

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

## **2023 Fall Newsletter**

St. Mary's & the Missions is blessed to have four beautiful cemeteries that serve as the resting place for 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.

In 2023, we paved the main roadway and circle at St. Mary's Cemetery in Georgian Bluffs, and we plan to pave other areas as funds become available through a bequest or donations. Our cemeteries date from the mid 19<sup>th</sup> century and some markers and monuments have gathered moss and needed to be refreshed. This year we have managed to power wash all markers in 3 cemeteries and plan to complete the work at St. Mary's in South Bruce Peninsula next year. The pioneer cemetery in the Irish Block was the only Catholic cemetery in Grey Bruce from 1848 to 1878. The markers of people interred in that period have been overgrown by trees. Finally, an effort is underway to recover the markers and place them in a compact area which can be maintained easily and economically. The project requires funds and volunteers.

We have assumed responsibility for all aspects of operation at St. Mary's Cemetery in Owen Sound which were previously carried out by Greenwood Cemetery. Our manager, Lynn Curley, will assist you in sales of lots, plots, niches, foundations, and markers. Arrangements can be made to purchase your needs over time at no interest. Please contact us at 519 379 5537 for all your needs related to our 4 parish cemeteries.

By laws revised in 2022, limit the decoration of graves to placing a saddle wreath on markers and monuments. 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. 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.

A myth commonly repeated is that the Catholic church does not allow cremation. The truth is that it still prefers burial of the body because it more fully exemplifies our belief in the resurrection of the body on the last day. However, cremation is an acceptable alternative for final disposition of the body if it is not done as an attempt to deny the resurrection. Our cemeteries offer niches in a handsome columbarium as well as in ground plots for the interment of cremated remains.

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.

You can support our cemeteries by purchasing a lot, plot, columbarium niche or memory wall plaque or by making a donation or bequest 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 our Care and Maintenance Fund. You may wish to indicate which cemetery you wish to direct your support. 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**