

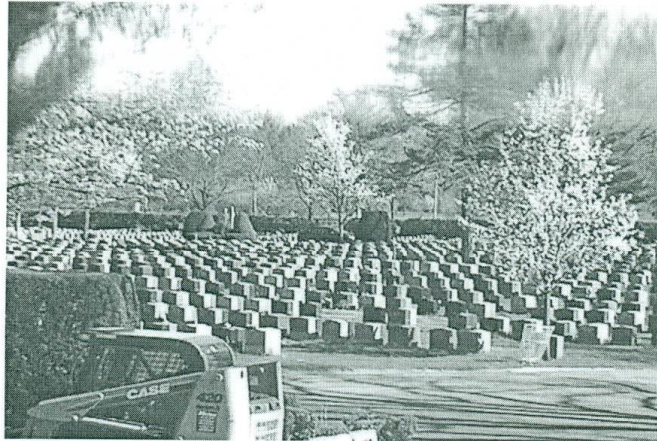
Catholic Cemeteries

IMPORTANCE OF CATHOLIC BURIAL



How important is it these days for Catholics to have a Catholic funeral and burial? What's wrong with simple burials, or cremation? Why go through all of that ritual and money for someone who has died? The soul is what lives on in the next life. God doesn't care where or how someone was buried.

These are common sentiments that arise when people choose to face the difficult subject of death, whether our own or those we love and care for. As such, there are serious questions. Fortunately, the answers are fairly straightforward and ought to bring comfort to those who wish to do the right thing.



- **The Resurrection**

The very foundation of Christian faith is the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. For those who could accept it, it proves, beyond the shadow of a doubt, that a new life awaits us beyond the grave. Today, belief in resurrection is the cornerstone of our Faith.

Jesus told her, "I am the resurrection and the life; whoever believes in me, even if he dies, will live". John 11:25

The grave, the tomb and death itself no longer signify the end. They are a transformation into a new beginning. Without the physical reality of a place for earthly remains, we take away the opportunity to focus our attention on the mystery of this good news. Without the cemetery, this truth loses its impact in our lives.

- **Respect for the Human Body**

You have heard the saying that our bodies are a gift of God, a temple of the Holy Spirit. Just as the human body ought to be treated with respect and dignity in life, so it is meant to be treated in death. Casketed remains—preferably whole—are present during the vigil and funeral to emphasize the connection between the living and the departed. This would be hard to manage without inviting the congregation to Mass, much less if the ashes of the departed are scattered on a distant mountainside or washing away from a garden and into the gutters of a street.

- **An Extended Community of Believers**

Why a Catholic cemetery? We live our lives following Catholic traditions, conducting our lives as Catholic Christians. We come together weekly as a worship community with our families and friends. We are asked to intern our loved ones within a Catholic cemetery, within the worship community where they have spent their lives. Hence, the Catholic cemetery symbolizes the extended community of believers unbroken by death. The Catholic cemetery serves the faithful and witnesses to the entire world the Good News of Jesus Christ.

- **A Path from Grieving to Living**

For these and other reasons, we see a trend today to omit or reduce to a minimum the Church's rites of Christian burial. This diminishes prayer for the dead and removes the opportunity to give witness to faith. It deprives those remaining of the consolation and emotional relief that the funeral rites offer. Grief is necessary and should be allowed to run its natural course. We are then better able to regain our balance and continue to live our lives in a healthy manner.

