

Holy Cross Cemetery & Mausoleum

Runner-Up in 2016 American Cemetery Excellence (ACE) Award

— by Joseph J. Verzi, K.H.S., CCCE



Holy Cross Cemetery and Mausoleum, in North Arlington, NJ, a property of Catholic Cemeteries of the Archdiocese of Newark, was recognized recently as one of three runners-up in the 2016 ACE (American Cemetery Excellence) Award contest from *American Cemetery & Cremation* magazine. This is the second Catholic Cemeteries property recognized as a contest runner-up by ACE. Maryrest Cemetery and Mausoleum in Mahwah, NJ, earned this distinction in 2013.

The 2016 ACE Award winner, according to the magazine's December issue, is Rose Hills Memorial Park & Mortuary in Whittier, CA, one of the country's largest cemeteries. The two other runners up include: Bunrong Memorial Park in Victoria, Australia, and Gate of Heaven Cemetery in Cincinnati, OH. According to the publication, which recognizes top-performing cemeteries among numerous applicants from the U.S. and around the world, "this year's three runners-up stood out not only for their performance, professionalism and innovation, but also for their ability to look to the past to envision the future." The 102-year-old Holy Cross Cemetery and Mausoleum was described as "built to stand the test of time."

One only needs to observe the age of some of the artwork, headstones and private family mausoleums at Holy Cross Cemetery and Mausoleum to see that timeless traditions are deeply intertwined in the cemetery's heritage dating back to its start in 1915. However, Holy Cross Cemetery and Mausoleum also has forged full-speed ahead with cutting-edge technology and architecture, innovative product choices, world-class customer service and unsurpassed beauty and grandeur. A unique holy place that allows families to memorialize and remember their deceased loved ones in a beautiful, inviting and faith-filled atmosphere, Holy Cross Cemetery and Mausoleum is recognized as one of the most magnificent cemeteries in the country; it is a holy place with a museum-like characteristic.

Evangelization Through Art

Celebrating the eternal divine bond initiated at baptism and affirmed in the Catholic belief in the Communion of Saints is the theme of the mausoleum's 90 major art works. Among them are six floor-to-ceiling mosaics that portray the Genesis story of creation, which employ thousands of colored stones and tiles hand-cut from glass, marble and ceramic depicting the planets, sea creatures,

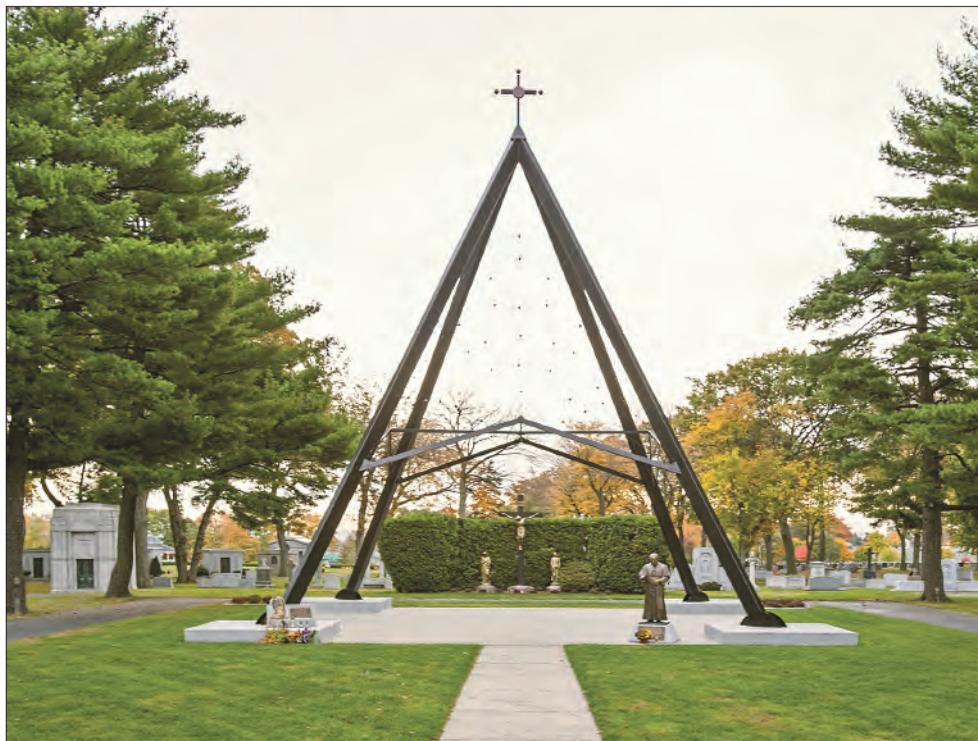
lush vegetation, dinosaurs, and Adam and Eve.

