

# **St. Joseph Parish Cemetery**

## **GUIDELINES FOR PLACING FLOWERS AND DEOCATIONS ON GRAVES**

Revised and adopted: April, 2013

Our parish cemetery which is the final resting place of our parishioners since 1847. Keeping the cemetery neat and orderly is something that people in the parish take great pride in. And we take pride in the fact that the work involved is all done with volunteer help. It is a good and holy thing to honor the graves of our loved ones and one of the great challenges we face is how to ensure that the cemetery continues to be both a place of honor and beauty.

Through the years, volunteers have served as members of the cemetery board. Their charge is to establish the rules governing the operation of the cemetery including the kind of decorations that are allowed. This is no easy task as there are as many different ideas as to what are beautiful and appropriate decorations as there are people in the parish.

For the common good, the cemetery board has established the following guidelines for cemetery decorations.

- It is always permissible to put flowers (live or artificial) on the grave provided that they are put in flower containers which are attached permanently to the grave monument. When placing artificial flowers on the grave monument, it is important that these flowers be attached securely to the flower container. It is important to remember that our cemetery sits on a hill and very often there are strong winds that blow through the cemetery. When flowers are not attached securely to the flower container the wind can easily dislodge them.
- It is not permissible to plant flowers around the grave monuments. We do not have the time and personnel to weed these kinds of flower gardens.
- Recently, it has become popular to place saddle bouquets on the top of the grave monument. As a cemetery board, we highly discourage this practice since, in our experience, these bouquets are easily dislodged by even the slightest amount of wind. If people are going to place these flowers on the monuments, they need to make sure that they are firmly attached to the monument.
- Shepherds Crooks, hanging flower baskets, wind chimes, solar lights and the like are not permitted as they create a hazard for those who mow the cemetery grass. Sticking artificial flowers in the ground in front of a monument is not permitted, nor is it permissible to stick flags in the ground close to the grave monument. These are also a hazard to our mowers
- Placing statues, toys, rocks, pictures of loved ones on the base of tombstones is not permitted. These can easily fall in the grass where they can be shredded into pieces by the lawn mowers and the weed eaters the cemetery crews use. Not only does this cause damage to the lawn mowers and weed eaters, but the flying debris is extremely hazardous to the mowing crews.
- Placing plaques (e.g. veterans' plaque, fireman or policeman emblems, or civic organization emblems) on tombstones is permitted. They should be glued or otherwise securely attached to the grave monument. It is not permissible to stick emblems and plaques that are attached to a pole into the ground next to the grave monument

The basic rule our cemetery board is trying to follow is this: any decorations or flowers need to be attached to the grave monument itself or placed securely in flower containers that are a part of the grave monument. Anything else placed around the grave monument creates a hazard for our lawn mowing crews.

We believe it is important for all those who are placing flowers on the graves of their loved ones to periodically check them. We have found that some people will place artificial flowers on the grave and then never come and check on them. In the meantime, the flowers get faded and shredded and begin to disintegrate thus causing bits of flowers to be scattered all over the cemetery. We think this is not in keeping with the image of the cemetery that people in the parish would like to see.

We have noticed that some people try to secure various items to their grave monument by wires and ropes and string. In our opinion this is not in keeping with the image of the cemetery that people in the parish would like to see..

We depend upon volunteers in our parish to mow and trim our cemetery. This takes a great deal of time each week. We do not think it is fair to ask these people to also take the time to walk through the cemetery each week and pick up flowers and other paraphernalia that has fallen off the grave monuments. We think it is generous enough for these volunteers to mow and trim the grass

The guidelines that we have established are primarily for the lawn mowing season: March through November. During the winter months, especially at Christmas, some people want to place wreaths and other Christmas decorations on the graves of their loved ones. We do not see a problem with this. However, just as people would decorate their homes for Christmas and then, once the season is over, take down their Christmas decorations, we think they should do the same with the Christmas decorations they place on the graves of their loved ones.

Each year the cemetery board takes upon itself the task of getting the cemetery ready for the mowing season. This involved primarily filling in recently dug graves. To help us prepare for the lawn mowing season, we ask that those people who put flowers on the graves of their loved ones, come and make sure their decorations are all securely fastened to the grave and remove old and faded flowers. We ask that people take care of this by March 1. After that date, we will remove any flowers or other material that we believe is a hazard to our mowing crews. Please know that we are doing this to help keep things safe for these volunteers and not to cause any hardship for people whose loved ones are buried in our cemetery.

We regret that we cannot assume responsibility for the well being and care of any decorations that are placed on the graves of loved ones in our cemetery. As difficult as it may be to imagine, there have been incidents of vandalism through which flowers and decorations have been taken from grave monuments in our cemetery. Ultimately, people who place flowers on the graves of their loved ones, do so at their own risk.