover and Plants with thorns.***
- ***Knickknack, Etc.*** Knickknacks, toys, shells, metal designs, ornaments, clothing jewelry or any other object of monetary or sentimental value should never be placed on the lot, near a memorial or in the cemetery. We will not be responsible for the loss, damage or theft of such objects.
- ***Evergreen grave blankets***

Memorialization

In a Catholic cemetery, memorials have the purpose of acknowledging and honoring the dead and inspiring the living with the appropriate inscriptions which bespeak the faith and dedication of God and of those who pray for the living. For this reason, our cemeteries encourage memorialization as long as it fits in conformity with cemetery standards and to the Catholic Church Teachings and Beliefs.

- ***Good Taste Rule.*** The St.Thomas Catholic Cemetery Committee will determine the appropriateness of any memorial placed in its cemetery. Items which are found offensive, improper or inappropriate for such a setting will be removed without prior notice by the cemetery staff. All monuments and markers are subject to the rules and regulations of the cemetery, and to the Catholic Church Teachings and beliefs and must be approved by cemetery management.
- ***Symbols on Memorials.*** It is strongly advisable that memorials have a permanent Catholic emblem on it. We will not allow any emblem, inscription, or insignia which is inconsistent with the doctrine of the Roman Catholic Church.
- ***Memorials Purchased Elsewhere.*** Memorials purchased from an outside vendor will still meet the criteria listed under the Good Taste Rule & Symbols on Memorials.

Memorialization (cont.)

- ***Veteran Markers.*** The placement of a Veteran Marker along with a separate memorial is permissible per the rules set forth by the United States Veterans Administrations.
- ***Size of Burial Markers.*** The maximum size grave stones for the following plots sizes are the following:
Single burial plot 36” long by 16” wide. Double plot 72” long by 16” wide,
Single cremation plots 24” long by 12” wide. Double cremation plots 48” by 12”
- ***Installation.*** The cemetery sexton will determine when the ground around the burial site has settled enough for a marker or headstone to be placed. Please check with the cemetery sexton for an approximate timeframe.
- ***Raised Lettering.*** While we will exercise all possible care to protect raised lettering, carving, or ornaments on any memorial, we disclaim responsibility for damage or injury thereto.
- ***Insurance Recommended.*** We advise the purchasing of insurance for the memorials by the lot lessors, or owners of the memorial.
- ***Temporary Markers.*** Temporary grave markers placed by the funeral home will be removed by the cemetery staff.
- ***Ownership of Memorials.*** All memorials are the private property of the purchaser. Repairs and upkeep of all memorials placed on cemetery lots are the responsibility of the plot t holder.
- ***Unsightly or Dilapidated Memorials.*** Should something become unsightly, dilapidated, or a menace to the safety of persons within the cemetery, We will have the right, after 30-days notice, to correct the condition or to remove the same, at the expense of the plot holder.

Memorial Flags

Flags are appropriate reminders of the service a deceased person has given to his/her country, community and to a particular Community-based Organization. In order to ensure the continued beautification of the cemetery, to allow for the unobstructed proper care and maintenance of the cemetery, and to ensure that all veterans and members of posts, lodges and other Community-based Organizations are honored in a fair and consistent manner, it is necessary for cemeteries to develop policies and procedures to assure that this will be done without offending anyone.

- ***When are flags allowed?*** Flags and flag holders are permitted at the graves one week prior to Memorial Day through Flag day. Flags are also permitted on the Sunday before the Fourth of July and Veterans Day through the following Sunday.
- ***Where can a flag be placed?*** All flags and flag holders must be placed on the head of the grave abutting the monument or marker.
- ***How many flags can be placed?*** Not more than one flag can be placed in one cemetery lot regardless of the number of deceased veterans, lodge members, etc., interred in the lot.
- ***What happens if the flag is not there when I return?*** We cannot assume the responsibility for the safekeeping of any flag, flag holder or other emblem, even when set out within the approved times.
- ***What happens to a flag placed for a burial?*** The flag will remain until the funeral flowers have been removed by the cemetery staff.
- ***Commemorative burial flags*** are frequently placed over the caskets of members of the armed forces who died in the line of duty, as mentioned above. The flags are then taken off the casket and then folded to be given to the family right before burial.

What is Endowed Care?

The cemeteries operated by the Diocese of Lansing are “Endowed Care” cemeteries. A Catholic cemetery is a sacred place, whether it is newly blessed or hundreds of years old. It is not enough that the cemetery is well kept, but it must be well kept forever. To provide for the future care when all other sources of income have ceased, the Diocese of Lansing Catholic Cemeteries requires a percentage of the sale of burial rights be set aside and invested for this purpose.

- ***Endowed Care Permitted Uses.*** Interest from the endowed care fund will be used for cutting and trimming the grass at reasonable intervals, maintenance of the grave and the general preservation of the lot and grounds, walk, roadways, boundaries and buildings. It will also be used for the partial payment of tools and equipment, employee salaries and benefits, facilities, supplies, insurance, replacement parts, utilities, and any other costs associated with the current and future maintenance of the cemetery.
- ***Endowed Care Restrictions.*** The term “Endowed Care” will not mean the maintenance, repair or replacement of any memorial, nor the planting of flowers or ornamental plants, nor the doing of any special or unusual work, nor does it mean the reconstruction of any granite, bronze or concrete work on any section of the lot, or any portion or portions thereof in any cemetery, injured or damaged by any cause direct or indirect, beyond our reasonable control.

Trees and Shrub Planting

The Diocese of Lansing Catholic Cemeteries undertakes to maintain, so far as its income will permit, the planting of trees and shrubs on its property which serve as a needful background for lots or as an essential part of the general landscape. The Diocese of Lansing Catholic Cemeteries does not undertake to maintain trees, shrubs, or other plants planted primarily for the benefit or decoration of individual lots.

- ***Planting of Trees.*** The planting of a tree or shrub on an individual grave is prohibited.

Trees and Shrub Planting (cont.)

- ***Removal of Trees.*** All unauthorized planting of trees, shrubs, and other such items will be removed without notification to the lot holder.
- ***Ownership of Trees.*** All trees planted within the cemetery become the property of that individual cemetery. The St. Thomas Cemetery will not be responsible for the replacement of a tree, shrub or other such items if it is deemed necessary to remove the tree.

Other Issues and Concerns

- ***Cemetery Security.*** The cemetery will have the right to maintain guards when they deem it necessary but are under no obligation to do so.
- ***Outside Workers.*** We must authorize outside workforces that perform work in the cemetery.
- ***Succession.*** Rights to a grave or lot must be specifically mentioned in a will. Otherwise, the laws of intrastate succession will apply for the unused burial space.
- ***Return and Exchange Privileges.*** The St. Thomas Cemetery will gladly purchase any unused burial spaces.
- ***Admission to Cemeteries.*** We reserve the right to refuse admission to the cemetery and to refuse the use of any cemetery equipment or Facility at any time to any person(s), as the rule of judgment, and tradition may dictate.
- ***Loss or Damage.*** The St. Thomas Cemetery disclaims all responsibility for any and all damage or losses from causes beyond our reasonable control and especially from damage caused by the elements, act of God, common enemy, thieves, vandals, strikers, malicious mischief makers, explosions, unavoidable accidents, invasions, insurrections, riots, or order of the military or civil authority, whether the damages are direct or indirect.
- ***Vehicles.*** The operator and/or owner of any vehicle will be held responsible for any damage done by the vehicle whether it is intentional or unintentional.