

## Catholic Funeral Rites A family's expression of faith

In a typical year, John Riehle assists many of the 50 or 60 families with planning funerals at the Church of St. Matthew in St. Paul, where he is the parish pastoral administrator.

But in 2010, he found himself experiencing the process from the other side of the table. His father, Frederick Riehle, died in April, and just three months later, his beloved wife of 37 years, Mary, succumbed to cancer.

Both funerals were at St. Matthew's, and while both were grounded in the Catholic Funeral Rites, each incorporated personal elements important to Riehle and his family.

"With my father, I was one of seven siblings involved in planning the service and we had to come to decisions together as a group. Each of us brought our own ideas, and it was a process of figuring out what was most important to each of us," he said. "There were certain things I wanted to hold strongly to — specifically the content of the liturgy. On the other hand, the Trappist casket that others had selected was more ornate than I would have chosen, but that was not as important to me as it was to my siblings."

The family decided against a eulogy but instead had an "open mike" over coffee and bars following the funeral Mass. "It was very informal, but it

worked well. It let people who would never have felt comfortable speaking in the front of a church get up and share stories and thoughts about my father," he said.

A graveside committal service at Resurrection Cemetery in Mendota Heights followed his father's funeral.

When Mary Riehle passed away in July, John took the lead in the planning with his three adult children, in consultation with Fr. Stephen Adrian, pastor at St. Matthew's. The rites incorporated several especially meaningful elements for the family.

In an uncommon addition to the visitation, the family decided to host an overnight vigil at the church through the night before the morning visitation and the liturgy. "That gave our family and friends special time for prayer and reflection," he said.

As for the funeral Mass itself, the couple's eldest daughter came up with a unique way of remembering her mother as part of the liturgy. "She said to me, 'You know, Dad, Mom was involved in lots of different levels of her life. Why don't we get one person from each of those levels to offer one of the general intercessions?'" Riehle said.

"We ended up with about ten people, each of whom had a particular relationship with Mary. Each started with a simple declarative sentence — 'Mary was a teacher,' 'Mary was a tutor,' 'Mary was a friend,' 'Mary was a

*Continued on page 2*

## Reflecting on Catholic funerals in today's world

By Father Steve Adrian, Pastor  
Church of St. Matthew, St. Paul

Increasingly, the people who are planning funerals at our church are not regular churchgoers. Therefore, funerals become



Father Steve Adrian

wonderful opportunities for evangelization. To that end, we are called to be welcoming, hospitable and inclusive.

When bereaved families turn to us to plan a funeral, they may come with specific requests or ideas that are beyond the

parameters of the Order of Christian Funerals, the rites of a Catholic funeral. For example, they may want a favorite secular song to be included in the funeral liturgy or they want to have a eulogy at an inappropriate time.

Many families are not familiar with the rites, which is not their fault, and they are very receptive to being guided during this difficult time. If we listen and use our creativity, we can find ways to respect their ideas, while preserving the integrity of the rites.

