



OFFICE OF THE BISHOP

March 19, 2026

Prot. No. B 056/26

Dear Fathers,

Christ's peace be with you.

I am pleased to announce the promulgation of new norms for cemeteries and columbaria in the Diocese of Charlotte on this 19<sup>th</sup> day of March of 2026, the Solemnity of St. Joseph, Patron of the Dying.

For those subject to these norms, local policies and other documents are to be updated accordingly, for which six months are being granted from the date of this decree. All existing contractual obligations for interment/inurnment remain in effect. The chancery is available if you or your staff need assistance.

I am grateful to the Presbyteral Council, contributing pastors, and diocesan personnel for their dedicated work on these important matters. The document includes the norms as well as helpful appendices and sample documents for parish use. I am confident these norms will better enable the Diocese of Charlotte to serve the needs of the faithful as they reverently lay to rest the mortal remains of their loved ones.

Peace,

Most Reverend Michael T. Martin, OFM Conv.  
Bishop of Charlotte





Roman Catholic Diocese of Charlotte

## Diocesan Norms for the Governance and Stewardship of Cemeteries and Columbaria

### Table of Contents

#### Section I: Diocesan Norms

##### PART I. INTRODUCTION

*Title I. Spiritual Mission*

*Title II. Purpose of Norms*

*Title III. Foundation in the Code of Canon Law and Ecclesial Tradition*

##### PART II. GENERAL DIOCESAN NORMS

*Title I. Eligibility for Interment in a Catholic Cemetery/Columbaria*

*Title II. Sacred Space*

*Title III. Environment*

*Title IV. Legal and Contractual Obligations*

##### PART III. CATHOLIC SECTIONS OF NON-CATHOLIC CEMETERIES

##### PART IV. PAROCHIAL & DIOCESAN CEMETERIES

*Title I. Request*

*Title II. Operations*

*Title III. Legal & Contractual Obligations*

## **PART V. FREE-STANDING COLUMBARIA**

*Title I. Request*

*Title II. Operations*

*Title III. Legal & Contractual Obligations*

### **Section II: Appendices**

- A. Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) for a Catholic Section
- B. Template Letter to Request a Catholic Section
- C. Cemetery/Columbarium Financial Plan
- D. Expenditure Approval Financial Worksheet
- E. Template for Site Review
- F. Policy for Cemeteries & Columbaria
- G. Cemetery Burial Rights Agreement
- H. Right of Inurnment Agreement
- I. Template for Cemetery/Columbarium Advisory Board Statutes/Bylaws
- J. Catholic Guidance on “Green” Burial



## DIOCESE OF CHARLOTTE

# DIOCESAN NORMS FOR THE GOVERNANCE AND STEWARDSHIP OF CEMETERIES AND COLUMBARIA

## PART I. INTRODUCTION

### *Title I. Spiritual Mission*

“In the face of death, the Church confidently proclaims that God has created each person for eternal life and that Jesus, the Son of God, by his Death and Resurrection, has broken the chains of sin and death that bound humanity.”<sup>1</sup> Accordingly, Catholic cemeteries and columbaria are sacred places set aside by the Church for the corporal work of mercy of burying the dead and for providing a final resting place for the faithful departed as a sign of their hope in the promise of Resurrection.<sup>2</sup> These grounds are blessed or dedicated spaces where the Church concludes the Order of Christian Burial. More specifically, “the rite of committal, the conclusion of the funeral rites, is the final act of the community of faith in caring for the body of its deceased member.”<sup>3</sup>

The burial of the dead is an expression of faith rooted in the Paschal Mystery. As St. Paul writes, “For if we have grown into union with him through a death like his, we shall also be united with him in the resurrection.”<sup>4</sup> In keeping with this hope, Catholic cemeteries/columbaria are places of prayer, remembrance, and Christian witness to the sacredness of every human body, created in the image and likeness of God, destined for resurrection and having been fortified by the sacraments.<sup>5</sup>

Catholic cemeteries/columbaria are extensions of the Church’s ministry—pastoral, liturgical, and communal, not merely functional places of burial. They are places where the faithful come to pray, to grieve, to remember, and to entrust their loved ones to God’s eternal care. As Jesus said, “I am the

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<sup>1</sup> Catholic Church, *Order of Christian Funerals: Ritual Edition*, (Chicago: Liturgy Training Publications, 2018), no. 1.

