



Saint Clare Cemetery

All inquiries should be directed to Saint Clare of Assisi Parish

412-233-7870

Below is a list of rules posted at St. Clare Cemetery.
We hope that all concerned will cooperate
and abide by these rules.

RULES FOR PLANTING AND DECORATING

1. Annual plants may be placed within a 12-inch area at the head of the grave without decorative stone or rock edging.
2. Graves may be decorated with cut flowers placed in an appropriate non-glass container.
3. Saddle flower arrangements are permitted year round.
4. A wreath may be placed in front of the headstone from November 1st until March 1st. All wreaths should be removed after March 1st.
5. All trash should be placed in the dumpster or removed from the cemetery property.

PROHIBITED IN THE CEMETERY AT ALL TIMES

1. Trees, shrubs or perennial plants.
2. Objects that are offensive to the sacred character of the cemetery.
3. Trenching, fencing or edging of lots.
4. Decorative rocks or stones.
5. Children without adult supervision.
6. Motorcycles, motorbikes, bicycles, skateboards or rollerblades.
7. Parking on graves.
8. Placing of household or commercial rubbish in the dumpster.
9. Dumping over any hillside.
10. Pets

CEMETERY IS CLOSED FROM DUSK TO DAWN

Posted Rules at the Cemetery

There are two sites where the Rules are posted at the Cemetery. One sign is at the main entrance to the Cemetery and the other is located to the left of the crucifix as you face the crucifix. It is near the "lawn crypt" section of the Cemetery. We hope that all concerned will cooperate and abide by these rules.

The Rules are basically divided into two sections. The first is entitled "Rules for Planting and Decorating." The other section is entitled "Prohibited in the Cemetery at All Times."

EXPLANATION OF RULES

RULES FOR PLANTING AND DECORATING

The sign reads as follows:

1. ***Annual plants may be placed within a 12 inch area at the head of the grave without decorative stone or rock edging.***
 - This is self-explanatory. However, there are problems in regard to families following this rule. There are a number of graves that have decorative edging on them. This is prohibited in St. Clare Cemetery. Families that do have such decorations need to have them removed. Beginning in October 2005, if such decorations are not removed, the Parish will have such things removed.
 - If you know families who are living outside of the Parish, please inform them that this decorative rule will be strictly enforced at the beginning of October 2005.
2. ***Graves may be decorated with cut flowers placed in an appropriate non-glass container.***
 - Containers need to be non-glass because glass ones can easily break. The pieces from broken ones can become projectiles when the grass is being cut and cause possible injury to people. Ceramic containers are inappropriate also.
 - If you have glass or ceramic containers on your family grave, please make sure that they are removed and do not use them in the future. If we see any family placing these sorts of containers on graves, they will be asked to remove them.
 - The “non-glass containers” rule not only applies to containers for flowers but also to vigil light candle holders.
3. ***Saddle flower arrangements are permitted year round.***
 - This is self-explanatory. If arrangements happen to blow off the headstone, or if they die or fade, then they would be discarded.
4. ***A wreath may be placed in front of the headstone from November 1st until March 1st. All wreathes should be removed by March 1st.***
 - Once again this is self-explanatory. Families need to be aware that at the beginning of March, wreathes will be removed.
5. ***All trash should be placed in the dumpster or removed from the cemetery property.***
 - The dumpster is located in the section of the cemetery near the lawn crypts and the crucifix. It is to the left of both of them when you face the cemetery on Worthington Avenue. Some families have gotten into the habit of leaving trash in bags or other containers on the asphalt roadways in the cemetery or along the fence. If you have trash from tending to your family member’s graves, then it should either be placed into the dumpster or taken home with you.
 - Trash in the dumpster is removed by a company with whom the parish has a contract. The trash is picked up on an “as needed basis.” Near the trash receptacle is a wooden stand for the empty glass votive candle containers. The empty containers are removed on an as needed basis by parish personnel.
 - Personal, household trash is strictly prohibited.

Currently, we are looking into fixing the area around the dumpster. Our hope is to make it look more presentable.

