

Catholic Funeral & Cemetery Community Digest

A word from our CEO, Jerry Del Core

Christmas is my favorite time of the year. You can usually feel the joy and love grow in the air as we get closer and closer to Christmas Eve and Christmas Day. The children, the colors, the lights, the sounds are all very exciting. Working on the funeral and cemetery side of our ministry, Christmas is often the most difficult time for a family that has lost a loved one. From personal experience, I know how hard the loss of my father was for me, my mother, and the rest of our family as we gathered for Christmas dinner that first year.



As many of you know, this year will be our 19th year celebrating our Remembrance Tree & Candlelight Vigil. It is our team's favorite event of the year. Unfortunately, this event has been reshaped by COVID-19. On **Wednesday, December 9th**, **Father Dean Marshall** will lead our celebration from St. Mary Cemetery & Funeral Center chapel as we will gather **via livestream starting at 6pm**. Father Dean Marshall is the Parochial Vicar, at St. Charles Borromeo Parish. **You can access the livestream from YouTube [here](#) on the CFCS Sacramento YouTube channel.** While attendance is not open to the public, we hope you will join us for the broadcast event to celebrate the lives of our loved ones who have gone before us in the light of the Lord.

This year our program will function as follows. Ornaments will be blessed prior to Friday, November 27th. **Starting on, Friday, November 27th**, you may **stop by our offices** at either St. Mary Cemetery & Funeral Center, Calvary Cemetery & Funeral Center or All Souls Cemetery & Funeral Center **to pick up your ornament**. You are encouraged to decorate your ornament in the manner you believe best fits your loved one. Then place your ornament on your tree in remembrance. Feel free to share your decorated ornament by taking a photo and sharing on our Facebook page.

We hope that you will be able to join us for our 19th Annual Remembrance Tree & Candlelight Vigil celebration on Wednesday, December 9th at 6pm. We wish you and your family a blessed and joyous Christmas Season, and a Happy New Year. Stay healthy. Stay safe. God Bless.

A Gift of a Peace of Mind

Celia and Miguel Castaneda share their story about why they chose to leave a unique gift for their children by giving them a gift of



advance funeral and cemetery planning.

"Why are we going to the cemetery again mommy," ask little Miguel. Celia, mother of three, Emiliano, Eliseo and Miguel, replies "To see Diane, the nice lady who is helping us plan our funeral and cemetery arrangements." This is not a usual conversation, but to the Castaneda family they

wanted to ensure that all their plans were taken care of and that their boys would not have to worry should something happen to either mom, dad or one of them.

Miguel recalls the first time, they sat in front of Diane, "I thought Celia and I were on the same page, so when Diane asked, cremation or full body for our funeral choices, I said cremation, Celia looked at me in shock and replied, full body." Celia remembers thinking, "How could we not be on the same page?" Being high school sweethearts we thought we knew everything about each other. They left their first meeting with Diane and promised that they would be back after discussing the information they received and realizing that they had to talk in more detail with each other. Celia remembers thinking, "Wow, I sure am glad that we are able to discuss this, imagine if something would have happen and we didn't know each other's wishes."

The discussion was put on the back burner for a while as they were busy working their careers, finishing graduate school, and raising three boys. When Miguel got hurt at work one day and Celia was called to the hospital to meet her husband, she realized that this conversation needed to be brought up again. "Life is too short, to not start this conversation," Celia shared. Both come from large Hispanic families; they are each one of ten children. "That's too many people who would get a voice in our planning," says Miguel. "We knew what we wanted and decided it was time to call Diane, so that our wishes would be planned."

Celia and Miguel shared that gift giving in their family looks very different from most families. "One year for my birthday, Celia, got me life insurance," Miguel shared. He was ready to buy her a new car for her birthday this year, but she asked for "this" instead. So they got the boys ready and came to St. Mary Cemetery & Funeral Center to plan their funeral and cemetery in advance.

As Diane shared their choices, Miguel looked at Celia and said, "I think we should do this for the boys too." Celia said "Yes, that is a great idea, we want them to be taken care of. They will most likely live a very long life, and can always add more later, but we can know we helped them with this very important plan." Both parents share that they don't buy the boys phones or the newest video games, they like to invest in their well-being and this seemed like the perfect gift.

The Castaneda family are devout Catholic's and their faith guides many of

their decisions. In thinking about end-of-life planning, it was important to be buried in consecrated grounds, to await resurrection day. I asked, "How did you tell the boys about this gift?" Celia and Miguel looked at each other and then back at me, "With Coco!" The Disney movie has been great in helping them to educate their boys on their heritage, "We celebrate, el Día de los Muertos, and we have an Altar with pictures of our loved ones. It's great when the boys ask, who is that, and we get to tell them" says Celia. I asked the boys how they felt; Emiliano and Eliseo, said they were fine with it, and the little one, Miguel said, "It's sometimes scary. I was scared thinking of past family, coming to eat food we left out for them."

As we wrapped up the interview, I asked one final question to Miguel and Celia. "What advice do you have for families?" "Don't wait, start the conversation, tomorrow is not promised and you want to be really clear and define your wishes when you are of sound mind," said Celia. Miguel added, "And don't be afraid to ask your spouse what they want, it might be different from what you were thinking." Both said, "Do it today, the price goes up the longer you wait."

Miguel Castaneda is a supervisor for district grounds at Sac City Unified School District, and Celia Del Toro is a Social Worker with San Juan School District. Their three sons all attend St. Patrick Academy; Emiliano is the oldest brother and in 7th grade, Eliseo is in 3rd grade and little Miguel is in Kindergarten.

Diane Gordon is a Family Service Advisor at St. Mary Cemetery & Funeral Center, you can reach out to Diane via email [here](#).



Cemetery Christmas Decoration Guidelines Dec. 12th to Jan. 10th

Decorating the grave of a loved one during the Christmas Season is a healing ritual that can help families get through what might otherwise be a very hard time in the grieving process. **Decorations may be placed on your loved one's grave starting on Saturday, December 12th and may remain displayed until Sunday, January 10th.**

Christmas decorations are permitted on your memorial marker and within the flower vase located on your loved one's grave. Christmas wreaths and artificial flowers are also



permitted during this period. All decorations, including Christmas trees, are not to exceed 18 inches in height from ground level.

We strongly encourage you not to leave any items of value on your loved one's memorial marker.

Decorations placed prior to December 12th, over 18 inches high, and decorations not placed on the memorial marker or in the vase are not permitted and are subject to removal and disposal by Cemetery staff without notice.

Cemetery staff will begin removing and disposing of all decorations on Monday, January 11th. If you wish to save your decorations, please remove them by Sunday, January 10th. The Cemetery and its employees are not responsible for any lost, stolen or damaged decorations.

If you have any questions please email us at atinfo@cfcssacramento.org and include "Christmas Decorations" in the subject line.

God Bless and Merry Christmas

Events



**19th Annual Remembrance Tree
& Candlelight Vigil
Wednesday, December 9th
at 6 pm via [YouTube](#)**

May all who delight in this tree come to the knowledge and joy of salvation.

Visit our website for up to date COVID-19 information



**CATHOLIC FUNERAL
& CEMETERY SERVICES**
OF THE DIOCESE OF SACRAMENTO

Mission Statement

Catholic Funeral & Cemetery Services is a full service provider of End-Of-Life care for the Catholic Community in the Diocese of Sacramento. We accompany families as they affectionately honor their loved ones in harmony with the Catholic Rites of Christian Burial. We cooperate with Parishes from Vigil to Mass and the Committal, bringing to all the consolation and mercy of Jesus.



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