For Catholics, cremation allowed with appropriate respect

ATLANTA (CNS) — In the Catholic Church cremation has become an accepted practice when “serious reasons” present a need for it and if the practice maintains respect for the sacredness of the body and belief in the resurrection of the dead.

The practice had previously been forbidden in the church, but a 1963 instruction by St. Paul VI explained that cremation is acceptable when practiced “not out of hatred of the church or Christian customs, but rather for reasons of health, economics or other reasons involving public or private order.”

An example of public order would be the lack of adequate space for cemeteries, as is the case in Japan and smaller countries in northern Europe, said Holy Cross Father Richard Rutherford, professor of theology and pastoral liturgy at the University of Portland in Oregon.

He then described a situation in which cremation might be pursued because of a private order that goes “beyond economics.” Perhaps an elderly parent dies in a Florida retirement home far away from the family home in Alaska where he or she wishes to be buried, he said. Family members may live in different parts of the country and plan to make the trip home for the funeral at some point.

“Cremation in Florida, perhaps following a funeral with the body present there, and transport of the cremated remains home to Alaska for a family funeral and committal in the family plot would be a reasonable request and not (done) out of hatred,” Father Rutherford explained. “In fact, the desire to have a Catholic funeral in the parish church where the deceased had belonged before the eventual move to retirement in Florida would be a praiseworthy decision (made) out of love of the church and Christian customs.”

Cost is often a reason for choosing cremation. However, Father Rutherford said that the cost discrepancy between a burial and cremation has lessened as “mortuaries and cremation providers — often now the same entity — are in business to provide goods and services for a profit.”

Cremation illustrates the interplay between Christian beliefs and cultural influences. “Early Christians wouldn’t have conceived of it, but (cremation) is part of our world,” said Father Rutherford, who co-wrote “The Death of a Christian: The Order of Christian Funerals.”

Material from the Committee of Divine Worship of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops further explains the sacredness of the body even after death: “This is the body once washed in baptism, anointed with the oil of salvation, and fed with the bread of life. This is the body whose hands clothed the poor and embraced the sorrowing. This human body that is so closely associated with the human person that it is hard to think of a human person apart from his or her body.”

For this reason, the church “earnestly recommends” burying the body of the deceased, according to the 1983 Code of Canon Law, but does not forbid cremation unless someone has chosen cremation to deny hope in the resurrection of the body.

When cremation is to be pursued there remains “the Catholic way” of putting to rest the cremated remains, according to Father Rutherford.

First, when possible, the preference is to hold the funeral Mass or liturgy with the body of the deceased present and at the person’s home parish as it is the place where he or she lived out the Christian life.

When the funeral liturgy or Mass is to be held in the presence of one’s cremated remains, certain practices have been adapted without losing their sense of respect for the person.

For instance, Father Rutherford explained, as with the funeral liturgy when a body is present, “some form of worthy vessel” containing the ashes is met at the church door or placed at the foot of the altar. Following the funeral rite, the commitment takes place whereby the cremated remains are entombed at a cemetery or mausoleum.

Certain cultural practices in regards to cremated remains are off limits to faithful Catholics. These include the desire of some to scatter a loved one’s ashes at certain locations or to distribute them to other family members. Again, the church invokes the importance of the integrity of one’s body and the hope of resurrection for the body.

According to the bishops’ statement, “the scattering of cremated remains is not a practice we believe is appropriate or honors a person, and is therefore not permitted.”

In either a traditional burial or cremation, the priest stressed that the important thing to always remember is the “integrity of the body.”

“The body is not simply the soul’s cage to throw away,” he said. “This was a person in relationship with God.”

Tips for writing an obituary

Coping with the death of a loved one is never easy. Even those comforted by the acknowledgment that a recently deceased friend or family member lived a full life may still struggle with the sense of loss that comes with the passing of a loved one.

Upon the passing of a loved one, an individual is often tasked with writing an obituary. Some people may find writing an obituary cathartic, providing an opportunity to tell a loved one’s life story and indicate how unique the deceased was. Because writing an obituary is not something people are asked to do every day, it’s understandable if many men and women don’t know where to begin. Obituaries do not necessarily have to follow a formula, but the following tips can help people compose an obituary that conveys who their deceased loved one was and how much this person meant to friends and family.