The rules that we have comply with the types of rules that the Catholic Cemeteries Association of the Diocese of Pittsburgh uses as examples in its manual. We have listed a few of the examples from the manual:

- No plastic flowers during the cutting season
- No pets, trail vehicles and loitering in the cemetery
- No fencing, borders or edging is allowed
- No permanent shrubs and trees, etc

The official Parish Cemeteries Procedures Manual states:

“In order to preserve the sacred nature of the Catholic cemetery, all parish cemeteries must be maintained with dignity and respect for the faithful departed and concern for the safety of visitors and ground maintenance employees. In many old parish cemeteries, either there have been no rules or the existing rules were never enforced so that many items that should have been prohibited were overlooked in the cemetery. No cemetery can achieve order, safety, and beauty without rules and regulations.” *

** The Catholic Cemeteries Association of the Diocese of Pittsburgh recommends that rules and regulations be displayed. The parish re-posted its rules and regulations on signs in the cemetery. The Association also suggests that these rules be placed in the parish bulletin, which has been done, and to also have hand-out sheets, rule booklets and letters given to owners of grave spaces. We will look into these means in the near future.*

PROHIBITED IN THE CEMETERY AT ALL TIMES

The sign reads as follows:

1. Trees, shrubs or perennial plants

- There are some families out of compliance in regard to this first prohibitive rule. It would be appreciated if families would take the necessary action to comply with this planting rule.

2. Objects that are offensive to the sacred character of the cemetery

- Only items of a religious (Christian) nature are acceptable in a Catholic cemetery.

3. Trenching, fencing or edging of lots

- There are numerous graves that are out of compliance with this cemetery rule. If your family lot has trenching, fencing or edging, please have it removed. This would include those graves where the edging, etc. is close to the grave markers.

4. Decorative rocks and stones

- This is self-explanatory.

5. Children without adult supervision

- This also is self-explanatory. However, if one of your young relatives comes home saying that they were asked to leave the cemetery, please find out if they were there with an adult.

6. Motorcycles, motorbikes, bicycles, skateboards or roller blades

- A cemetery is to a certain extent traffic free. Families may feel that it is fine for persons to enter the cemetery on the recreational items named above. However, there are parks and trails for these sorts of recreational toys. The cemetery is not a park or a nature trail or an exercise trail for walking and jogging. A cemetery is a place for the final resting of the faithful departed. Since the human body was marked with the seal of the Trinity and became a temple of the Holy Spirit, there is a certain respect and honor given to the dead and the place where they rest.

7. *Parking on graves*

- This rule is self-explanatory.

8. *Placing of household or commercial rubbish in the dumpster*

- This rule is self-explanatory.

9. *Dumping over any hillside*

- If you have rubbish from your family's gravesite, then please use the dumpster. Do not leave it on the roadway.

10. *Pets*

- This rule is also self-explanatory. Please refer to rule #6.

PROGRESS

Under the direction of Br. Greg Brown (now "Fr. Greg") with the assistance of the Parish Cemetery Committee, a computer was set up to handle a cemetery program. This software program will make it possible for the parish staff to have all the cemetery records on file in the computer. With a volunteer, the data is gradually being entered in the computer. The Committee and Br. Greg also had new signs posted in the cemetery with the cemetery rules.

There have been some contracted service problems addressed. The parish contracts service for lawn cutting, grave digging and grave landscaping. In the process of addressing problems with our contractors, we have learned of problems with families caring for their loved one's grave.

A few parish volunteers have donated their time helping us maintain the cemetery by sharing with us their knowledge about the water system, while others cleared the unsightly vines from the fence.

Cemetery Records

The cemetery is a ministry of the parish. The ministry has different aspects to it. One area of the ministry is to keep good records and to know the record keeping system. While Br. (Fr.) Greg was here, the parish purchased a software program that makes it possible for the cemetery records to be computerized. Searching for information regarding matters pertaining to the cemetery can be done rather quickly once the data is entered. It takes time to enter the data correctly in the computer. A volunteer has offered to do this task in a timely fashion that will not take forever to complete.

Having a quicker means to research records will not alleviate all problems regarding record keeping, such as requiring families to verify that one's family truly has a fully paid lot in the cemetery. This sort of issue requires that families have good records. Often the adult children of a couple are handling the funeral arrangement of their parents. Please take the time to locate the deed for your cemetery lot or that of your parents'. The data that we are using for proof of purchase of a lot is our Deed Book. We are not interested in impeding the progress of a burial at our cemetery at the time of a person's death because the family does not have the proper documentation. However, if one cannot show proper documentation in advance of a burial, then a burial might be postponed until the proper documentation is shown. So please take time to locate your deed. You can take it to the parish offices so that all is in proper order if one were to experience an untimely death.

Seeking Past-Due Payments On Graves

The cemetery is a ministry of the parish. This does not negate the fact that the cemetery needs to operate as a business, too. The cemetery is both: a ministry and a business.

