



SAINT JOHN GUALBERT CATHEDRAL PARISH
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Dear Lot Owners, Families & Friends of loved ones at
St. John Gualbert Cemetery and St. Joseph Cemetery,

Greetings from our Parish Cemetery Committee. When I wrote this letter last year, we were in the middle of a difficult situation, our grass-cutters had recently quit, and we were scrambling to get the conditions under control. I'm happy to share that this year we're in a very different position. For the first time in a number of years, we have secured a stable, reliable contractor for our grass-cutting. We thank Reliable Lawn Care for taking us on as a client, and thus far we have been thankful that they have lived up to their name. While prices do continue to climb, we are very thankful that we have been able to secure a stable vendor.

Aside from our normal upkeep, I'm happy to share a few other projects we are currently working on at both cemeteries and the Mausoleum. As I mentioned last year, we are working to install a french drain in the lower swampy section of St John's near Walters Ave. While we have secured bids, the vendor was not able to complete the work last summer, because of the wet ground. We are hoping for a dry spell during this summer where the work can be completed.

If you have been to St Joseph Cemetery in the last few months, we have a large stone wall stretching the length of the cemetery. At some point this past winter, the wall was hit by a vehicle, knocking quite a few pieces loose, doing nearly \$10k worth of damage. While our insurance did cover much of the cost, we were still responsible for a \$5k deductible. Thankfully that section has been repaired. While doing the repair, we noticed that some large sections of the wall are very worn and in very serious need of repointing. We are happy to share that Greater Johnstown School District Building Trades will be taking on the repointing of the interior side of the wall, while we will only be responsible for parts and materials. Due to the safety involved, we will eventually have to have the street side of the wall repointed by a regular masonry contractor, at likely some substantial cost.

At the St Joseph Mausoleum, we've been able to make a few updates. We have installed a limited network system in the Mausoleum and are working on smart thermostats so that we can be notified if there are issues with the HVAC in the building, and have begun to install security cameras in and around the building as a deterrent to vandalism. At our last cleanup, we also noticed that the rear roof of the Mausoleum was missing a number of shingles. At the advice of our Cemetery Committee, we have approved replacing the shingle roof with a metal roof to match the rest of the building.

The digitization project for St. John Gualbert Cemetery records is still a work in progress. As of this writing, we have managed to enter data for about 70% of St. John's 1600 cemetery lots. This slow process of digitization will continue until all data is entered. The process is a bit painstaking, as it involves going manually through each individual deed and record, many of which are incomplete; typing the information into a digital format and checking the information against the layout in the cemetery. Cemetery maps will also be re-done during this process, as all maps & data will be entered into our cemetery software (CIMS). While it is a slow process, we are very hopeful that when it is complete, searching for plots & loved ones buried at St John's will become much easier, as it currently is for St Joseph's Cemetery.

I would like to thank all the people who came for our spring cleanup. We've had a good turnout of both volunteers and cemetery committee members for our fall and our spring cleanups. If you are available, please consider helping us with our Fall/Spring cleanups in March/October. Dates are always posted on our website at www.stjohngualbert.org, in the church bulletins (St. John's & St. Benedict's) and signs placed in the cemetery usually about a month in advance. This year, we did have a few newer plot-holders who were unaware that we clean up the cemetery twice a year. In the interests of clarity for

everyone involved and so that we do not need to remove anyone's decorations unnecessarily, we are implementing some new rules this year. We ask that just as we remove all decorations from our Churches during Lent, we ask that all decorations be removed from the Cemetery during Lent. Decorating may resume Palm Sunday. Previously, we had asked people to remove the decorations for fall cleanup based on the signage, but as many people like to put up Easter Decorations, we felt this would be clearer for everyone.

Last year, with all of our grass-cutting issues, we held an annual public cemetery meeting. It was very well attended, and we would like to thank everyone who came. This year, we will give another in-person update and be open to any suggestions. **This year's public cemetery meeting will be Sunday August 16th at 1PM** Please consider joining us if you are able.

Finally, I want to thank all of you for your support, and especially for those who continue to contribute to our Holy Ground fund. Without your contributions, we would not be able to continue to maintain the Cemetery. Like most cemeteries, our income is made up of four main sources: our perpetual care endowment, our grave sales (50% of which is invested in the endowment), a small portion of our grave opening fees, and our Fundraising. Currently our Perpetual Care endowment only covers around \$13,000 per year, and with annual grass cutting costs of \$38,000 per year and rising, we are dependent on people like you to keep our cemetery running. This past year, we had some incredible support for our Holy Ground Campaign, and to make up the remaining shortfall, we began a Cemetery Lottery Ticket. This year's ticket brought in about \$6,000 in profit. We hope to begin a little earlier this year and hopefully bring in enough to fund our grass-cutting costs as well as our upcoming projects, including the Wall at St Joseph, the Roof of the Mausoleum, and work towards boosting our endowment funds until they can cover our regular costs.

Thanks to your past contributions, we have been able to keep all of our bills paid and have been able to work on many needed improvements. These are only possible thanks to your ongoing support. We greatly thank you for your past support and hope that you are able to assist us again in the future. As we do each year, I would invite you to **please consider a commitment of at least \$25 per grave per year toward your loved one's final resting place.** If you would like us to send you lottery tickets, please let us know.

As in past years, please use the attached sheet and make sure to update us on any changes in contact information, as well as recording your contributions and requesting any tickets. Above all, please keep us in your prayers as we work together to care for the final resting place of your loved ones.

God bless you now and always,



**Very Rev Matthew Baum
Rector
St. John Gualbert Cathedral**



**Kristen Caddy
Cemetery Manager
St. John Gualbert Cemetery,
St. Joseph Cemetery & Mausoleum**