



CALVARY & ALLIED CEMETERIES

Ascension • Calvary • Gate of Heaven • Resurrection • St. Mary's

Dear Friend in Faith,

Every question you carry into this new sacred space matters deeply to us, because it springs from love—love for God, love for family, and love for the Church's ancient promise that "life is changed, not ended." This introduction to our most Frequently Asked Questions is offered in that same spirit of love. May the words that follow feel less like an institutional preface and more like the calm voice of a trusted companion walking at your side. Together we will explore practical details, yes, but always within the larger horizon of faith, hope, and charity. In the quiet hush of our new mausoleum's corridors—where soft light falls across marble and prayerful hearts gather—every visitor is received as family. When you cross the threshold, you join a communion of the Faithful who believe that death cannot sever the bonds forged in Christ. We greet you, then, not as a stranger seeking information, but as a beloved friend seeking reassurance.

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- Must I be Catholic to be buried at Gate of Heaven Cemetery or interred at the new Mausoleum of Saint Patrick?

Only one family member is required to be Catholic.

- What is the difference between a niche and a crypt?

Every niche and every crypt in our new mausoleum points beyond itself toward Easter dawn. The physical resting places prepared here are signs of a greater

home promised by Christ. As you browse the FAQ, let each answer be heard against that Easter chorus: “He is not here; He has risen.”

A mausoleum niche and a mausoleum crypt are both sacred resting places within a mausoleum, but they honor different forms of Catholic burial. A niche is a smaller, reverent space specially designed to hold an urn containing the cremated remains of a loved one. These niches are often beautifully arranged in columbarium walls, and may be sealed with marble, granite, or glass, sometimes allowing for personal mementos or inscriptions that reflect a life of faith and love.

A crypt, on the other hand, is a larger space meant to hold a casket with the full body of the deceased. It’s a place of solemn dignity, offering a traditional form of Catholic burial that reflects our belief in the resurrection of the body.

Both niches and crypts are places of peace and prayer—blessed spaces where our loved ones rest in the hope of eternal life, surrounded by the prayers of the Church and the promise of Christ’s triumph over death.

- **What are the top 10 considerations for selecting a mausoleum crypt and niche?**

1. Total Cost of Ownership and Financial Stewardship
2. Location and Accessibility for Generations of Visitors
3. Size and Capacity to Accommodate Family Needs
4. Catholic Church Teaching and Cemetery Regulations
5. Perpetual Care and Long-term Maintenance Assurance
6. Security Features and Protection from Vandalism
7. Indoor vs. Outdoor Environment and Climate Considerations
8. Quality of Construction Materials and Craftsmanship
9. Ownership Rights, Transfer Options, and Estate Planning
10. Visitation Policies, Hours, and Cultural Fit with Catholic Practice

To learn about these considerations in more detail, read on for **A Catholic Family’s Guide to Being Prepared**.

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A Catholic Family's Guide to Being Prepared

The journey of choosing a final resting place for our loved ones—or planning ahead for ourselves—is one of the most profound acts of love and care we can undertake. As Catholics, we understand that our earthly bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit, deserving of reverence even after death. This sacred responsibility of selecting a columbarium niche for cremated remains or a mausoleum crypt for full-body entombment requires prayerful consideration and practical wisdom.



Whether you're walking this path in the immediate aftermath of loss or thoughtfully planning for the future, this guide offers ten essential considerations ranked by their importance to help you make a decision that honors both your loved one's memory and your family's faith. May these insights bring you peace and clarity during this meaningful decision.

1. Total Cost of Ownership and Financial Stewardship

The loving care we show our departed begins with being faithful stewards of the resources God has entrusted to us. The complete financial picture extends far beyond the initial purchase price and requires careful consideration of both immediate and long-term expenses.

Carefully examine all costs. Ask about:

- Opening and closing fees
- Perpetual care fund contributions
- Bronze inscription and religious emblems
- Administrative and recording fees
- Weekend or after-hours service premiums

The Church teaches us to be prudent with our earthly resources while honoring the dignity of the human person. Consider creating a comprehensive budget that includes all these elements, and don't hesitate to ask for a detailed breakdown of all costs. Gate of Heaven offers pre-construction pricing to help families manage these expenses with dignity.

2. Location and Accessibility for Generations of Visitors

"Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also" (Matthew 6:21). The location you choose will become a sacred place of prayer and remembrance for your family for generations to come. This consideration encompasses both the cemetery's geographic location and the specific placement within the facility.

GEOGRAPHIC CONSIDERATIONS

Choose a location that allows family members to visit regularly for prayer, reflection, and the commemoration of important dates like All Souls' Day, anniversaries, and birthdays. Consider the cemetery's proximity to your parish community and family members who will be the primary caretakers of the loved one's memory.