One matter of business regarding the cemetery is the purchasing of lots for burial. At the time of purchase of a lot or when the balance of payment is made, a family or family member is issued a certificate of "Agreement for Right of Burial." (This "Agreement" is what many people call a "deed" but "Agreement for Right of Burial" is the proper term.) The lots are purchased by families and individuals but are maintained by the parish. At the time of a funeral, family members pay to have a grave dug which is a cost that is in addition to the price of the lot.

Usually, this matter is discussed with a funeral home director whether one buries a body or cremains. If a family is burying the cremains of a loved one without the services of a funeral home director, the parish contacts a burial company to prepare the lot and the family assumes the cost of this service.

There are different ways that burial lots are purchased at the cemetery. Some families come in advance to buy a lot (or two or whatever number they need). When paid in full, they receive a certificate indicating that they have paid for the lot in full. This certificate is presented at the time of a person's funeral to prove a lot has been purchased.

Other families purchase a lot or lots by making a down payment and then developing a payment plan with the parish's Administrative Assistant. However, at the time the family plans to make use of a lot for a funeral, it must be paid for in full. Obviously, at the time of death, this could be a tough discussion to have. It puts the parish staff between a rock and a hard place. While it is important to be aware that people are hurting, it is also important that families know that the pastor with the parish staff are held accountable to handling parish resources properly. In reality, if a family fails to be responsible in the matter of properly paying for a lot, they really hurt the other families who have purchased lots. In this situation, the pastor and staff are fulfilling their role as the managers of the parish's cemetery.

Please check to see if you have things in order regarding lots in the cemetery. Please inform family members of this information in order to limit the anxiety at the time of a family member's death.

WHAT TO DO WITH BURIAL LOTS YOU WILL NOT USE

There seems to be two situations where this issue may occur. The one is a "size" issue and another is if a "family relocates" to another state.

Size

Some graves were purchased a long time ago. Over the course of time, the size of people has changed and the size of burial vaults has changed. If a family paid for three graves in 1900 and if they used them in 1997 with the burial of two family members, there would only be a small area remaining. One could not bury another coffin in the remaining portion of a grave. Cremains could be buried there, but not a coffin within a vault.

Relocation

Families may consider wanting to sell graves back to the Parish Cemetery. There are civil laws that have a direct bearing on what can be done with such graves. It would be best to speak with the Parish Administrative Assistant about the matter.

According to civil law, graves are passed onto bloodlines. A son without any children may inherit a grave. He may think about wanting to sell the grave to the Parish. However, if his brother who is deceased has children, those children can be rightful heirs of the grave and he cannot just sell it back to the Church. Only the person who has his or her name on the "Right of Burial" certificate could sell the grave and not the brother that inherited the grave because there are other heirs in line to use the grave.

Because laws according to its non-profit, tax exempt status in this country govern the Church, there are other policies that govern the selling of a grave. The parish has control over the "Right of Burial" because it is the Church's responsibility to uphold its religious identification and affiliation. The Church has a responsibility to prevent speculators from buying graves and reselling them for profit. Even the Parish is forbidden to do this.

If you are considering selling a grave back to the Parish, then do the following:

Call the Parish Administrative Assistant to explain your situation. It will take time to research what policies apply and whether a "buy back" can occur. (However, first consider donating the grave back to the Parish and indicate that you would like the Parish to resell the grave or hold it for an indigent person who is in need of a grave.) If a "buy back" is possible, realize that reimbursement would only be the original purchase price less administrative fees because this type of work requires additional staff time

GRAVE MARKERS AND FOUNDATIONS

Grave markers and the foundations on which the markers rest seem to generate many telephone calls to the cemetery office.

Types of Markers

There are two types of grave markers which can be placed in Saint Clare Cemetery. The one is called a "monument" which is defined as aboveground or an upright memorial. The second type is called a "flush marker" or "grass marker." These markers are defined as memorials set flush with the surface of the ground.

All memorials rest on a "foundation" – sometimes called a "footer" – which is an in-ground concrete base. An "approved" monument dealer or the monument dealer's "approved" agent installs all foundations.

Styles of Markers

Memorials not only mark the grave of the deceased, but they also help to maintain the aesthetic beauty and dignity of a Catholic cemetery. Memorials are to reflect the Catholic faith. There are no uniform codes regarding the specifications of memorials because such regulations would be inadequate. However, when a family selects a memorial, it is important to understand that the approval of a memorial is the prerogative of the corporate entity of Saint Clare Cemetery. The parish cemetery has the right to make sure that the beauty and dignity of the cemetery is maintained. The cemetery makes judgments whether or not a marker is in keeping with reflecting the Catholic faith.

