

Cemetery offering outreach services for families in pain

By Mike Latona
Staff writer

A full 125 years after its founding, Holy Sepulchre Cemetery appears to be growing more beautiful with age.

However, cemetery officials also would like it to be known for more than its carefully sculpted grounds and new buildings.

In recent years, the Rochester cemetery has also provided services that aren't as readily visible to the public eye. Rather, these efforts target families who struggle inwardly to cope with death of a loved one.

Beginning in 1994, the cemetery has offered a monthly memorial Mass, which is held every third Saturday at 8:30 a.m. These Masses take place at the All Saints Mausoleum Chapel, on the cemetery's west side, from May to October; and at the All Souls Chapel, on the east side, from November to April.

According to James R. Weisbeck, the cemetery's new executive director, the Masses are open to the public and are attended by an average of 100 people. They are usually celebrated by Father Peter Bayer, who serves as chaplain at St. Ann's Home. Father Bayer is also a member of Holy Sepulchre's board of trustees and secretary/treasurer of the cemetery's corporation.

Two regular participants at the memorial Masses are Richard and Madeline Flanigan, parishioners of Holy Cross Church in Rochester. Madeline said her family began attending

the monthly Masses soon after their son, Stephen, died in October 1995.

"We've found it very comforting," Madeline Flanigan said. "Everybody's friendly, and it's very close and intimate. It's much more meaningful, and we feel closer to Stephen."

Holy Sepulchre is also developing an outreach program for people who seek assistance in coping with their grief. This service is being coordinated by Marian Casey Brust, customer service manager at Holy Sepulchre.

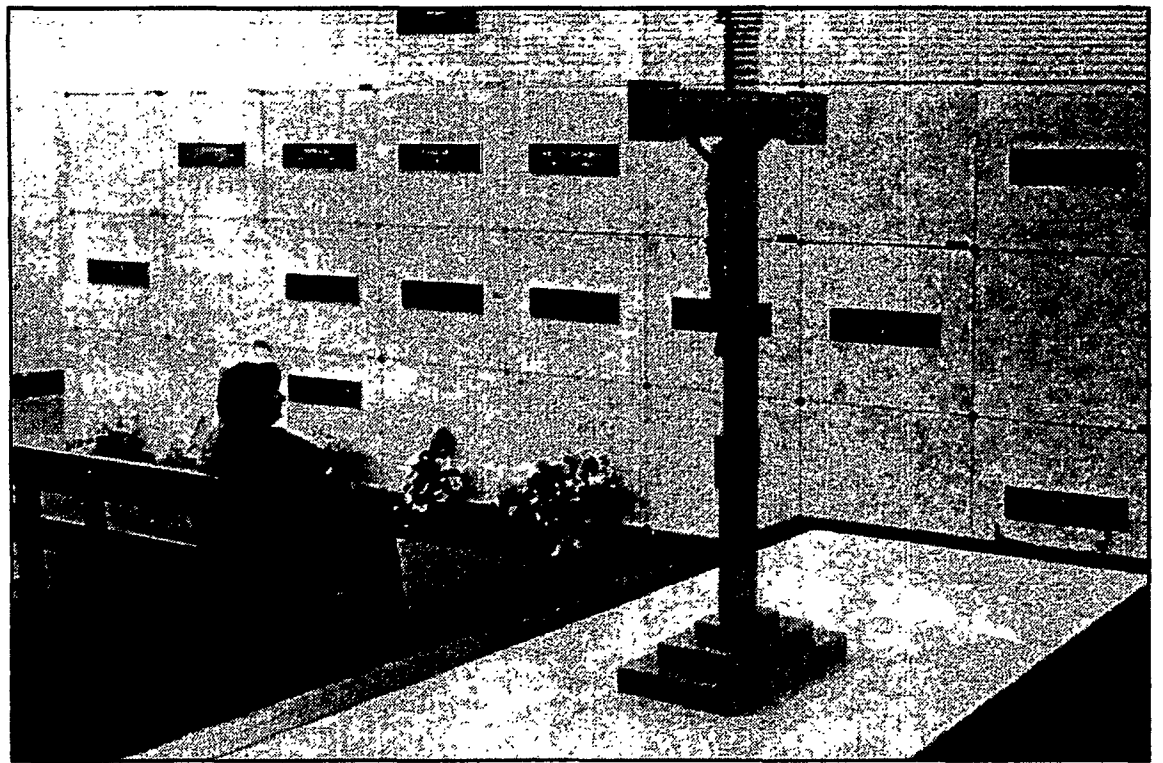
Brust said the program is scheduled to be launched in the spring of 1997. She noted that its facilitator will encourage people to share their emotions in a group setting.