WITHIN-FACILITY PLACEMENT

Eye-level niches and crypts command premium prices but offer easier access for elderly family members and more convenient placement of flowers and personal items. Catholic cemeteries typically have specific hours (our cemetery is open for visitation from 9:00 AM to 4:40 PM daily) with some cemeteries extending hours during holy seasons, so consider how these schedules align with your family's needs for visitation and prayer.

Many Catholic facilities offer special accommodations during significant liturgical seasons and holy days, extending hours for Memorial Day, All Souls' Day, and other important

observances. This consideration is particularly meaningful for Catholic families who wish to maintain the beautiful tradition of visiting and praying for the deceased during these sacred times.

3. Size and Capacity to Accommodate Family Needs

The Church's wisdom in celebrating the unity of families extends to our consideration of burial space. Standard single niches typically measure 10-12 inches in height, width, and depth, while companion niches designed for two urns are increasingly popular and cost-effective.

SIZE STANDARDS FOR CATHOLIC FAMILIES

- **Single niche:** 10"x10"x9" to 12"x12"x13" deep
- **Companion niche:** 12"x12"x16" deep - accommodates two urns
- Companion urns typically hold 380-440 cubic inches

The 16-inch depth companion niche offers exceptional value for Catholic families, as it can accommodate two urns for a minimal price increase over single niches. This option is particularly meaningful for married couples who wish to remain together, reflecting the Catholic understanding of marriage as a sacramental bond that endures beyond earthly life.

When selecting urn sizes, remember that companion urns must fit within the niche dimensions while allowing for any religious artifacts, rosaries, or holy cards that families may wish to include. Many Catholic families choose to place small religious items with their loved ones as a sign of faith and devotion.

4. Catholic Church Teaching and Cemetery Regulations

Our Catholic faith provides clear guidance regarding the treatment of human remains, and these teachings should be at the heart of your decision-making process. The Church's position on cremation has evolved significantly since the Second Vatican Council, and understanding these teachings brings comfort and confidence to our choices.

CHURCH TEACHING ON CREMATION

Since 1963, the Catholic Church has permitted cremation, provided it is not chosen for reasons contrary to Christian teaching. The 1983 Code of Canon Law states: "The Church earnestly recommends that the pious custom of burial be retained; but it does not forbid cremation, unless it is chosen for reasons which are contrary to Christian teaching."

PROPER TREATMENT OF CREMATED REMAINS

The Church requires that cremated remains be treated with the same respect given to the human body. This means:

- Remains must be placed in a worthy vessel (urn)
- They must be buried in a grave, entombed in a mausoleum, or placed in a columbarium
- Scattering of ashes is not permitted
- Keeping ashes at home is discouraged, as catastrophes can damage or destroy urns
- Division of ashes among family members is not allowed

However, recent Vatican guidance (as of 2023) has clarified that families may request to keep a small portion of remains in a "place of significance for the history of the deceased person," provided it does not contradict Catholic teaching.

CEMETERY-SPECIFIC REGULATIONS

Catholic cemeteries maintain specific rules regarding urn materials, decoration policies, and inscription requirements. Most require religious symbols on memorials and maintain uniform standards for engravings. Some prohibit metal urns or require specific urn types for their niches.

5. Perpetual Care and Long-term Maintenance Assurance

The Catholic understanding of our responsibility to care for the deceased extends beyond the moment of interment. Perpetual care ensures that your loved one's resting place will be maintained with dignity for generations to come, reflecting our belief in the communion of saints and our ongoing relationship with those who have died.



UNDERSTANDING PERPETUAL CARE

Perpetual care funds are established from a percentage of each sale — typically 5-25% of the purchase price — and are invested to generate income for ongoing cemetery maintenance. These funds cover general groundskeeping, pathway maintenance, building upkeep, and facility security, but typically do not include individual grave or niche care.

WHAT PERPETUAL CARE TYPICALLY COVERS

- Lawn mowing and landscaping
- Road and pathway maintenance
- Building repairs and roof maintenance
- General facility upkeep
- Security measures

FINANCIAL STABILITY

Verify that the cemetery has a properly established perpetual care trust managed by independent trustees and subject to regular audits. Catholic cemeteries, as institutions of the Church, often have additional stability through diocesan oversight and support, but it's still wise to inquire about the fund's financial health.

Some Catholic cemeteries allocate 20% of crypt or niche sales to perpetual care funds, which exceeds many state minimums and demonstrates a strong commitment to long-term maintenance. This investment in perpetual care reflects the Catholic principle of caring for the dignity of the human person even after death.