- Contact your local newspaper. Some newspapers may have obituary guidelines that govern things like writing style and obituary length. Before writing an obituary, contact your local newspaper to determine if they have any such rules in place. Some newspapers may only publish obituaries written by their own staff members.

- Do not feel obliged to include cause of death. While acquaintances who first learn of a person’s death via an obituary may be curious about cause of death, loved ones of the deceased do not have to include such information if they are uncomfortable doing so. Many obituaries never include such information, so readers likely won’t expect it. Those who are comfortable including such information in the obituary may find it helps them avoid having to answer numer-
All Saints’ Day, Souls’ Day

**EVENTS**

- **Holy Rosary**
  - St. Amant: Nov. 2, 8 a.m.
  - Holy Rosary Cemetery
- **Immaculate Conception**
  - Denham Springs: Oct. 31, 4 p.m.
  - Nov. 1, 8:30 a.m., noon, 7 p.m.
  - Memorial Service for the deceased
- **Blessings of the Graves:**
  - Oct. 3, 9 a.m.: Old/New Red Oak, Livingston
  - 2 p.m.: Denham Springs Memorial
  - 3 p.m.: Beech Ridge, Denham Springs
  - 3:30 p.m.: Milton/Palmetta, Walker
  - 4 p.m.: Evergreen Memorial, Denham Springs
- **Immaculate Conception**
  - Lakeland: Nov. 3, 9 a.m.
  - Afterwards: Immaculate Conception Cemetery
- **Our Lady of Peace**
  - Vacherie: Nov. 4, 11 a.m.
- **Our Lady of Mt. Carmel**
  - St. Francisville: Oct. 28, 11:30 a.m.
  - Mount Carmel Cemetery
- **Sacred Heart Chapel**
  - Lake St. Ann: Oct. 28, 3 p.m.
  - Lake Cemetery
- **Sts. Anthony of Padua and Le Van Phung**
  - Nov. 1, 4 p.m.
  - St. Joseph Cemetery
- **St. Augustine Chapel**
  - Belle Rose: Nov. 1, 7 a.m. English, 7:30 p.m.
  - Vietnamese
  - Nov. 2, 7 a.m. English, noon & 7:30 p.m.
  - Vietnamese
  - Nov. 4, 9 a.m.: St. Augustine Cemetery
- **St. Augustine**
  - New Roads: Nov. 4, noon
- **St. Benedict the Moor**
  - Napoleonville: Nov. 4, 11:30 a.m.
  - St. Benedict Cemetery
- **St. Elizabeth**
  - Paincourtville: Oct. 28, 11:45 a.m.
  - approx.
- **St. John the Baptist**
  - Bruancy: Nov. 3, 11 a.m.
  - St. John the Baptist Cemetery
- **St. John the Evangelist**
  - Plaquemine: Nov. 4, noon
  - St. John Cemetery
  - Grace Memorial Park
- **St. Joseph Cathedral**
  - Baton Rouge: Nov. 1, 4 p.m.
  - St. Joseph Cemetery
  - Highland Cemetery
- **St. Joseph**
  - French Settlement: Oct. 28, 10:15 a.m.
  - approx.
  - St. Joseph Cemetery
  - approx.
  - Paulina
  - St. Joseph: Oct. 28, 10 a.m.
  - St. Joseph Cemetery
  - Sacred Heart Cemetery
  - St. John Cemetery
  - Sacred Heart Cemetery
  - St. Joseph Cemetery
  - St. Jules Cemetery
  - Small Chapel
  - St. Mary Cemetery
  - St. Mary Cemetery
  - St. Michael Cemetery
  - Mass Resthaven, Baton Rouge
  - LeBourgeois Cemetery
  - All Saints Candlelight Mass

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**THURSDAY November 1st 2018 @ 10:00 a.m.**

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Deacon Brent Duplessis, St. Jean Vianney Catholic Church
Deacon Don Musso, Most Blessed Sacrament Catholic Church
Reverend Michael Miceli, St. Patrick’s Catholic Church
Eucharistic Minister Shirley Weber

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**A BEAUTIFUL WAY TO CELEBRATE THE MEMORY OF THOSE MOST DEAR TO US**

**The ultimate guide to writing a eulogy**

**By Dignity Memorial**

Delivering a eulogy or funeral speech is an opportunity to share the things you cherished about someone, brag on their accomplishments, and tell friends and family about their unique charms and funny quirks.