<sup>2</sup> See CIC 1176, CCC 2300 and Tobit 1:16–18. All translations of the Latin *Codex Iuris Canonici* (CIC) are from: Catholic Church, *Code of Canon Law, Latin-English Edition: New English Translation*, (Washington, D.C., Canon Law Society of America, 2017).

<sup>3</sup> Order of Christian Funerals, no. 204.

<sup>4</sup> Romans 6:8. Scripture citations are taken from <https://bible.usccb.org/bible>.

<sup>5</sup> See Genesis 1:27 and John 5:28–29.

resurrection and the life; whoever believes in me, even if he dies, will live.”<sup>6</sup> Cemeteries/columbaria are places of Christian hope.

## ***Title II. Purpose of Norms***

The purpose of these norms are fourfold:

1. **To safeguard the sacred character** of Catholic cemeteries/columbaria as places of reverence and peace.<sup>7</sup>
2. **To facilitate the final witness of hope** in the resurrection of the Christian faithful.
3. **To ensure compassionate and pastoral care** for families and individuals at the time of loss. They are expressions of our belief in the resurrection of the dead and the communion of saints.<sup>8</sup>
4. **To maintain and administer** cemetery/columbaria grounds with integrity, justice, compassion and due respect for the deceased, whose bodies were “temple[s] of the Holy Spirit.”<sup>9</sup>

These norms are intended for all those who serve in the ministry of Catholic cemeteries/columbaria—clergy, administrators, staff, and volunteers—and invites them to share in the Church’s sacred mission to witness to the faith, care for the dead, and comfort the living with faith and dignity.

## ***Title III. Foundation in the Code of Canon Law and Ecclesial Tradition***

Informed by faith, Catholic cemeteries/columbaria are governed by the norms of the Church, which recognize the burial of the dead as a sacred duty and a vital expression of ecclesial communion. The Code of Canon Law (canons 1176–1185) provides the universal legal framework that shapes and supports this ministry, ensuring that the dignity of the human person and the hope of the Resurrection are preserved in all burial practices.

**Canon 1176 §1** (Christian Burial as a Right of the Faithful) “Deceased members of the Christian faithful must be given ecclesiastical funerals according to the norm of law.”

Ecclesiastical funerals noted here conclude with burial. The Church regards Christian burial not merely as a cultural tradition but as a spiritual right rooted in baptism. Through burial in blessed ground, the faithful departed are entrusted to the mercy of God and remain united to the praying Church. The place of interment thus becomes an extension of the liturgical and sacramental life of the community.

**Canon 1176 §3** (Theological Meaning of Burial) “The Church earnestly recommends that the pious custom of burying the bodies of the deceased be observed.”

The Church teaches that the human body, once a temple of the Holy Spirit, is to be treated with reverence both in life and in death.<sup>10</sup> Burial bears witness to the Resurrection through the imitation of

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<sup>6</sup> John 11:25.

<sup>7</sup> See Wisdom 3:1–6.

<sup>8</sup> See Hebrews 12:1.

<sup>9</sup> See 1 Corinthians 6:19.

<sup>10</sup> See 1 Cor 6:19.

Christ, who himself was buried.<sup>11</sup> Cremation is permitted, provided it is not chosen as a sign of denial of Christian belief in the resurrection of the body.<sup>12</sup>

**Canon 1205** (Establishment and Oversight of Catholic Cemeteries/Columbaria) “Sacred places are those which are designated for divine worship or for the burial of the faithful by the dedication or blessing which the liturgical books prescribe for this purpose.”

Catholic cemeteries/columbaria are considered sacred places (*loci sacri*) once properly blessed or dedicated. According to Canon 1240, they are to be treated with reverence and maintained in a condition befitting their sacred character.<sup>13</sup> These norms provide oversight of cemeteries/columbaria in accord with Canon 1276, specifically for their administration, pastoral care, and conformity to Church law.<sup>14</sup>

**Canon 1180 §1** (Parochial Cemeteries) “If a parish has its own cemetery, the faithful deceased are to be buried in it unless another cemetery has been legitimately chosen by the deceased or those in charge of the burial.”

The Church expresses a preferential option for parishioners to be buried in their own parish cemeteries.