6. Security Features and Protection from Vandalism

Protecting the final resting place of our loved ones is both a practical necessity and a spiritual responsibility. Cemetery vandalism unfortunately affects communities nationwide, with recent statistics showing significant impacts on burial grounds. Our new mausoleum is secure and well maintained for long-term peace of mind. Professional security guards patrol our entire gated cemetery.

UNDERSTANDING THE SCOPE OF CEMETERY CRIME

Research indicates that cemetery vandalism affected at least 1,811 individual markers in 2016 alone, causing approximately \$488,000 in damage. Most vandalism is committed by groups of young people (ages 12-28) during weekends and after dark, often involving alcohol or drugs.

SECURITY FEATURES TO EVALUATE

- **Locking mechanisms:** Quality niches feature five-pin tumbler locks with unique keys
- **Construction materials:** Marine-grade aluminum frames and tamper-resistant hardware
- **Surveillance systems:** CCTV monitoring and motion-sensor lighting
- **Physical barriers:** Proper fencing, controlled access points, and secure gates
- **Personnel presence:** Regular security patrols and on-site staff during operating hours

FOR MAUSOLEUM CRYPTS

Indoor mausoleums generally provide better security than outdoor installations, with controlled access, climate control, and reduced exposure to vandalism. Many Catholic mausoleums have specific visiting hours (typically 8:00 AM-4:00 PM) and staff presence during these times.

PREVENTIVE MEASURES

Catholic cemeteries often benefit from strong community connections that provide natural surveillance. Regular parish activities, special Masses, and community events create ongoing presence that deters criminal activity. When evaluating security, consider the cemetery's integration with parish life and community involvement.

7. Indoor vs. Outdoor Environment and Climate Considerations

The choice between indoor and outdoor placement significantly impacts both the preservation of your loved one's remains and the comfort of visiting family members. This decision affects long-term maintenance, accessibility, and the overall experience of prayer and remembrance.

INDOOR MAUSOLEUM BENEFITS

- **Climate control:** Protects urns and crypts from temperature extremes and moisture
- **Year-round comfort:** Allows meaningful visits regardless of weather conditions
- **Enhanced security:** Controlled access and reduced vandalism risk
- **Extended hours:** Some indoor facilities offer longer visitation periods
- **Sacred atmosphere:** Often designed with beautiful stained glass, religious artwork, and spaces for prayer

COST CONSIDERATIONS

Indoor placements typically cost 10-35% more than outdoor options due to climate control, lighting, and building maintenance costs. However, this premium often results in lower long-term maintenance needs and better preservation of memorializations.

OUTDOOR COLUMBARIUM ADVANTAGES

- **Natural beauty:** Integration with landscaped gardens and outdoor prayer spaces
- **Lower initial cost:** Generally more affordable than indoor options
- **Connection to creation:** Reflects the Catholic appreciation for God's creation
- **Traditional cemetery atmosphere:** Familiar outdoor memorial setting

Many Catholic families find spiritual comfort in outdoor settings that connect them with God's creation, while others prefer indoor mausoleums that provide a chapel-like

atmosphere for prayer and reflection. Consider your family's preferences for prayer and meditation when making this choice.



8. Quality of Construction Materials and Craftsmanship

The Catholic principle of doing all things with excellence and dignity extends to the construction quality of the final resting place we choose for our loved ones. Quality construction ensures that the memorial will stand as a lasting testament to the person's life and faith. The new Mausoleum of Saint Patrick is being built at the highest point of Gate of Heaven Cemetery. The foundation and exterior will be constructed of poured-in-place concrete, surrounded by granite and marble, thereby providing a clean, dry and above ground entombment for your loved ones, as well as protection from inclement weather during your visits and services.

FOR MAUSOLEUM CONSTRUCTION

High-quality mausoleums use granite from reputable quarries in the United States and Canada, with slabs 1.5 inches thick or greater for durability. Quality construction features:

- **Single-layer concrete foundation:** 100% high-grade concrete several feet thick with wire mesh reinforcement
- **Quality granite:** High quartz content for strength, non-porous surface for moisture resistance
- **Proper foundation:** Extends under the entire footprint of the structure to prevent shifting

- **Sealed joints:** High-quality sealants and minimal joint gaps (1/8" or less)
- **Engineered drainage:** Proper roof design to prevent water infiltration

FOR COLUMBARIUM NICHES

Quality columbaria feature marine-grade aluminum frames, reinforced polycarbonate niches, and secure five-pin tumbler locks. The construction should include:

- **Weather-resistant sealing:** Injection-molded seals to prevent element infiltration
- **Durable granite facing:** 12mm granite tiles in various colors
- **Concealed hardware:** Professional installation with tamper-resistant fasteners

RED FLAGS IN CONSTRUCTION

Avoid facilities using thin granite (less than 1 inch), concrete substitutes for granite, or poor-quality sealants. Inferior construction can lead to water damage, structural problems, and costly repairs that may not be covered by perpetual care funds.