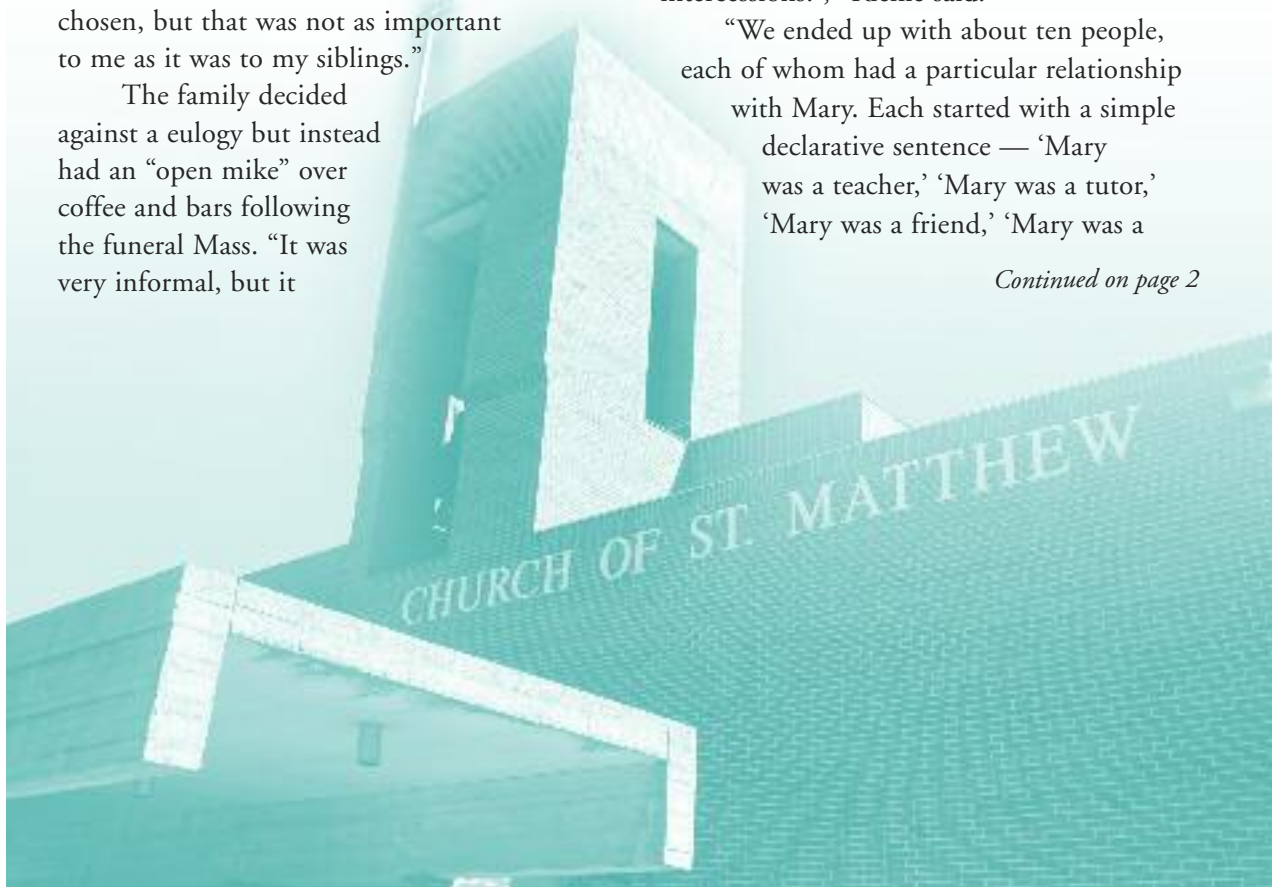
Other than a funeral Mass, the rites are not specifically sacramental and that does provide opportunities to be creative. If we listen to what the family is really requesting, we often can find ways to respond appropriately. For example, that favorite secular song can be played before the Call to Worship when the focus then shifts to God's promise of life after death. To maintain this focus, the eulogies or personal remembrances can be offered during the social time after the service or as part of the storytelling at the Vigil.

People want to do something special for their loved ones and once they hear all that the rites have to offer, they are usually pleased with the fact that they have been listened to and that the rites do celebrate not only their loved one but also the richness of our faith.

*Editor's note: see the Fall/Winter, 2009, edition of Heritage, for further information on how parishes work with families at the time of death. Go to [www.catholic-cemeteries.org](http://www.catholic-cemeteries.org).*



John Riehle



## Catholic Funeral Rites,

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grandmother,' and so on — then that person prayed for not only Mary but all people in that category. That was much better than doing a eulogy.”

Riehle said the result was very moving and said much about who Mary was and how she lived her life.

The family chose to have one of the Scripture readings — Corinthians 15:52-53 — done musically. The selection, “The trumpet shall sound...,” is part of Handel’s *Messiah* and was proclaimed by a cantor with trumpet and keyboard.

After the graveside service at the parish cemetery of Guardian Angels in Oakdale (Riehle worked there from 1979–1996), the parishioners invited mourners back to the church for ice tea and cookies. “Instead of everyone leaving right after the burial, it gave us one more opportunity to be together in our grief and to remember Mary.”

Riehle said while he has helped countless families plan funerals over the years, planning those for his father and his wife reinforced the vital importance of this ministry.

“You don’t get a second chance with funerals,” he said. “So we need to be sure to listen carefully and help families find their way.”

## ARCHBISHOP HARRY J. FLYNN COMPASSIONATE ASSISTANCE FUND

### A final resting place brings peace

Calvin Rogers Jr.’s death at age 25 in September caught his sister Darlene Brown totally unprepared. The young man, who had special needs and lived in a group home, had undergone heart surgery months earlier but his health quickly deteriorated.

“Calvin was so young and his death so unexpected,” said Brown, who lives in north Minneapolis. “We were just shocked and couldn’t believe it.”

With the assistance of the Archbishop Harry J. Flynn Compassionate Assistance Fund of The Catholic Cemeteries, Rogers was laid to rest in a grave at Gethsemane Cemetery in New Hope.