## **PART II. GENERAL DIOCESAN NORMS**

In accord with ecclesiastical law, these norms are issued for the Diocese of Charlotte by the authority of the diocesan bishop. They provide the framework for ensuring that all practices, operations, and services offered within Catholic places of interment align with the Church’s moral, theological, and liturgical teachings and canonical practices.

The following norms apply to all cemeteries and columbaria that fall under the pastoral oversight of the diocesan bishop. This includes the three types of cemeteries/columbaria: diocesan, parochial, and Catholic sections in other cemeteries.

### ***Title I. Eligibility for Interment in a Catholic Cemetery/Columbaria***

**Art. 1.** Burials in a Catholic cemetery shall be done according to the Catholic rites in accord with Canons 1183 and 1184.<sup>15</sup> In such cases where rituals by representatives of other faiths involving non-

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<sup>11</sup> See 1 Thessalonians 4:13–18; Matthew 27:59–60.

<sup>12</sup> Instruction *Ad resurgendum cum Christo*, 2016.

<sup>13</sup> Canon 1240 §1. Where possible, the Church is to have its own cemeteries or at least areas in civil cemeteries that are designated for the deceased members of the faithful and properly blessed. §2. If this cannot be achieved, however, then individual graves are to be properly blessed.

<sup>14</sup> Canon 1276 §1. It is for the ordinary to exercise careful vigilance over the administration of all the goods which belong to public juridic persons subject to him, without prejudice to legitimate titles which attribute more significant rights to him. §2. With due regard for rights, legitimate customs, and circumstances, ordinaries are to take care of the ordering of the entire matter of the administration of ecclesiastical goods by issuing special instructions within the limits of universal and particular law.

<sup>15</sup> Canon 1183 When it concerns funerals, catechumens must be counted among the Christian faithful. §2. The local ordinary can permit children whom the parents intended to baptize but who died before baptism to be given ecclesiastical funerals. §3. In the prudent judgement of the local ordinary, ecclesiastical funerals can be granted to

Catholics (according to the norms below) or other respectful practices such as military honors are requested, the minister may allow them prior to or after the conclusion of the Catholic rite provided that due regard is given to Catholic sensibilities.

**Art. 2.** While Catholic cemeteries/columbaria are intended primarily for the burial of baptized Catholics, in the Diocese of Charlotte the administrator may also grant the following interment:<sup>16</sup>

- Children whom the parents intended to baptize but who died before baptism.<sup>17</sup>
- Those who died with the explicit intention to complete OCIA.<sup>18</sup>
- Non-Catholic baptized persons who, although enrolled in a non-Catholic Church or ecclesial community and because of some familial or special connection to the Catholic Church, unless their intention is evidently to the contrary.<sup>19</sup>
- Non-Christian spouses, children, or relatives, provided this does not create scandal or imply a denial of Church teaching.

Those to be denied ecclesiastical funerals are outlined in Canon 1184 and may require the consent of the ordinary.

**Art. 3.** Burial options should remain affordable.<sup>20</sup>

**Art. 4.** The Catholic rite of Committal is not permitted on private property unless there is a preexisting, legitimately recognized, cemetery.

## ***Title II. Sacred Space***

**Art. 5.** All Catholic cemeteries and columbaria, whether diocesan or parochial, are sacred places. They are, therefore, to be prayerful places. Their planning and use must reflect reverence for the dead and care for nature. For this reason, Catholic cemeteries/columbaria must implement policies that protect gravesites, ensure proper recordkeeping, and respond appropriately to violations of reverence.<sup>21</sup>

- In new cemetery/columbaria projects, environmental sustainability is required. This includes native landscaping, sustainable materials, and water conservation.<sup>22</sup>
- Green burial options are to conform to liturgical and canonical requirements.<sup>23</sup>
- Natural and locally sourced materials are preferred.

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baptized persons who are enrolled in a non-Catholic Church or ecclesial community unless their intention is evidently to the contrary and provided that their own minister is not available.

Canon 1184 §1. Unless they gave some signs of repentance before death, the following must be deprived of ecclesiastical funerals: 1° notorious apostates, heretics, and schismatics; 2° those who chose the cremation of their bodies for reasons contrary to Christian faith; 3° other manifest sinners who cannot be granted ecclesiastical funerals without public scandal of the faithful. §2. If any doubt occurs, the local ordinary is to be consulted, and his judgment must be followed.