Simply giving a kind and respectful speech will make a good eulogy. However, a little research can help you write and deliver a wonderfully meaningful tribute that goes beyond a list of accomplishments and virtues. But writing a eulogy can be a difficult task when time is limited and emotions are high. You may be tasked with writing a eulogy in addition to making funeral arrangements, supporting other family members and working through your own grief. To make it a bit easier, we’ve outlined a few things that can help you write a touching and memorable eulogy.

**Brainstorm and research**

Start by gathering all the biographical details about the person you are eulogizing, including when and where they were born, important jobs they held, how many children they had and more. These details are a starting point for sharing meaningful stories. After all, your dad was more than the job he worked. Your spouse had passions beyond his children.

So how do you capture the best parts of a life? Spend some time thinking about what was meaningful to your loved one and which memories celebrate their life. Most everyone has a pastime that feeds their soul and reflects a deep interest. Maybe your wife was known for her beautiful garden or your father had a famous barbecue sauce recipe. Maybe your sister rescued hundreds of animals in her lifetime, or perhaps your brother was a secret sculptor. Talk to other family members and friends about their favorite memories and stories of your loved one. Here are a few thought-starters:

- Ask your spouse’s siblings to share
PHILADELPHIA (CNS) – On a November morning, Father Marc Capizzi had his rosary in hand when he left the rectory at St. Albert the Great Parish in the Philadelphia suburb of Huntingdon Valley.

Having received an anguished call from a parishioner, he set out to comfort a family that had just lost a son to suicide.

His heartbreaking mission was not out of the ordinary. “It’s probably more common than you would think,” Father Capizzi said. “A number of priests have had this experience.”

According to a recently released report from the Centers for Disease Control, that experience is becoming more common. From 1999 to 2016, suicide rates increased by more than 30 percent in half of the nation’s states. Almost 45,000 Americans die by suicide each year, making it the 10th leading cause of death in the U.S.

Recent celebrity suicides, such as those of fashion designer Kate Spade and celebrity chef Anthony Bourdain, also have highlighted the issue.

Both the CDC and the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention emphasize that suicide has no single cause. Mental and physical health, relationship issues, sexual and substance abuse – along with financial, employment, legal and housing difficulties – have all been shown to contribute to a person’s decision to end his or her life.

“Suicide itself is a gravely disordered act, an evil one,” said Father Bernard Taglianetti, a professor of moral theology at St. Charles Borromeo Seminary in Wynnewood. “However, the church also recognizes that strong emotional experiences – deep suffering, deep depression – can diminish one’s culpability.”

Father Taglianetti noted that the church relies on the expertise of mental health professionals in evaluating and crafting a pastoral response to suicide.

Pilots cannot be regarded as mental health counselors unless they have received training and licensure as such, he said. However, clergy should be able to refer parishioners to appropriate treatment, and above all, priests can pray with and provide spiritual support for those contemplating suicide.

“God is with you, and the church’s blessing is always available,” he told CatholicPhilly.com, the news outlet of the Archdiocese of Philadelphia.

In addition, the sacraments – particularly confession and the Eucharist – provide profound healing for those in despair. Through confession, an individual can be “relied of spiritual anguish from bad decisions or thoughts,” said Father Taglianetti, while the Holy Eucharist makes Christ’s love a tangible reality.

Although some Christian denominations maintain that suicide results in automatic and eternal damnation, the Catholic faith does not despair of God’s mercy for those who take their own lives.