Specially commissioned life-size bronzes of St. Francis of Assisi with a wolf and St. Kateri Tekakwitha, both framed with an 18-foot-high flight of bronze doves and stone wall, stand vigil in outside gardens. Lindenwood carved statues of St. Elizabeth Ann



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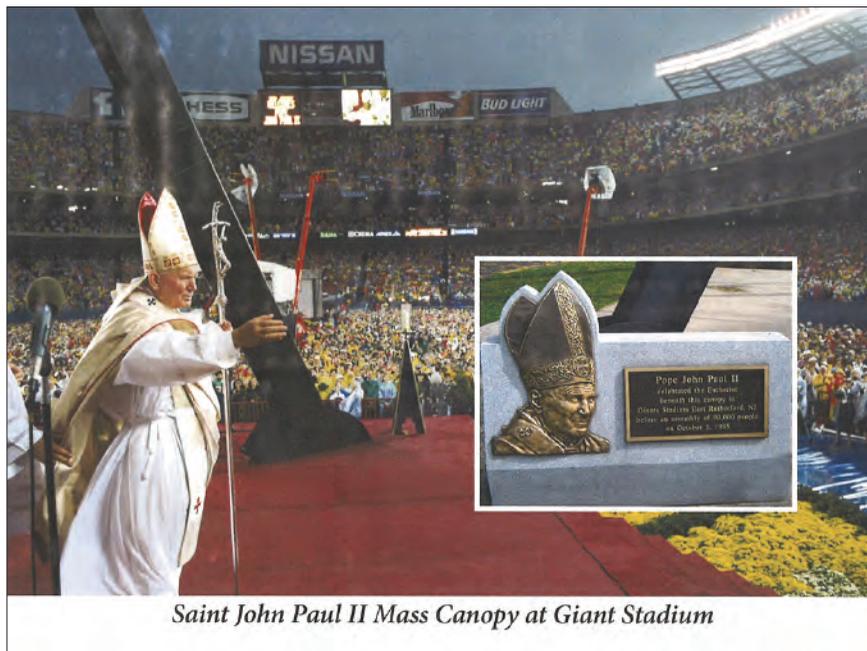
e (ACE) Contest



Seton, Teresa of Calcutta, Frances Xavier Cabrini and Marianne (of Molak'i) Cope repose in bright alcoves at the ends of four corridors.

A completed Rondanini Pietà statue (*bottom of page 18*) imagines what Michelangelo would have completed had he not died before finishing the magnificent work depicting the body of Jesus in the arms of his Mother, Mary, after the Crucifixion. The 15-foot Carrara-marble statue with wooden cross imported from Italy sits atop a hill overlooking all the faithful departed. A similar marble statue of St. Helena, the Emperor Constantine's mother, who found the True Cross during a pilgrimage to Jerusalem in the fourth century, complements this masterpiece. This statue is displayed on the opposite side of the mausoleum's exterior.

Holy Cross Cemetery and Mausoleum also features 100-year-old stained glass art, including an 85-year-old, 10-foot Rose Window depicting Jesus with children, and various Altars and statues reclaimed from now closed churches in Newark. These beloved and treasured art works flank the main chapel where a colossal cross of Lindenwood hangs above the marble Altar with an intricate, marble-



Saint John Paul II Mass Canopy at Giant Stadium

carved base depicting Adam and Eve's fall from grace. The inspiring art reminds visitors of the Catholic faith and tells the stories of the Bible from creation to the resurrection.