<sup>16</sup> See Canon 1180.

<sup>17</sup> See Canon 1183 §2.

<sup>18</sup> See Canons 1183 §1 and 206.

<sup>19</sup> See Canon 1183 §3.

<sup>20</sup> See *Dilexi Te (DT)*, 27-28, 118.

<sup>21</sup> See Canon 1367 and Appendix F.

<sup>22</sup> See *LS*, 137–162.

<sup>23</sup> See Appendix J for more information on the topic of ‘green burial.’

- Landscaping plans shall give deference to native, drought-resistant species and minimize large, barren, expanses of turf.
- Irrigation systems must employ water-efficient designs.

***Title III. Environment***

**Art. 6.** In keeping with the Church’s teachings on the dignity of the human person and the resurrection of the body while drawing upon the guidance of the encyclical *Laudato Si’*, the Diocese of Charlotte adheres to the following principles for the design, operation, and maintenance of Catholic cemeteries and columbaria:

- Cemeteries and columbaria are sacred places and must reflect the Church’s eschatological hope in the resurrection of the body.<sup>24</sup>
- Their care and design must model stewardship and custodianship rather than ownership.<sup>25</sup>
- Environmental sustainability should reflect Christian virtue and the beauty of creation.<sup>26</sup>
- Burial locations are to be reverent and ecologically ethical.<sup>27</sup>
- The presence of natural beauty should foster contemplative prayer and connection to creation.<sup>28</sup>

***Title IV. Legal and Contractual Obligations***

**Art. 7.** The documents in the appendices must be used for Cemetery Burial Rights Agreement and Right of Inurnment Agreement.<sup>29</sup> Additionally, the Policy for Cemeteries and Columbaria in the appendix must be used.<sup>30</sup> Portions of the policy document may be modified at the discretion of the pastor/administrator as indicated in the text. All other modifications require the consent of the ordinary.

**Art. 8.** Among parochial cemeteries there can be several configurations. For example, a parish with a single cemetery; two parishes with a shared cemetery; or regional cemeteries among several parishes. In addition to cemeteries, the Church recognizes the use of columbaria. These more properly exist in the context of a cemetery. They may, however, exist separately from cemeteries. For example, columbaria may exist on church property. The following norms are organized according to these three general categories.

**PART III. CATHOLIC SECTIONS OF NON-CATHOLIC CEMETERIES**

**Art. 9.** All agreements that create Catholic sections in non-Catholic cemeteries are to be between the cemetery and the diocese, not individual parishes or entities.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> See Canons 1205-1213.

<sup>25</sup> See *LS*, 159.

<sup>26</sup> See *LS*, 233–234.

<sup>27</sup> See *LS*, 58.

<sup>28</sup> See *LS* 85, 225.

<sup>29</sup> See Appendices G and H.

<sup>30</sup> See Appendix F.

<sup>31</sup> See sample agreement in Appendix A.

**Art. 10.** Pastors/administrators, or groups of pastors/administrators of neighboring parishes, or vicars forane, are encouraged to identify and, where possible, quantify the need for burial and columbaria space for the faithful departed. Once this need is quantified, they are then encouraged to identify local private or municipal cemeteries where Catholic Sections may be established and dedicated. Having been informed, if there is a desire to proceed, the priests/administrators should then write the ordinary requesting that the Diocese of Charlotte contact the local cemetery and establish a relationship between itself and the identified cemetery or cemeteries.<sup>32</sup>

**Art. 11.** The procedure for an entity administrated by the public juridic person of the diocese is the same as noted above with necessary adaptations to the central administration approval process found in the *Finance Manual*.

## **PART IV. PAROCHIAL & DIOCESAN CEMETERIES**

**Art. 12.** The difference between parochial and diocesan cemeteries is the administrator. If the administrator is a pastor(s)/parochial administrator(s) then the cemetery is parochial. If the administrator is the ordinary or his delegate, then the cemetery is diocesan. Cemeteries of public juridic persons subject to the bishop are treated like parochial cemeteries. All cemeteries are to have a Cemetery Advisory Board. Its composition and function are described in the *Operations* section below.

