

## **The Cemeteries of St. Mary's and the Missions**

### **2022 Fall Newsletter**

This year St. Mary's has assumed responsibility for all aspects of operation at St. Mary's Cemetery in Owen Sound which were previously carried out by Greenwood Cemetery staff. Our manager, Lynn Curley, will assist you in sales of lots, plots, niches, foundations, and markers. Please contact her for all your needs related to any of our four parish cemeteries.

A major task this year has been the updating and provincial approval of by-laws governing the operation of our cemeteries. The major change affecting rights holders is that flower gardens are not permitted to be kept and no loose objects are to be placed on the graves. The reason for this by-law is to provide a beautiful environment while permitting maintenance to be carried out safely at a reasonable cost. Our grass cutting contractors cannot reasonably be expected to navigate a minefield of objects and irregular terrain.

There is a **myth** that when someone buys a lot or plot that they can do anything they wish. The **truth** is that one does not "buy a lot" – one purchases burial rights. Cemeteries sell burial rights which provide a license and an easement for a specific number of burials (traditional or cremation) in a specific location within the cemetery. The easement also provides for a memorial to be erected in accordance with cemetery regulations and for perpetual care to maintain the property in perpetuity. By selling burial rights rather than land there is no question of taxable property, we are assured the property will always remain a cemetery. It allows the Board to set reasonable rules and regulations to assure proper maintenance of the cemetery can be performed.

Our new by-laws limit the decoration of graves to placing a saddle wreath on markers and monuments. Foundations are installed by our approved contractors or approved agents such as monument dealers.

There is no provision for gardens since they are placed beyond the easement of the foundation of the approved monument. In some instances, gardens have even been planted beyond the limit of the lot or plot which in most cases means it extends on to an adjacent grave. Articles such as statues and loose items are a hazard to grasscutters and

are strictly prohibited. We take seriously our obligation to maintain the cemeteries in a safe and beautiful condition for all rights holders.

The manager is using her discretion in slowly bringing the cemeteries into conformity with the new by laws. It is a process of education and gradual approximation as is the implementation of any new practice. Signs have been posted and the work will continue as time allows. We ask that all solar lights, decorations, and flower gardens be removed before the winter months for safety reasons and to assist with this major clean up.

As has been our past practice all cemeteries will be closed each year from December 1<sup>st</sup> to May 1<sup>st</sup>. Visitors are still welcome to walk in the cemetery and visit graves during this period.

St. Mary's & the Missions are blessed to have four beautiful cemeteries that serve as the resting place of generations who have gone before us. We hold these properties in sacred trust with an inherent obligation to care for them in perpetuity. We are always grateful for your generous support, however in this unusual year we make a special request that you make your best efforts to share your blessings with our cemeteries. Regular maintenance such as grass cutting, tree removal as well as management and administration need your annual support.

You can support our cemeteries by purchasing a lot, plot, niche, or memory wall plaque or by making a donation to the Cemetery Fund. This coming week we celebrate All Saints Day and All Souls Day. We remember those who have gone before us and now rest in our cemeteries awaiting the final resurrection. Any time during the month of November you are urged to return your Parish Cemeteries Collection offering. All donations are matched by Bishop Crosby, with funds going directly into the local Care and Maintenance Fund. Those with envelope boxes will find an envelope dedicated to this collection. Extra envelopes marked All Souls can be picked up at the back of the church this month. If you are not attending mass in person, please drop off or mail your donation marked "Cemetery Collection" directly to the parish office at the address on the front of the bulletin.

**Respectfully submitted on behalf of the Cemeteries' Board,**

**Michael Donovan, Current Chairperson**