“The Catholic Church doesn’t ever decide or declare that someone is in hell,” said Father Taglianetti. “What’s important here is hope – hope in the love of God, and in his divine mercy.”

That mercy can save a soul even in its final moments on earth, he added.

“At the very last second of a person’s life, if they’ve done this terrible act to themselves, they can cry out to God, whose mercy is infinite,” said Father Taglianetti.

Those who commit suicide are no longer necessarily refused a Christian burial, said Father Dennis Gill, director of the Archdiocese of Philadelphia’s Office for Divine Worship.

Although suicide was once regarded as a denial of God’s
Parish cemeteries: A labor, but also a labor of love

WASHINGTON (CNS) – Often overlooked amid issues of grief and loss in Catholic families after the death of a loved one is that thousands of parishes across the United States have their own parish cemetery.

The Diocese of Madison, Wisconsin, alone has 125 parish cemeteries.

The majority of these cemeteries were established when the parish, then new, was founded in a rural area far from the closest neighboring parish in another village or the center of the diocese. The parish cemetery also was a welcoming presence for Catholics and made burying their loved ones easier in an era when there was still a great degree of suspicion – and separation – between Catholics and non-Catholics.

Those kinds of attitudes have largely dissipated, as have the distances between parishes as cities have grown and swallowed up farmland in their path.

One Wisconsin Catholic official who oversees parish cemeteries calls them “the perfect ministry, because it’s right there, it’s right in the middle of your parish.”

In Detroit, Assumption Grotto Parish on the city’s northeast side has its own cemetery. When the parish was founded in 1832, it was 11 miles from its “mother church,” Ste. Anne de Detroit, established in 1701 as the first French settlers set down roots in Detroit.

In the intervening 183 years since Assumption was established, Detroit grew up and shot past what had been known as “Greinerville,” named after an Assumption Grotto family of French descent that ran a post office and general store. Greiner Road starts across the street from the church and ends at a large Catholic cemetery in Detroit, Mount Olivet.

Suburban development has spread 18 miles northbound past the parish, and the neighborhood surrounding the church has seen better days. It is pockmarked with dilapidated houses and vacant lots where houses once stood.

Yet the parish goes on – and its cemetery, too.

Joe Fisher grew up in the parish, an altar boy and choir boy, and delivered newspapers on the street behind the 3.5-acre cemetery, where his father is buried. Over the past seven years, he’s taken it upon himself to map out the cemetery, clean the grave markers, take photos of each of them and post them on a website called findagrave.com.

Of the 2,500 people buried there, “there’s just 200 people that I don’t know where they are,” Fisher said. “Before 1950, before vaccinations and stuff, the child mortality rate was pretty high. There are children who would have buried from the flu epidemic. Wooden crosses do not survive 100 years.” He’s also skeptical of a report of a burial at the cemetery in a year that predates the parish’s founding.

What Fisher likes is the grotto shrine built in 1881 inside the cemetery. “I go there because it makes me feel peaceful,” he said, even though he’ll spend two or three hours cleaning it.

There are still a few plots available, likely returned to the parish, according to Ellen Paluzzi, a parishioner and former parish secretary. “In fact, I’m going to be buried out there,” she said.

Parish cemeteries are “not all that uncommon” in the Midwest, said Grant Emmel, who is charged with keeping tabs on the 125 cemeteries in the Madison Diocese. “It’s the perfect ministry, because it’s right there, it’s right in the middle of your parish.”

Emmel said some parishes have the opportunity to expand their cemeteries when adjacent farmers – who themselves could be parishioners – sell some acreage to the parish.

“The parish cemetery is like a business. You’ve got to approach it with that kind of mindset,” Emmel told Catholic News Service.

“You’ve got inventory, you’re selling things, you’ve got customer service, a lot of record-keeping – more so than a general nonprofit might think about. Then you’ve got the whole ministry side … you start adding that in, there’s a lot to learn, but it’s not overwhelming.”

Emmel added, “People in the parishes, a lot of them have businesses. A lot of them know how to keep a cemetery in operation – or any business, really.”