It is wise to consult the parish cemetery office in regard to grave markers. If a family is to error, then do it on the side of asking questions. Mistakes can be avoided by having the monument dealers submit a description of a proposed memorial to the parish cemetery office.

When a family purchases a memorial, composition is important. The marker should withstand our local climatic conditions. Families need to keep in mind that memorials need to be of a size that permits easy maneuverability of maintenance equipment. Once again, submit a description of a proposed memorial to the cemetery office in order to avoid problems in the area of composition and size.

Upright Monuments and Foundations

Issues arise regarding monuments and foundations in regards to when they can be placed and whose responsibility it is to maintain them.

It has been established that a family buys the "Right of Burial" in the cemetery when they pay for a lot in the cemetery. The family is privileged to be buried in a particular place in the cemetery. St. Clare Cemetery is always the owner of the cemetery property.

Monuments on the other hand are the property of the families. St. Clare of Assisi Parish gives families permission to place the monument that the family owns on the gravesite. St. Clare Cemetery has established that all monuments must be placed on a foundation (or "footer" as some call it). So the monument and foundation are the possession of the families.

Monuments can be placed at any time after the "Right of Burial" is purchased. Remember that the primary use of the cemetery is to bury the deceased. The actions that are necessary to do that takes precedence over all other actions, such as the placing of monuments.

If a foundation must be disturbed so that St. Clare Cemetery can execute a family's "Right of Burial" to bury a second body, it is the responsibility of the family to replace the foundation. Remember that the Cemetery permitted a family to place the monument, but the Cemetery never assumes responsibility for the monument and foundation. If a monument and foundation fall into disrepair, it is the responsibility of the family to tend to the monument and foundation. However, this must be done in cooperation with the Cemetery Office staff who must be notified before any work can be done. If monuments are vandalized, it is the responsibility of the families to repair their monuments.

Monument Dealers & Work Orders

The process for placing monuments in St. Clare of Assisi Cemetery follows guidelines and steps that are in line with the Catholic Cemeteries Assn., Inc., of which St. Clare Cemetery is a member. The step by step process is being presented here. The intent behind publishing this is to inform all parties of the proper procedures for marking graves and to re-establish the way St. Clare Cemetery operates.

Process For Placing A Monument

- It is suggested to wait at least one year after a burial to have a foundation laid and a monument placed.
- Contact a monument company.
- The company will contact St. Clare of Assisi Parish so that the parish's Administrative Assistant can have the grave marked where the foundation is to be placed.
- The Administrative Assistant will prepare a work order for its designated contractor to mark the grave, (\$60 Inspection Fee) or to install the foundation (\$.60 per sq. ft.)
- The contractor will return the work order along with an appropriate check to the Administrative Assistant who in turn sends the order back to the monument company.
- Upon receiving this work order, a monument company is free to pour a foundation and place a monument.
- Once the monument company has completed its work, a copy of the work order needs to be returned to the Administrative Assistant to show that the work has been completed. (The parish needs to know if and when the work has been completed, since it is responsible for the cemetery.)
- If a monument has been disturbed, especially due to the burial of a second body, then return to the first step of this process and follow each of the steps. (If a new foundation is necessary because the ground will again settle due to seasonal weather conditions, it is advisable to wait a reasonable amount of time after the second grave has been dug before having a new foundation re-poured.)
- Monument dealers may give you information that is not in keeping with these procedures, but Saint Clare Cemetery is operated by the parish with the guidance of the Catholic Cemeteries Association of the Diocese of Pittsburgh and its vast wealth of experienced people.

A Summary on Saint Clare Cemetery

A parish ministry such as operating a cemetery demands time and effort to keep the cemetery operating well. St. Clare Cemetery is very dependent upon the cooperation of families whose loved ones are buried there. There are many concerned families who help make this parish ministry possible. Thank you for doing so.

LOOKING AHEAD - - -

Listed below are several issues that will be addressed in the near future:

- Continue to enter data into the cemetery software program;
- Seek the past-due balances that are owed on graves;
- Review policy statements regarding the cemetery and visitation by family and friends of the deceased;
- Enforce the current policies, such as what are acceptable and unacceptable grave decorations according to the cemetery rules;
- Enlighten family members of the deceased on the burial procedures of St. Clare Cemetery when they meet with a funeral home director.

We hope that addressing these issues will create a better-managed cemetery ministry in the coming years.