

Alleluia! Christ is risen, he is risen indeed! Alleluia! Today, Easter Sunday, we celebrate the Resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, a resurrection which we all hope to share in on the Last Day when the trumpet sounds and the dead shall be raised from their graves! The place of burial for Christians and our Jewish ancestors before us was always revered and held as sacred. For Christians, this was especially poignant because it was from the grave that we will rise on that last day. The Church has always cared for the mortal remains of her deceased children, especially by consecrating ground for their bodies and to allow us to visit and remember them and pray for them.

Many people are unaware that the Catholic Church in Chattanooga has its own cemetery, Mount Olivet, located on the Ringgold Road, just to the east of the tunnel through Missionary Ridge. This cemetery was established in 1886 to serve the growing Catholic population. The original cemetery had been located next to our parish church downtown, on land which is now occupied by the Carnegie Library building to our west. All of the bodies interred there were moved to the new cemetery, most notably, the body of the Servant of God, Fr. Patrick Ryan, the hero of the Yellow Fever epidemic of 1878. When they made the transfer of his body in 1886, they held a solemn high Mass in the church, with the Bishop from Nashville coming to celebrate, and Fr. Ryan's long-time friend, Fr. Walsh, eulogizing this martyr of charity. Afterwards, the entourage proceeded from the church to the newly created Mount Olivet Cemetery, with hundreds of carriages in procession. In fact, in the local newspaper, it was noted that this was the largest known procession through the streets of Chattanooga to that day. Soon we will be exhuming the body of the Servant of God, Fr. Ryan, and returning him to the church to be close to his people, as was his last wish, and for us to be able to tell his story as his Cause for Canonization progresses.



Mount Olivet still serves the Catholic population today. If you walk through the beautiful grounds of the cemetery, you will note all of the names of Catholic families that have been long-standing members of our community. But the cemetery is far from being full. The foresight of the founders of the cemetery laid it out in such a way that it will be viable for decades to come. Unfortunately, many people are unaware that it even exists, and we would like to remedy this ignorance with an invitation. Especially in this Easter season, when we have recalled our own mortality and now look forward to our future glory in the Resurrection, it does us well to consider where our mortal remains will be placed until that day when the trumpet is sounded. I would ask you to consider Mount Olivet in your funeral planning. We have very affordable and competitive rates compared to the other cemeteries around town, and we have space for cremated remains—not only in the columbarium, but also each gravesite can be used for multiple burials of cremated remains—one gravesite could be sufficient for a whole family, if they are cremated. However, the greatest benefit of being buried at Mount Olivet is the spiritual benefit of prayers for the dead. Many people visit the cemetery, myself included, with the intention of praying for the dead and obtaining the indulgence that the Church grants for doing so. Furthermore, every year on the Feast of All Souls, November 2nd, we offer a Mass at the altar on Priest Hill, in the center of the cemetery, for all the souls buried at Mount Olivet Cemetery, especially those deceased in the preceding year.



You can find out more on the Mount Olivet website, www.mountolivet.net, or by calling David Hale, the Superintendent, at the number listed below. Again, Alleluia! Christ is risen indeed!

Sincerely,

Rev. J. David Carter, JCL, Director
Mount Olivet Cemetery

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