He explained the dual nature of cemetery as business and ministry: “Like catechesis, like religious education, like the Catholic school, the cemetery is a ministry. In some situations, you say: ‘Listen, the cemetery has to be self-sustaining. It has to pay its own way.’ That’s not an unreasonable thing to say, but at some level, there’s going to be some level of loss.”

All Saints Day Mass November 1, 2018 11:00 am
Bring your lawn chair. Stay afterwards for lunch at the Reception Center.
**EULOGY ▼**
From page 3B

their funniest childhood stories.

Have your children reflect on a time when their dad made them feel special.

Gather your mom’s grandchildren and ask them to share what they loved best about their grandmother.

Call up former teachers and classmates and get them to tell you about the special qualities and attributes that your brother possessed.

Once you gather all the information you can, start writing. If you’re having trouble getting going, pick a theme to help you organize your thoughts.

If your dad spent most of his time outdoors, share stories related to his wild camping trips, mishaps at the lake or the ways he shared his love for nature with others. If your spouse’s greatest joy was her grandchildren, share their favorite memories of her and all the ways her legacy will live on through other family members. Describe how your mom devoted her extra time to the community by teaching classes, helping at a food bank or serving on the board of nonprofits.

Each life is unique, and a well-written eulogy expresses a person’s unique personality, reminds people of the good times, and helps generate even more fond memories of a life well celebrated.

**Edit and practice your delivery**

Once you have a draft of the eulogy, start practicing your delivery well before the funeral service. As you practice your funeral speech, you’ll most likely pause and edit several times, adding details or reorganizing your thoughts. It can be helpful to practice with a sibling, child or parent who can give helpful feedback. Once you have a final draft, take the time to proofread the eulogy and double-check all the details.

**Keep in mind that a eulogy isn’t an opportunity to air out a grievance or make sense of a loss. It’s an opportunity to tell the story of a remarkable life. As you complete your eulogy draft, add a final tribute to close your speech. This could be a simple statement that ties your thoughts together, a favorite Scripture or quote or a final heartfelt farewell.**

**Tips for delivering a eulogy**

Before you take the podium at a funeral or memorial service, print out the eulogy in a large font with double line spacing so that you can easily read what you’ve prepared. Remember to speak slowly. Take deep breaths and make eye contact with family members and friends. Have a glass of water nearby in case you need to clear your throat.

If while you’re sharing your eulogy, you stumble over your words or become emotional, that’s OK! It’s perfectly natural. Allow yourself to pause, wipe your eyes with a tissue and then continue with your message of love, laughter, remembrance and gratitude.

**HOPE ▼**
From page 48

mercy and power in a person’s life, modern research affirms that “a person who takes his or her life most likely did not make a rational decision,” said Father Gill in an emailed statement.

“Therefore, there is all the more reason to entrust the soul to the Lord with a funeral Mass,” he wrote.

Catholic teaching also addresses the issues of euthanasia and end-of-life care.

Direct euthanasia, defined as “an action or omission which of itself or by intention causes death” to eliminate suffering, is “morally unacceptable,” according to a 1980 Vatican declaration and the Catechism of the Catholic Church. Physician-assisted suicide is considered a form of euthanasia.

In cases of terminal illness, the church distinguishes between ordinary and extraordinary means of care. While ordinary care offers a reasonable hope for improvement without overburdening the patient, extraordinary means excessively burdening the patient without benefit and can be refused.

Father Taglianetti observes that at whatever period it occurs in one’s life, suffering can be redemptive if viewed in the light of faith.

“It allows a person to reach out more deeply into your life,” he said, contrasting two high-profile cases of terminal brain cancer— that of Brittany Maynard, an outspoken physician-assisted suicide advocate who took her life in 2014; and Father Philip G. Johnson, a priest of the Diocese of Raleigh, North Carolina, priest who has fought his illness since being diagnosed in 2008 at age 24.

While still a seminarian, Father Johnson wrote an open letter to Maynard detailing his own medical struggles and urging her to remain alive as “an example and inspiration.”

“Suffering is not worthless, and our lives are not our own to take,” Father Johnson stated in his letter. “We do not seek pain for its own sake, but our suffering can have great meaning if we try to join it to the Passion of Christ and offer it for the conversion or intentions of others.”