Meaningful Structures Empower the Faithful

Bolstering the beauty of the cemetery grounds are several features that are significant for individual and group prayers, personal meditation, and reflection. In a special section of the cemetery are 10 graves connected to

the tragedy of September 11, 2011. The memorial reflects the architecture of the World Trade Center and features two 20-foot stainless steel towers built to scale and bound by a stained glass cross. Attached to the towers are four titanium plates etched with photomontages of the events from that tragic day, including the recovery and aftermath. The memorial's base is composed of original brick pavers from Newark's Cathedral Basilica of the Sacred

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Original Twin Towers steel beams on display at Holy Cross Cemetery and Mausoleum's 9/11 Memorial unveiled during its dedication ceremony; with Archbishop Emeritus John J. Myers (center), Andrew P. Schafer, Exec. Director of Catholic Cemeteries (left), and Rev. Msgr. Michael A. Andreano, V.G., Vicar General and Chancellor (right).

Heart on which Saint John Paul II and Mother Teresa walked.

Additionally, on display are twisted beams from the original Twin Towers (*above*) donated by the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey. Near the cemetery's main entrance is a 60-foot steel pyramidal structure with a canopy under which Saint John Paul II celebrated the Eucharist at Giants Stadium on Oct. 5, 1995 (*see page 19*). Archdiocesan clergy who facilitated the papal visit are especially fond of this monument. Behind the canopy is the priests' burial section which adds to its significance. This same structure serves as the backdrop for our annual Memorial Day Mass honoring our heroes.

Ministry Through Community Services

A primary goal and an integral aspect of the cemetery's ministry is to provide for the spiritual needs of its community and families. Under the direction of Andrew Schafer, K.H.S., CCCE, Executive Director of Catholic Cemeteries, outreach programs involving the community's participation have flourished over the years.

As part of the fulfillment of this commitment, Masses of Remembrance are celebrated at Holy Cross Cemetery on the first Wednesday of each month. These Masses include a beautiful candle-lighting ceremony for first-time families who choose to remember departed loved ones with a memorial candle blessed by

Archdiocesan clergy and lit by family members when their loved one's name is announced.

Additionally, Holy Cross Cemetery and Mausoleum joins more than 1,000 Catholic cemeteries nationwide to recognize Memorial Day in honor of those who have died while serving in the armed forces, as well as those actively serving today and our military veterans. Holy Cross invites active military personnel and veterans to participate in this Mass and to serve as flag or candle bearers, Lectors, or participants in the Presentation of Gifts, and to recite intercessions.

Memorial Day Mass at Holy Cross Cemetery is significant and extraordinary. Countless members of local police and fire departments, EMS, Knights of Columbus, local dignitaries and government officials, war veterans, etc., attend, participate, donate their time, and commit to assisting with the safe, successful and prayerful commencement of Mass for the hundreds of local parishioners who attend each year. It is a meaningful occasion for the Church, the cemetery and the community.

At Holy Cross Cemetery, visitors and families of departed loved ones also are offered an opportunity to express themselves on life-sized greeting cards on special days including Easter, Christmas, All Saints/Souls Days, Mother's and Father's Day, and Memorial Day. These 12x5 foot "greeting cards" are installed up to two weeks prior to a special day, and eventually they are filled with numerous handwritten personal messages conveying love, sadness, hope and faith from visitors of every age. They provide a unique and inspirational



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way for the community to remember and memorialize their loved ones.

The end-of-year holiday time is particularly busy for Holy Cross Cemetery staff in reaching out to the community.

