

Burial plots were invariably priced within the budget of working families who contributed to the financial livelihood of their parishes. And the families of the deceased – usually men of the parish – contributed their time on a voluntary basis to the maintenance of the cemetery.

Over time, these very competitively priced plots attracted the attention of people who lived well beyond the local area, and who offered no financial support to the parish. Soon enough, the Camden Catholic Cemetery became a place of interment not only for the local parishioners, but for many others as well.

For well into the 21<sup>st</sup> century, adults with an affiliation to the parish continued to meet monthly on Saturday mornings to attend to the needs of the cemetery. In the local weekend parish bulletin, there were regular appeals for more volunteers but usually without much response. Over time, and with the passing of years, this very loyal group of people began to decline in number.

Somewhat providentially, a few years ago an informal agreement was reached between St Paul's Parish with the Department of Corrective Services for the ongoing maintenance of the cemetery. This has been quite a successful arrangement in which people who are undertaking community work have really kept the cemetery in exceptionally good condition. Many thanks to the Department and the people who participated.

In financial terms, the cemetery is a liability to the parish. There is no income and only potential costs. The best example can be cited by reference to the illegal dumping of a few years ago. This unconscionable conduct was only going to get worse. The dignity of many of the graves was already under serious threat. The only solution was the construction of a security fence which can still be opened and closed for vehicles by consultation with the parish office.

Occasionally because of extenuating circumstances, there may a time lapse between the occasions that maintenance is undertaken. Patience is requested. All will be well. If any particular period becomes quite protracted, then there's always the option of enlisting professional services.

However, the cost of providing a complete and thorough overall may well approach \$1,000 each time. This money comes from our devoted parishioners who continue to give generously and trustingly and who, overwhelmingly, have no loved ones buried in this historic cemetery.

St Paul's is a generous parish and finances are managed carefully. There are many costs. A few months ago it became necessary to change all the lights in the church. Scaffolding was required and the total cost was over \$7,000. The carpet in the presbytery is still the original from 1987. Clergy are not indulged.

The parishioners of Camden have a very long history of generous giving to various needs and charitable causes beyond the parish. People with loved ones interred in the cemetery are invited to share in this same generosity of spirit. An initial offering of \$500 towards the cemetery would be appreciated. If forthcoming, a specialist in outdoor maintenance will be engaged within a week or two.

Love for the deceased always bears a special sacrificial character when expressed with a financial offering. This is why people make financial contributions to the priest when requesting the offering of Holy Mass for deceased relatives and friends.

The great importance of personal sacrifice can never be disregarded. It has a strong biblical foundation. In the Catholic tradition, November is the month of Holy Souls. Parishioners provide

specific intentions with an accompanying financial offering. This happens all year round but especially during November.

Many of these Mass Intentions are passed on to religious orders who have priests working in missionary regions of the world. The depth of love that people share for each other – alive or deceased – can generally be measured according to the extent to which sacrifice is embraced. Love is about sacrifice.

Finally, and notwithstanding various opinions contained in social media, the parish has no intentions of selling the cemetery.

Father Michael Williams PP