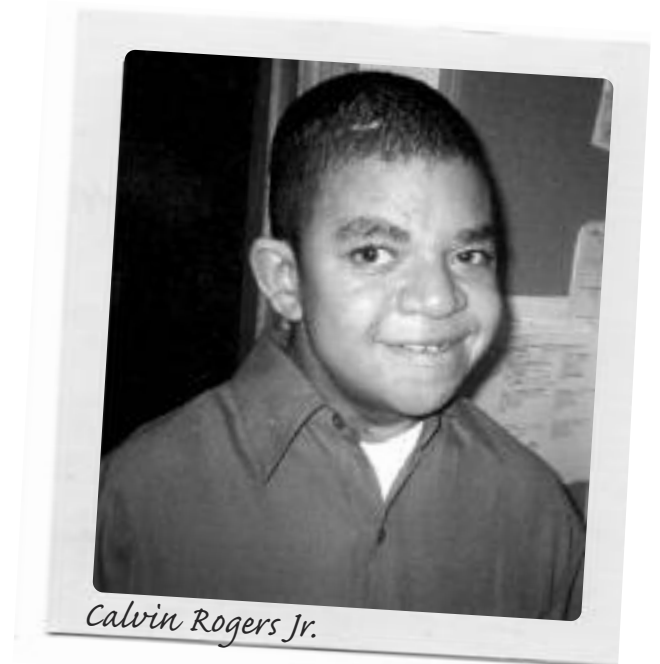
“It was such a relief when we learned Gethsemane found him a nice place to be buried,” she said. “We were finally at peace and could begin to accept what had happened because he had a final resting place.”

In cases such as this, the county of residence makes partial payment for the costs associated with burial. Some families are able to pay the difference; many are not. The mission of The Catholic Cemeteries is to bury anyone regardless of their ability to pay. Since Brown and her family simply did not have funds, that’s where the Archbishop Harry J. Flynn Compassionate Assistance Fund comes in.

“This vital ministry to those bereaved families unable to pay for all or some of the costs of burial for a deceased loved one is possible through the generosity of donors to the Fund,” said John Cherek, director of The Catholic Cemeteries.

Darlene Brown said she is very thankful for the assistance her family received.

“A lot of families just don’t have the money set aside for something like this, when someone so young dies,” she said. “We are so appreciative that there are people out there who do care and who give to this program, even though they don’t know anything about the circumstances.”



## JOHN IRELAND MEMORIAL FUND

### A tree grows in their memory

John McDonald died suddenly from a heart attack in February — just a few months after his good friend Ted Sullivan passed away after suffering a heart attack.

Besides being long-time friends, both were fathers, husbands, and lawyers in their mid-50s. Their unexpected deaths, so close together, shocked the West St. Paul and Mendota Heights communities where they lived.

The McDonald children had attended St. Joseph’s School, and after John’s death, a group of parents asked his widow, Ann McDonald, what they could do. She suggested funding a tree to grow in memory not just of John but of both men, who are buried next to each other at Resurrection Cemetery in Mendota Heights.

The St. Joseph group and a number of other family friends responded with donations to the John Ireland Memorial Fund of The Catholic Cemeteries, which provides for the planting of new trees, landscaping and shrubbery throughout the cemeteries.

This fall, Resurrection staff planted the tree by the graves of the two friends.

*“We have been showered by so much love and support since John’s death. This is yet another expression of how much we are cared for.”*

ANN McDONALD

#### A SPECIAL WAY OF REMEMBERING

Making a donation to the John Ireland Memorial Fund or the Archbishop Harry J. Flynn Compassionate Assistance Fund can be a special way of remembering or honoring a loved one. These important funds support the mission of The Catholic Cemeteries to provide beautiful places of prayer and remembrance as well as our ministry to those who mourn. All gifts are tax deductible. Please use the enclosed envelope for your gift. Thank you!

# Updates...

## Celebrating Memorial Day 2010

As has become an annual custom for so many families, hundreds of visitors were present over the Memorial Day weekend at The Catholic Cemeteries to remember their loved ones and decorate their graves. Archbishop Flynn presided at the Memorial Day mass at Resurrection Cemetery and Bishop Piche presided at Gethsemane Cemetery. Masses were also held at Calvary, St. Mary's and St. Anthony's cemeteries.



At Resurrection Cemetery, Archbishop Flynn greeted attendees after the Memorial Day Mass.



The procession at Resurrection Cemetery on Memorial Day 2010.

## Special Masses to be held on December 4

Masses of remembrance will be celebrated at Gethsemane Cemetery and Resurrection Cemetery in the chapel mausoleums on Saturday, December 4, 2010. Invitations are being sent out to the newly bereaved. For more information, contact the respective cemetery office at Gethsemane or Resurrection, or visit our web site's upcoming events page.



## New columbarium at Gethsemane Cemetery

Since Archbishop Flynn dedicated the Garden of Gethsemane cremation garden at Gethsemane Cemetery on Memorial Day, 2007, the garden has been enhanced with trellises and extensive landscaping. In the newly landscaped area, the first of several columbarium units was set in place during the spring of 2010. A columbarium is a free-standing bank of niches designed for the burial of cremated remains. The columbarium pictured here, which is located near the sidewalk entrance to the garden, contains thirty niche spaces, providing for single and companion inurnments. Over half of the columbarium spaces have already been purchased, and plans are underway to add another unit to the garden. For more information about the new columbarium in the Garden of Gethsemane, contact Jules Bobst, family service counselor, at Gethsemane Cemetery.