**Art. 13.** Acquisition/alienation of property that contains an existing cemetery or the dedication of existing property for the purpose of establishing or expanding a cemetery by a public juridic person subject to the bishop, such as a parish, is considered an act of extraordinary administration and is to follow the norms outlined in *Instruction for the Decree of Complementary Norms to Canon 1281*. Proposed diocesan cemeteries are to follow the procedure outlined in the diocesan *Finance Manual*.

### ***Title I. Request***

#### **Chapter I: Acquisition or alienation of property that contains an existing cemetery or establishing a new cemetery on existing property.**

**Art. 14.** This request is for an act of extraordinary administration, the canonical validity of which requires the local administrator to obtain the consent of the Ordinary. The procedure for requesting consent of the Ordinary is found in the *Instruction for the Decree of Complementary Norms to Canon 1281*.

**Art. 15.** When requesting to acquire an existing cemetery, or purchasing property for a new cemetery, additional documentation is required beyond that which is already noted in Title II – Real Estate Acquisition/Alienation, *Instruction for the Decree of Complementary Norms to Canon 1281*:

a. When in the Exploratory Phase, follow Title II, Art. 2, §3, and also provide:

(1) Identification of the proposed Cemetery Advisory Board members and their qualifications.

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<sup>32</sup> See Appendix B.

- (2) A cemetery financial plan (for details see *Operations* below), which is to be completed by the CAB, along with the *Expenditure Approval Financial Worksheet*.<sup>33</sup>
- b. When at the Real Estate Approval Request (REAR), follow Title II, Art. 2, §5, and also provide:
  - (1) Governing by-laws for the Cemetery Advisory Board (CAB) and a final list of CAB members and their qualifications.<sup>34</sup>
  - (2) A completed policy and procedure manual for the cemetery.<sup>35</sup>
- c. When submitting acquisitions during the Due Diligence Period, follow Title II, Art. 2, §12, and also provide:
  - (1) A completed title search and title insurance policy.
  - (2) For land that contains an existing cemetery:
    - i. A professional survey identifying existing burial plots.
    - ii. A detailed register of all human remains buried on the site and all plots for which burial rights are owned.

**Art. 16.** The procedure for an entity administrated by the public juridic person of the diocese to request consent of the ordinary to acquire or alienate property that contains an existing cemetery, or for the purpose of establishing a new cemetery, is the same as above with necessary adaptations to the central administration approval process found in the *Finance Manual*.

**Chapter II: Construction, expansion, relocation, or alteration of property that serves as an existing cemetery or for the purpose of establishing a new cemetery.**

**Art. 17.** This request is for an act of extraordinary administration, the canonical validity of which requires the local administrator to obtain the consent of the ordinary.

**Art. 18.** The procedure for requesting consent of the ordinary for construction, expansion, relocation, or alteration of property that serves as an existing cemetery or for the purpose of establishing a new cemetery is:

- a. For projects funded by a capital campaign consisting of pledges to be paid over multiple periods, or that exceed \$1 million:
  - (1) The Title I – Large Capital Projects *Instruction for the Decree Complementary Norms to Canon 1281* and *Capital Construction Team Handbook*.

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<sup>33</sup> See Appendix C for financial plan template and D for worksheet.

<sup>34</sup> See Appendix I for template.

<sup>35</sup> The policy provided in Appendix F must be used. There are places for the administrator to further specify. This is what is meant by a completed policy manual.

b. For projects neither funded by a capital campaign consisting of pledges to be paid over multiple periods, nor that exceed \$1 million:

- (1) The Title III – Facility Projects & Vehicles *Instruction for the Decree Complementary Norms to Canon 1281*.

c. In addition to the required documents defined in Title I and Title III noted above, the following documents must be submitted in the letter of request to the Vicar General (5.1 *Capital Construction Team Handbook* and Title III, Art. 3, §4 *Instruction for the Decree Complementary Norms to Canon 1281*, respectively):

- (1) Governing by-laws for the Cemetery Advisory Board (CAB) and a final list of its members and their qualifications.<sup>36</sup>
- (2) A cemetery financial plan (for details see *Operations* below), which is to be completed by the CAB, along with the *Expenditure Approval Financial Worksheet*.<sup>37</sup>
- (3) A basic environmental review. [N.B. This review assesses ecological impact, water use, and preservation of natural features.]
- (4) A preliminary map of the property with proposed burial plots, as well as any other existing or proposed buildings, burial plots, columbaria, or improvements on site.<sup>38</sup>
- (5) A completed policy and procedure manual for the cemetery.<sup>39</sup>

**Art. 19.** The procedure for an entity administrated by the public juridic person of the diocese to request consent of the ordinary to construct, expand, relocate, or alter property that serves as an existing cemetery, or for the purposes of establishing a new cemetery, is the same as above with necessary adaptations to the central administration approval process found in the *Finance Manual*.