"Very often, people get stuck in the grieving process if they don't get help," Brust explained. "Family members sometimes become distant when you have a loss. They don't mean it; they just don't know how to handle it. They don't know what to say or do."

Therefore, Brust said, it's important to utilize resources outside the family to work through these challenging stages of life. "It's really difficult to lean on someone who is already doubled over in pain," she commented.

She added that bereavement-group participants will not only share their grief, but "also their faith — that we all die through Christ and we believe that life is everlasting."

Weisbeck noted that he's modeling this bereavement service after a successful program



Matthew Scott/Staff photographer

Holy Sepulchre Cemetery opens its chapels, such as the newest chapel located inside the All Saints Mausoleum, for mourners.

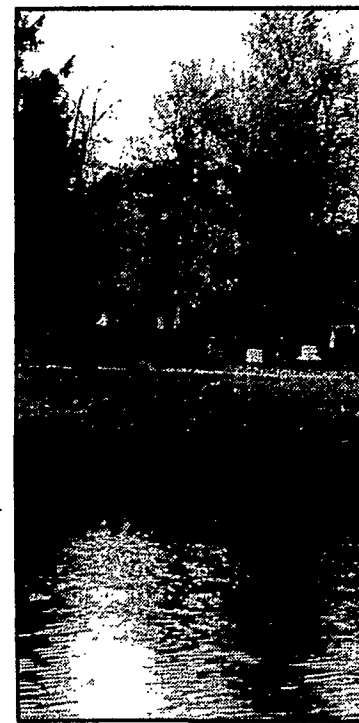
that has operated for several years in the Diocese of Cleveland, Ohio.

"It seems to be very, very popular," Weisbeck said.

Weisbeck and Brust emphasized that if one's grief is so severe that it cannot be overcome through the group, cemetery staff would refer that person to a professional.

The memorial Mass and outreach program are two recent examples of Holy Sepulchre's longstanding service to its community. The cemetery was dedicated in 1871 by Bishop Bernard McQuaid, only three years after the Diocese of Rochester was founded. Today, Holy Sepulchre's 332-acre facility in northern Rochester stands as the largest cemetery in upstate New York.

An extensive beautification effort was launched in recent years under the guidance of Robert Vogt, who retired earlier this year as executive director.



A placid scene of tranquility in the east section of Holy Sepulchre Cemetery.

He was replaced by Weisbeck, who had been Holy Sepulchre's business director since 1991.

During Vogt's 23-year tenure, the cemetery developed four garden sections, two shrine-burial sections, and the Garden of the Sepulchre at the Lake Avenue entrance. Holy Sepulchre has also added four community mausoleums.

To acknowledge the cemetery's prominent place in the Catholic community, Bishop Matthew H. Clark celebrated an Oct. 12 anniversary liturgy at Holy Sepulchre.

Weisbeck noted that the liturgy, along with the recent upgrades, reaffirmed Holy Sepulchre's commitment to Catholic ideals.

"This cemetery is not just a burial ground. It's a Catholic cemetery, and that's a whole different story," Weisbeck stated. "It is not our (the administration's) cemetery. It belongs to the people."

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Psychologist to talk on 'living heroically'

Psychologist Gordon Barnhart will apply his ideas about "living heroically" to the problems encountered when grieving the loss of a loved one in "The Hero's Journey," a free public forum scheduled for 7 p.m. Thursday, Nov. 14, at The Lodge at Woodcliff, off Route 96 in Perinton.

The Genesee Region Home Care's Hospice of Rochester will sponsor Barnhart's talk in conjunction with the observance of November as National Hospice Month.

Admission to his talk is free of charge, but reservations are requested and may be made by calling 716/262-5590.

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