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Under Christ's watchful care
Charlotte cemetery opens Catholic section
Third of its kind in the Diocese of Charlotte

by KATIE MOORE
staff writer

Charlotte — Another option for Catholics preferring traditional burial is now available in the Diocese of Charlotte.

Bishop Peter J. Jugis consecrated Holy Redeemer Garden at Sharon Memorial Park in Charlotte June 1.

Members of the Knights of Columbus; Deacon Guy Piche, director of diocesan properties; and parishioners of St. Vincent de Paul Church in Charlotte gathered for the event.

“The Holy Redeemer Cemetery at Sharon Memorial Park is the fourth Catholic cemetery I have had the privilege of blessing in less than two years,” said Bishop Jugis in an interview.

It is the third Catholic section to be opened at an independently-owned cemetery in the diocese in the past 10 months.

The Garden of St. Matthew at Forest Lawn Cemetery in Matthews opened Aug. 12, 2008 and a Catholic section at Northlake Memorial Gardens in Huntersville was consecrated Dec. 2, 2008. A cemetery at the site of the future Sacred Heart Church in Salisbury was consecrated Sept. 1, 2007.

In 2006, the Diocese of Charlotte implemented a moratorium on constructing and expanding columbaria and conducted a study on the use of columbaria and cemeteries.

“The Holy Redeemer Cemetery fulfills the requirements of our diocesan Policy on Cemeteries, which requires that a resting place for the bodies of the deceased and a resting place for cremated remains be available all at one location,” said Bishop Jugis.

“The Holy Redeemer cemetery is a pastorally sensitive approach, offering equal access at one location to all our Catholic parishioners who desire a resting place for either the body or for cremated remains,” the bishop said.

Sharon Memorial Park was opened in 1939. The cemetery offers private estates, hedge estates, traditional ground burial and a cremation columbarium.

Holy Redeemer Garden is the newest section in the park and the first Catholic cemetery in the city of Charlotte.

An 8-foot granite crucifix at the center of the Catholic section serves as an identifiably Catholic symbol within the independently-owned cemetery.

“It stands as a reminder of Christ’s love for all humanity,” said Bishop Jugis.

“St. Paul says that if we have died with Christ, then we shall also live with Christ,” the bishop said. “We place our beloved dead at the feet of the crucified Lord, knowing that they continue to live in Christ and that their bodies are safe under his watchful care as they await the resurrection on the last day.”

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Burial or cremation?

- The Order of Christian Funerals — the Vatican-approved rite used for celebrating Catholic funerals — indicates three reasons for the preference of burial of the body of the deceased over the cremation of the body:

- Jesus himself willed to be buried;

- the body at the funeral rite expresses in a natural way the manner people had been accustomed to relating to the person while he or she was living, namely through a human body;

- the body at the funeral rite expresses Jesus’ teaching regarding the supernatural dignity and destiny of the human body.

- The Order of Christian Funerals presents cremation as an exception to burial and allows Catholics to be cremated “when extraordinary circumstances make the cremation of a body the only feasible choice.”

- In March 2007, the Diocese of Charlotte issued its new policy on cemeteries and columbaria, which states parishes may offer at one location a resting place for both the bodies and the cremated remains of the deceased.

- The policy gives the diocese the option to create Catholic sections in local cemeteries and to receive or purchase land for the establishment of a Catholic cemetery.