Father Taglianetti observed that suffering can ultimately be a road to sainthood.

“It can be an act of prayer, an act of love,” he said. “And God’s love is not temporary, but eternal, which always give us hope.”
CEMETERIES ▼
From page 58

el of expectation that this is important to us, and it's worth it to us to expend some of our resources to keep this up and running.

“Now, is it prudent that it’s completely supported by the parish? It's not an either-or, it's a both-and,” Emmel continued. “You do it because you are prudent with the use of the funds you've been given; you've invested in them over time. You get gifts, you get bequests, and you use that to build up a fund that will generate revenue for the cemetery to offset expenses. The majority of the expenses are offset by the revenues generated by past users of the cemetery.”

And the trump card for many in the parish, according to Emmel, is the reality that in the parish, and its parish cemetery, “our parents are there, our grandparents are there, our kids are there.”

Joe Sankovich, a former priest, got thrown into parish cemetery ministry as an associate pastor at a suburban Detroit parish, when the pastor left and started thinking about cemeteries, “our parents are there, our grandparents on one side are in the Polish cemetery, the grandparents on the other side are in the (adjacent) Slovakian cemetery.” He replied. “On the top of the hill there is a Polish cemetery. My grandparents are on one side are in the Polish cemetery, the grandparents on the other side are in the (adjacent) Slovakian cemetery.”

“It became my laboratory,” he recalled. Sankovich left the ordained priesthood as a new pastor finally arrived in 1975, “but he asked me to hang on to the cemetery,” he said.

As an ex-priest, Sankovich didn’t have an obvious career to fall back on — “my master's (degree) was in New Testament,” he said — “but I was doing some counseling with a couple of guys that were based in New York City who had discernment programs for resigned priests.

“IT was their recommendation that I look to something in the area of grief and bereavement,” he added.

So he went off to California “to do a weeklong workshop with Elisabeth Kubler-Ross,” the Swiss psychiatrist who had established her “five stages of grief” concept in the 1960s, he told CNS.

“I became good friends with Elisabeth and started thinking about cemeteries. I was in the Catholic Cemetery Conference,” an association for diocesan cemetery directors, “and they were doing absolutely nothing for parish cemeteries” at the time, he added.

Long story short, Sankovich became an authority on parish cemeteries, working in New England, New Jersey, and in the Archdioceses of New York, Indianapolis, Milwaukee and Seattle.

It was in Seattle that Archbishop Raymond G. Hunthausen, then head of the archdiocese, challenged him on whether there was any longer a need for Catholic cemeteries. Working with a committee, Sankovich not only agreed that “the theology was bad,” but that it could be improved — and in the committee’s report, showed how.

Archbishop Hunthausen was so impressed with the report, Sankovich said, that he sent it to his fellow bishops.

Sankovich for some years has been a Catholic cemetery consultant, working out of Tucson, Arizona. He was traveling roughly every 10 out of 14 days, but is now semi-retired. He also has produced six manuals for parish cemeteries, some of which are over 150 pages.

Given his travels, where does Sankovich want to be buried?

“It’s going to be buried in Central City (Pennsylvania), next to my sister, in my (childhood) parish, in that same place, close to the Flight 93 memorial,” he replied. “On the top of the hill there is a Polish cemetery. My grandparents are on one side are in the Polish cemetery, the grandparents on the other side are in the (adjacent) Slovakian cemetery.”

OBITS ▼
From page 28

ous inquiries about the loved one’s demise at the ensuing visitation and funeral services.

• Include some biographical information. Obituaries are typically more than simple announcements of death. Some simple biological information can shed light on who the deceased was and his or her personal and professional accomplishments. Avoid getting too detailed, as newspapers may not accept obituaries that are very lengthy.

• Include donation information. If the funeral will be public, include the day and time of the funeral as well.

• Have the obituary ready one to two days before the services are scheduled. Publishing the obituary a couple of days in advance of visitation hours gives loved ones of the deceased time to arrange to visit and pay their respects.

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