



## Roman Catholic Bishop of Portland Finance Office

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To: All Calvary Patrons

From: Richard Nee, Director of Calvary Cemetery  
David Twomey, Diocesan Finance Officer

Subject: Vigil candles, solar lights or any other candles or lights

Date: August 1, 2008

Ten years ago, the Diocese of Portland formed the Maine Catholic Cemetery Committee. The Committee is comprised of the Directors of Calvary Cemetery in South Portland, St. Peter's Cemetery in Lewiston, St. Francis Cemetery in Waterville, St. Joseph Cemetery in Biddeford and Mt. Pleasant Cemetery in Bangor as well as the Diocesan Director of Property Management, the Diocesan Director of Parish Financial Services and the Diocesan Finance Officer. This committee was assembled to establish best practices for the 67 Catholic cemeteries in Maine and to ensure their long-term viability. The committee meets regularly and meets annually with representatives of all Catholic cemeteries on a regional basis.

With input from large and small cemeteries, the Committee devised a more universal set of forms, safety regulations and rules and regulations. There were some differences between the cemeteries but many more similarities. One area that was discussed at length was vigil candles, solar lights or any other candles or lights. Calvary Cemetery was the only one of the five committee cemeteries that was allowing candles and lights. The other four cemeteries had banned candles and lights after years of vandalism, neglect and safety concerns. The lights at times have proven to be a beacon for attracting vandalism. They have been stolen, dismantled (one year someone took all the crosses off the tops of the vigil candles at Calvary) and broken. One lot's candle has been broken over another lot's granite monument, causing wax to be permanently absorbed by the granite (stained). Pieces of broken vigil lights become dangerous flying projectiles when struck by mowers and trimmers.

We know that the lights and candles are a symbol of devotion and respect for family members of deceased loved ones. This is not a decision that we make lightly. However, in light of the reasons stated above, the time has come for Calvary to come into compliance with standards developed for the entire Diocese. All vigil candles, solar lights or candles/ lights of any kind must be removed from Calvary Cemetery by September 1, 2008.

Thank you for your understanding and cooperation.