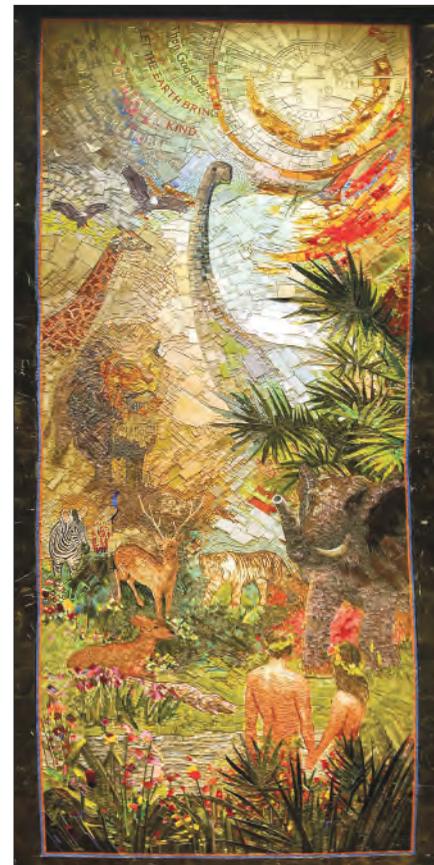
A *Concert of Remembrance* in the grand Cathedral Basilica in Newark commemorates All Saints and All Souls days, and the bereaved are invited to inscribe the names of departed loved ones in a special book of remembrance. Additionally, an annual *Candlelight Carol Sing* is hosted in mid-December at the Cathedral where the community is invited to attend an impressive standing-room-only event (with 2,000+ churchgoers). This has become one of Holy Cross Cemetery's best community outreach programs.

During the Christmas season, the team at Holy Cross Cemetery (and all other Catholic Cemeteries properties) also collects food and monetary donations for distribution to those

less fortunate in the Archdiocese. Additionally, as a way to demonstrate a sincere commitment to the mission of "Trust, Respect & Dignity" and to help ensure that Holy Cross Cemetery/Catholic Cemeteries can be of service to needy and marginalized families, free grave vouchers are offered to Catholic families that may be in extreme financial crisis at a time of loss.

Educating Students

During the summer, about 50 high school students in the Archdiocese of Newark visit the cemetery to learn about Catholic burial and to build and install birdhouses, which complement the cemetery's park-like setting. Their two-day visit is part of a community service program with the Office of Youth and Young Adult Ministry of the Archdiocese of Newark. This program has proven to be a positive and productive way of introducing teens to a cemetery.



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This centrally located Gazebo provides a special location for community events and activities sponsored by the cemetery.

It helps educate students about the Order of Christian Funerals and Catholic burial practices, and teaches that a cemetery can be a positive and uplifting place to visit, reflect, pray, and remember departed loved ones.

The building of birdhouses in this program is symbolic, as birds bring life and nature to the cemetery and help visitors during the healing process when mourning.

During construction, each teen is offered an opportunity to personalize their birdhouse with an imprinted name plaque in memory of a departed loved one. Names of departed loved ones are collected from students early in the day and miniature name plaques are provided before day's end. This makes the project deeply personal and meaningful for the teens.

The birdhouse program was recognized by the International Cemetery, Cremation and Funeral Association (ICCF) and awarded First Place in the 2015 KIP (Keeping It Personal) Events category.

A Community Partner

As a respectful and long-serving community partner in the town's revitalization efforts, Holy Cross Cemetery has renewed, rebuilt and improved its property. Before the expansion of Holy Cross Mausoleum in 2009, the local Zoning Board and borough requested Catholic Cemeteries to repair adjacent sidewalks and create two park areas.

Upon the expansion project's completion, Holy Cross replaced 12 municipal trees with 27 new trees, added a berm on one side of the cemetery, reconstructed sidewalks along the main road near the cemetery, installed a modern bus shelter, and developed two "pocket parks" that offer the community beautiful recreational space.

Holy Cross Cemetery and Mausoleum is truly a special place. Ancient scriptures and contemporary art are combined in an effort to transform the unsettling reputation of cemeteries and mausoleums into a welcoming place filled with beautiful and meaningful symbols that inspire

faith and hope. Upon the very first visit, guests will learn that this 21st century cemetery has taken into consideration every last detail. ✎