## ***Title II. Operations***

### **Chapter I. General**

**Art. 20.** The Cemetery Advisory Board is advisory to the pastor/administrator on issues pertaining to policies, finances and proper care and maintenance of the cemetery. The Board is to consist of at least three members with the appropriate knowledge to advise the pastor/administrator in such matters and shall meet no less than twice annually. Minutes of all meetings are to be recorded and kept on file in the parish/diocesan office. The board is to prepare a cemetery budget sufficient to cover all one-time and reoccurring operation, care and maintenance expenses. See “Care and Maintenance” obligations below.

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<sup>36</sup> See Appendix I for template.

<sup>37</sup> See Appendix C for financial plan template and D for worksheet.

<sup>38</sup> See Appendix E for a site review template.

<sup>39</sup> The policy provided in Appendix F must be used. There are places for the administrator to further specify. This is what is meant by a completed policy manual.

**Art. 21.** The administrator/pastor is to establish an endowment with the Diocesan Foundation for perpetual care to provide for the future care of the cemetery. This is to be funded by designating a percentage of all sales for this purpose. The percentage of sales designated for future care is to be no less than 15%. In addition, donors may contribute to the perpetual care fund, and the parish/diocese may designate accumulated surplus for this purpose. Funds must be withdrawn at least annually from the perpetual care endowment to fund the cemetery annual budget. Endowment contributions must continue unless funds available for distribution are sufficient to cover the annual cemetery budget. In such case, the amount that would have been deposited into the endowment is no longer restricted for cemetery use.

**Art. 22.** The administrator/pastor, after receiving the advice of the Cemetery Advisory Board, is to determine a target amount that is to represent the “corpus” of the perpetual care fund, which is not to be spent. Interest income earned on the corpus is available for care and maintenance expenses. Accounting procedures for recording the sale of rights to cemetery plots is displayed in Section 114 of the diocesan *Finance Manual*.

## **Chapter II. Care and Maintenance**

**Art. 23.** Grounds maintenance requires . . .

- a. Regular mowing, trimming, and edging of grass to maintain a respectful and orderly appearance.
- b. Planting and care of trees, shrubs, and flowers that enhance the prayerful atmosphere.
- c. Seasonal cleanup of leaves, branches, and debris. Removal of dead or diseased plants.

**Art. 24.** Gravesite care requires . . .

- a. Ensuring headstones and markers are upright, legible, and secure.
- b. Cleaning and minor repair of monuments as needed.
- c. Monitoring decorations to ensure they are appropriate, safe, and in keeping with cemetery guidelines.

**Art. 25.** Infrastructure and safety requires . .

- a. Maintenance of roads, pathways, fences, and gates.
- b. Adequate lighting and signage for safety and accessibility.
- c. Regular inspection of grounds to address hazards such as uneven surfaces or fallen branches.

**Art. 26.** Spiritual and pastoral care requires . . .

- a. Providing a reverent environment for prayer and reflection.
- b. Ensuring chapels, crucifixes, statues, and shrines are maintained and in good condition.
- c. Offering seasonal liturgies, such as All Souls’ Day services, to honor the faithful departed.

## **Chapter III. Legal and Contractual Obligations**

**Art. 27.** The documents in the appendix must be used for a Cemetery Burial Rights Agreement and Right of Inurnment Agreement.<sup>40</sup> Additionally, the Policy for Cemeteries and Columbaria in the appendix must be used.<sup>41</sup> Portions of the policy document may be modified at the discretion of the pastor/administrator as indicated in the text. All other modifications require the consent of the ordinary.