## Calvary Cemetery gardens honored

For the second time in three years, Calvary Cemetery has been honored with a Blooming Saint Paul Award for a business or institution. The gardens in front of the cemetery office and on the boulevard west of the office were selected for their plant variety, design, visual impact and maintenance. Aimed at recognizing beautification efforts in the public realm, the Blooming Saint Paul Awards are an initiative of the Saint Paul Department of Parks and Recreation, The Saint Paul Garden Club, the Ramsey County Master Gardeners and Public Art Saint Paul, and are sponsored by the *Saint Paul Pioneer Press*.

## Resetting of markers underway

The Catholic Cemeteries is in the process of restoring overgrown and sunken markers in the older sections of the cemeteries. Already, more than 1,000 markers in Calvary Cemetery have been restored, according to Jon Louris, operations manager for The Catholic Cemeteries.

Overgrown grave markers are common in the older sections of cemeteries for several reasons. Some were set before the cemetery began requiring burial vaults, which protect the land around a grave from sinking in. In addition, since flat markers must be mowed over as the grass is cut, markers sometimes sink in due to repeated mowings over many years. And in years of lush grass growth and heavy precipitation, markers can become overgrown.

"Restoring older markers is something we would like to do on a regular basis, but do not always have the financial and staff resources to do so," said Louris. "We are currently working on a plan to systematically begin restoring markers in Calvary Cemetery, which may or may not require enlisting the help of volunteers."

Louris said the process of restoring markers at Calvary will continue next spring after the ground thaws. If you have questions about a marker, please call your cemetery office.



We invite you to visit  
The Catholic Cemeteries' new web site  
[www.catholic-cemeteries.org](http://www.catholic-cemeteries.org)  
It includes new information on  
dealing with grief, genealogy  
and other topics.

## Remembering a beloved child: A special opportunity

The Children's Memorial and Prayer Garden at Gethsemane Cemetery offers a special way for bereaved families to memorialize a beloved child. Paving bricks that border the walkway leading to the Memorial are available for inscription of the child's name and years of birth and death. A contribution of \$250 covers the cost of the memorial brick and inscription and supports the endowment for the care and maintenance of the Memorial, which was dedicated in 2008. For more information, please call 651-228-9991.



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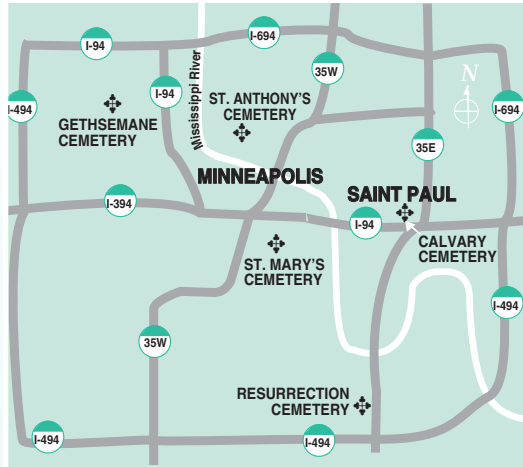
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PEACEABLE KINGDOM GARDEN

Donors invited to support garden's next phase

The first phase of the Peaceable Kingdom Garden outside of the south entrance to the Resurrection Chapel Mausoleum has been completed due to the generosity of Mr. Antonio Pilla, whose late wife Bonnie was the inspiration for this beautiful memorial garden. Through fundraising efforts directed by Mr. Pilla, the second phase of construction has begun, but additional gifts are needed to fully realize the concept. This phase includes the addition of granite walls to form a backdrop to the statue as well as a granite perimeter to a raised flower bed that will surround the statue. Granite benches are planned for seating and paving bricks will form the patio area. A bronze plaque (see below) explaining the concept of the garden and one recognizing donors to the garden have been mounted outside the garden entrance. Names of donors who have made gifts of \$5,000 or more will be added to the plaque.

The scale and timing for completion of this phase will be dependent on donations received. Mr. Pilla invites others to share in this project by making a gift. To make a gift, use the enclosed envelope. For more information, call the The Catholic Cemeteries office at 651-228-9991.



Our Appreciation

Our thanks go to those listed below for gifts given between October 1, 2009, and September 30, 2010.

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CEMETERY HOURS

Every day of the year, cemetery grounds are open from 8 a.m. to dusk (generally 5 p.m. in the winter). All cemetery offices are normally open Monday through Friday, 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. and on Saturday, 8 a.m. to noon at Resurrection and Gethsemane.



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