



Catholic Diocese of Richmond

May 18, 2016

## **Diocese hires Cemetery Management Company, Announces New Office of Cemeteries**

Bishop Francis X. DiLorenzo has authorized the Diocese of Richmond to hire Catholic Management Services, a strategic planning and professional services firm, to restore, maintain and make financially viable almost 60 cemeteries, mausoleum and columbaria within the Diocese of Richmond.

CMS, is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization headquartered in Pleasanton, Calif. specializing in providing business planning services to revitalize cemetery operations. After successfully revitalizing the Diocese of Oakland cemeteries, CMS was hired by other dioceses to share its expertise in cemetery management. It serves the Dioceses of Sacramento, Spokane, Detroit and Saginaw, among others, and has recently expanded operations by opening an office to service the eastern region of the United States.

Under the new arrangement, CMS's first order of business will be to hire a director for the Diocese's newly created Office of Cemeteries to manage and maintain its burial sites and to work with parishes to raise awareness of this ministry of consolation. See the job posting [here](#).

The Diocese's new initiative will represent a paradigm shift, bringing into focus the role of cemeteries and other burial sites as sacred places of Catholic outreach, education and evangelization. At the same time, the initiative is designed to restore cemeteries to fiscal health, many of which are financially struggling.

"We believe that providing well-maintained, financially sound cemeteries and other burial sites will better enable our Diocese to evangelize what we as Catholics believe about the care and respect we show to our deceased loved ones," said Bishop DiLorenzo. "CMS and our new Office of Cemeteries will serve as a vital resource to our parishes and parishioners in this important time. In addition, financially sound cemeteries will bring in additional resources to support this ministry."

The Catholic Church teaches that the human body is a temple of the Holy Spirit. The Canon law of the Church defines cemeteries and other sites as sacred places of repose for the body until the

final resurrection. Because of this belief, the Church requires its dioceses and parishes to maintain cemeteries, mausoleums, and columbaria in virtual perpetuity. Church buildings and grounds, however, are fluid: closures, remodeling and expansions occur due to the changing demographics and pastoral needs of the parish. In response, the Diocese implemented a new policy, endorsed by the diocesan Priests Council in January of this year, prohibiting new construction of cemeteries, etc. within close proximity of church buildings.

In 2014 CMS began an extensive assessment, including visits, to nearly all 24 parish and regional cemeteries, 33 columbaria and 3 mausoleums located throughout the Diocese. The assessment showed inconsistencies in policies, procedures, pricing and maintenance of cemeteries and columbaria and indicated these parishes would benefit from guidance and recommendations for best practices to better address the challenges they face today. Some of these locations present financial liability issues because they have inadequate endowment funds to provide for their perpetual care.

The assessment also revealed pastoral concerns about how and where cemeteries and columbaria are being located, as well as an opportunity to educate families about the rich liturgical tradition of the Catholic Church and Christian burial. The results of this assessment was presented to the Priests Council upon its completion. Earlier this year, pastors and parish staff were invited to presentations at three locations throughout the Diocese to discuss the role of the new Office of Cemeteries and the Diocese's hiring of Catholic Management Services.

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