## **PART V. FREE-STANDING COLUMBARIA**

**Art. 28.** Acquisition/alienation of property that contains an existing columbarium or dedicating existing property for the purpose of establishing or expanding a columbarium by a public juridic person subject to the bishop, such as a parish, is considered an act of extraordinary administration and is to follow the norms outlined in *Instruction for the Decree of Complementary Norms to Canon 1281*. Columbaria are to follow the financial procedures in the diocesan *Finance Manual*.<sup>42</sup> All columbaria are to have a Columbarium Advisory Board (CAB). Its composition and function are described in the *Operations* section below.

### ***Title I. Request***

**Art. 29.** When requesting the consent of the ordinary to acquire an existing columbarium, in addition to the other required documents defined in Title II – Real Estate Acquisition/Alienation, *Instruction for the Decree of Complementary Norms to Canon 1281*, the following documents must be submitted.

- a. To be submitted for acquisitions as part of the Exploratory Phase submission (Title II, Art. 2, §3.):
  - (1) Identification of the proposed Columbarium Advisory Board members and their qualifications.
  - (2) A columbarium financial plan (for details see Operations below), which is to be completed by the CAB, along with the *Expenditure Approval Financial Worksheet*.<sup>43</sup>
- b. To be submitted for acquisitions as part of the Real Estate Approval Request (Title II, Art. 2, §5.):
  - (1) Governing by-laws for the Columbarium Advisory Board (CAB) and a final list of CAB members and their qualifications.<sup>44</sup>
  - (2) A completed policy and procedure manual for the cemetery.<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> See Appendices G and H.

<sup>41</sup> See Appendix F.

<sup>42</sup> See Section 115 of the diocesan *Finance Manual*.

<sup>43</sup> See Appendix C for financial plan template and D for worksheet.

<sup>44</sup> See Appendix I for template.

<sup>45</sup> The policy provided in Appendix F must be used. There are places for the administrator to further specify. This is what is meant by a completed policy manual.

- c. To be submitted for acquisitions during the Due Diligence Period (Title II, Art. 2, §12.)
  - (1) A completed title search and title insurance policy.
  - (2) For land that contains an existing columbarium:
    - i. Identification of existing available niches.
    - ii. A detailed register of all human remains inurned on the site and all niches for which inurnment rights are owned.

**Art. 30.** When requesting the consent of the ordinary to expand an existing columbarium or to dedicate existing property to establish a new columbarium, in addition to the other required documents defined in Title III – Facility Projects, Vehicles, Cemeteries & Columbaria, *Instruction for the Decree of Complementary Norms to Canon 1281*, the following documents must be submitted.

- a. To be submitted in the letter of request to the Vicar General (Title III, Art. 3, §4.):
  - (1) Governing by-laws for the Columbarium Advisory Board (CAB) and a final list of its members and their qualifications.<sup>46</sup>
  - (2) A columbarium financial plan (for details see Operations below), which is to be completed by the CAB, along with the *Expenditure Approval Financial Worksheet*.<sup>47</sup>
  - (3) A map of the proposed columbarium and, if envisioned, the proposed columbaria.
  - (4) Include in the letter the maximum number of columbarium niches envisioned in your pastoral plan.
  - (5) A basic environmental review. [N.B. This review assesses ecological impact, water use, and preservation of natural features.]
  - (6) A preliminary map of proposed columbarium, as well as any other existing or proposed buildings, columbaria, or improvements on site.<sup>48</sup>
  - (7) A completed policy and procedure manual for the columbarium.<sup>49</sup>

**Art. 31.** In the above two cases, the procedure for an entity administrated by the public juridic person of the diocese is the same as noted above with necessary adaptations to the central administration approval process found in the *Finance Manual*.

## ***Title II. Operations***

### **Chapter I. General**

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<sup>46</sup> See Appendix I for template.

<sup>47</sup> See Appendix C for financial plan template and D for worksheet.

<sup>48</sup> See Appendix E

<sup>49</sup> The policy provided in Appendix F must be used. There are places for the administrator to further specify. This is what is meant by a completed policy manual.

**Art. 32.** Each parish must establish a Columbarium Advisory Board (CAB) which is advisory to the pastor on issues pertaining to policies, finances and proper care and maintenance of the parish columbaria. The Board is to consist of at least three members with the appropriate knowledge to advise the pastor/administrator in such matters and shall meet no less than twice annually. Minutes of all meetings are to be recorded and kept on file in the parish/diocesan office. The board is to prepare a columbarium budget sufficient to cover all one-time and reoccurring operation, care and maintenance expenses. See “Care and Maintenance” obligations below.

