



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,

Just this past week I was meeting with a widow who was preparing to bury her husband of 20 years. As we were making the preparations for the funeral and she was sharing stories about him, she shared that she knew where his parents were buried, and that he would be next to them. When her day came, she knew her body too, would be buried next to his. As a Christian people, we believe in the resurrection, and so the cemetery is a real symbol to us that those who have gone before are dead, but not forgotten.

While it is an honor to be able to assist in caring for the final resting place of so many, it is also a great responsibility, fraught with difficult challenges. As I looked back to last year's letter, we had struggled with our previous company and only just managed to get the grass cut in time for Memorial Day, and I wish that had been our story this year. As I'm sure many of you witnessed, we had some major difficulties this year, so much so that we felt we should postpone our annual letter until we had a handle on the situation. To make a long story short, our previous grass cutter sold his business, and the new owners had promised to continue at the previous prices. However, when the time came to cut, they would promise to show up and then fail to show. Finally, when Mother's Day arrived, we terminated their contract and looked for a new company. As most companies book in the fall, we only managed to secure a new company by Memorial Day. Sadly, by that time, the grass had grown well past a manageable length, to a point where both cemeteries had to be string-trimmed manually.

However, thanks to the heroic work of our new grass cutting vendor, C&N Landscaping, I am happy to report that finally, the entire cemetery has been cut and returned to a normal, functional condition. I cannot thank them enough for their hard work, and I sincerely hope we never face a situation like that again in our cemetery. In the aftermath, St John Gualbert Parish has purchased 4 new commercial string trimmers so that should we ever find ourselves in a situation like this again, we will at least have some equipment available to solicit the help of volunteers. If you would like to read the longer version of all that happened, it is available at www.stjohngualbert.org under Cemeteries.

Aside from grass-cutting, we have a few other projects going on at the Cemetery. Last year, we also said we were working on installing a new drain on the lower section of St. John Gualbert Cemetery along the Walters Ave side. There is a low spot that becomes very swampy every time it rains. I'm happy to report that we have secured a bid, and the vendor hopes to install the drain at some point this summer.

At the St Joseph Mausoleum, we've been able to make a few updates. The way our mausoleum is constructed, there are small rosette screws that hold each of the marble crypt doors in place. Over time, those screws have worn and needed to be replaced. We recently replaced most of the screws, and it has improved things quite a bit. In positive news, we were recently contacted by a local security vendor, who is willing to make a donation of the electronic parts to enable an electronic entry system for the mausoleum. While we are in the early stages, if things go well, we would be able to have the mausoleum open at certain times of day with keyless access to the mausoleum via a keypad.

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 50% 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 had 8-10 people show up both for our fall and our spring cleanup. 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.stjohnsgualbert.org, and signs placed in the cemetery usually about a month in advance. Similarly, I would like to thank the Ancient Order of Hibernians, as they have offered to assist in maintaining and repairing some of the large monuments in the priest circle of St John.

In light of the recent issues with grass-cutting, as well as some of the new projects we are hoping to complete, we often run into people who haven't gotten our annual newsletter, or would like to hear in person about what has been going on. With that in mind, our Cemetery committee has decided to begin to have an annual public meeting to update everyone on the status of the cemetery, share some of the finances, and have an opportunity for new ideas to be shared. Our first public meeting will be held **Sunday August 24th at 7PM** in the St John Gualbert Activities Center Hall at 110 Adams Street. Please join us if you can.

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 Holy Ground contributions from our incredibly supportive families like you. Currently our Perpetual Care endowment only covers around \$13,000 per year, and with annual grass cutting costs of \$30,000 per year and rising, we are dependent on people like you to keep our cemetery running.

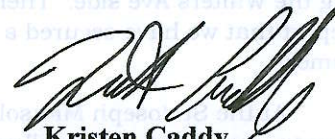
Thanks to your past contributions, we have been able to keep all of our bills paid, and have been able to work to make some improvements. These are only possible thanks to your ongoing support. We greatly thank you for your past support and hope that you are able to assist us again in the future. As 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.**

As in past years, please use the attached sheet and make sure to update us on any changes in contact information. 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