9. Ownership Rights, Transfer Options, and Estate Planning

Understanding your legal rights and responsibilities helps ensure that your investment serves your family appropriately both now and in the future. Catholic families often have strong traditions of family burial plots and multi-generational planning that require clear legal frameworks.

UNDERSTANDING INTERMENT RIGHTS

When you purchase a niche or crypt, you're buying "interment rights" or "burial rights" rather than owning the land itself. These rights include:

- The privilege to inter remains in the designated space
- The right to memorialize the deceased according to cemetery regulations
- Limited transfer and inheritance rights subject to cemetery approval

INHERITANCE AND TRANSFER

Catholic cemetery ownership typically passes according to state laws of intestate succession unless specifically addressed in a will. In New York, for example:

- Spouses have vested rights of interment when there are available spaces
- Parents and children may be interred based on order of death and space availability
- Transfer requires written consent from cemetery authorities

IMPORTANT CONSIDERATIONS FOR CATHOLIC FAMILIES

- **Family plot planning:** Consider purchasing family rooms for spouses and immediate family

- **Will provisions:** Specifically address cemetery property in estate planning documents
- **Cemetery approval:** Most transfers require written consent from cemetery management
- **Recording fees:** Administrative costs for transfers and changes of ownership

RESALE AND BUYBACK POLICIES

Many Catholic cemeteries retain right of first refusal, meaning they have the option to repurchase the space at original cost before you can sell to a third party. Some cemeteries offer space-for-space exchanges within their system if families relocate.

10. Visitation Policies, Hours, and Cultural Fit with Catholic Practice

The ability to visit, pray, and maintain connection with our departed loved ones is fundamental to Catholic tradition. Cemetery policies regarding visitation, decorations, and special observances should align with your family's spiritual practices and traditions.



TYPICAL CATHOLIC CEMETERY HOURS

Most Catholic cemeteries maintain consistent hours that accommodate regular visitation:

- **Cemetery gates:**
8:00 AM-5:00 PM daily
(extended to 6:00-7:00 PM in summer)
- **Indoor mausoleums:**
9:00 AM-4:30 PM daily
- **Extended hours:**
Special accommodations for Memorial Day, All Souls' Day, and other holy days

CATHOLIC-SPECIFIC CONSIDERATIONS

- **All Souls' Day observances:** Special Masses and extended hours for November 2nd commemorations
- **Memorial Day traditions:** Community Masses and prayer services
- **Religious decoration policies:** Guidelines for religious symbols, flowers, and memorial items
- **Prayer space availability:** Areas for individual and family prayer within mausoleums

DECORATION AND MEMORIAL POLICIES

Catholic cemeteries typically allow:

- Fresh flowers in designated vases during specific periods
- Religious symbols and artifacts (crosses, rosaries, holy cards)
- Seasonal decorations for Christmas, Easter, and other holy days
- Memorial plaques with religious inscriptions and symbols

COMMUNITY AND PARISH INTEGRATION

Many Catholic cemeteries serve as extensions of parish life, hosting:

- Regular Masses in mausoleum chapels
- Rosary prayers during Marian feast days
- Special devotions during Lent and Advent
- Community prayer services for the faithful departed

FAMILY GATHERING ACCOMMODATIONS

Consider whether the cemetery can accommodate family gatherings for anniversary Masses, memorial services, or special remembrances. Some Catholic cemeteries have designated areas for larger family gatherings and may assist with arranging special liturgical services.

Closing Reflection

Dear friend, as you prayerfully consider these ten essential factors, remember that you are making a decision rooted in love, faith, and the Catholic understanding of the dignity of the human person. The choice of a final resting place is ultimately an act of love and hope—hope in the resurrection of the body and the life of the world to come.

Take time to visit potential locations during different times of day and seasons. Speak with cemetery staff about their experience serving Catholic families. Most importantly, bring your decision to prayer, asking for God's guidance as you seek to honor your loved one in a manner worthy of their dignity as a child of God.

The Catholic Church's beautiful tradition of caring for the deceased reflects our belief that death is not the end, but a transition to eternal life. By thoughtfully considering these practical matters, you create space for the more important work of grief, remembrance, and prayer.

May you find peace in your decision, comfort in your faith, and strength in the knowledge that your loved one rests in hope of the resurrection. The communion of saints surrounds us, and our prayers for the faithful departed continue the bonds of love that death cannot break.



*"Eternal rest grant unto them, O Lord,
and let perpetual light shine upon them.
May they rest in peace. Amen."*

- Eternal Rest Prayer,
Roman Rite of the Catholic Church,
the Requiem Mass