**Art. 33.** The administrator/pastor is to establish an endowment with the Diocesan Foundation for perpetual care to provide for the future care of the columbarium. This is to be funded by designating a percentage of all sales for this purpose. The percentage of sales designated for future care is to be no less than 15%. In addition, donors may contribute to the perpetual care fund, and the parish/diocese may designate accumulated surplus for this purpose. Funds must be withdrawn at least annually from the perpetual care endowment to fund the columbarium annual budget. Endowment contributions must continue unless funds available for distribution are sufficient to cover the annual columbarium budget. In such case, the amount that would have been deposited into the endowment is no longer restricted for columbarium use.

**Art. 34.** The administrator/pastor, after receiving the advice of the Columbarium Advisory Board, is to determine a target amount that is to represent the “corpus” of the perpetual care fund, which is not to be spent. Interest income earned on the corpus is available for care and maintenance expenses.

**Art. 35.** Accounting procedures for recording the sale of columbarium niches is displayed in Section 114 of the Finance Policy Manual.

## **Chapter II. Care and Maintenance**

**Art. 36.** Grounds maintenance requires . . .

- a. Regular mowing, trimming, and edging of grass to maintain a respectful and orderly appearance.
- b. Planting and care of trees, shrubs, and flowers that enhance the prayerful atmosphere.
- c. Seasonal cleanup of leaves, branches, and debris. Removal of dead or diseased plants.

**Art. 37.** Columbarium care requires . . .

- a. Ensuring markers are legible and in appropriate condition.
- b. Cleaning and minor repair of the columbarium as needed.
- c. Monitoring decorations to ensure they are appropriate, safe, and in keeping with guidelines.

**Art. 38.** Infrastructure and safety requires . . .

- a. Maintenance of roads, pathways, fences, and gates.

- b. Adequate lighting and signage for safety and accessibility.
- c. Regular inspection of grounds to address hazards such as uneven surfaces or fallen branches.

**Art. 39.** Spiritual and pastoral care requires . . .

- a. Providing a reverent environment for prayer and reflection.
- b. Ensuring chapels, crucifixes, statues, and shrines are maintained and in good condition.

### **Chapter III. Legal and Contractual Obligations**

**Art. 40.** The documents in the appendix must be used for a Right of Inurnment Agreement.<sup>50</sup> Additionally, the Policy for Cemeteries and Columbaria in the appendix must be used.<sup>51</sup> Portions of the policy document may be modified at the discretion of the pastor/administrator as indicated in the text. All other modifications require the consent of the ordinary.

As Bishop of the Catholic Diocese of Charlotte, I have decreed these to be normative for the governance and stewardship of cemeteries and columbaria, Prot. No. B 057/26.

Given in Charlotte, North Carolina, this 19<sup>th</sup> day of March, the Solemnity of St. Joseph, in the Year of our Lord 2026.

*\*\*\* End of document \*\*\**

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<sup>50</sup> See Appendix H

<sup>51</sup> See Appendix F.



HIS EXCELLENCY  
THE MOST REVEREND MICHAEL T. MARTIN, OFM CONV.  
By the Grace of God and the Authority of the Apostolic See  
BISHOP OF CHARLOTTE  
DECREE  
DIOCESE OF CHARLOTTE  
NORMS FOR THE GOVERNANCE AND STEWARDSHIP  
OF CEMETERIES AND COLUMBARIA

Prot. No. B 057/26

In conformity with United States Episcopal Conference Norms and Canon Law and having consulted experts and other dioceses in the U.S. Conference, I am grateful for the work that has been done by the Presbyteral Council and diocesan leadership in the drafting of the new diocesan norms governing cemeteries and columbaria.

I hereby decree the Diocesan Norms for the Governance and Stewardship of Cemeteries and Columbaria to be normative for the Diocese of Charlotte.

Given at the Diocese of Charlotte on this 19 day of March in the Year of Our Lord 2026, the Solemnity of Saint Joseph, Patron of the Dying.

The Most Reverend Michael T. Martin, OFM Conv.  
Bishop of Charlotte

The Reverend Monsignor Patrick J. Winslow  
Vicar General and Chancellor

