



Legacy & Community

A Planning Guide for Creating Beautiful, Sacred Cremation Spaces





In this Guide

Planning the Right Solution for Your Community

Over the years, we've worked with Catholic Cemetery Directors and Parish and Diocese leaders in all stages of considering cremation memorialization for their community. We've assembled this streamlined planning guide to help make the process as simple as possible.

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A Sacred Place of Remembrance for Catholic Families

Meeting the rising demand for cremation with solutions rooted in faith and tradition.

Cremation rates continue to rise across the country, and many Catholic families seek what only the Church can provide: a sacred, permanent place for remembrance rooted in faith and tradition. For cemetery directors, pastors, and diocesan leaders, this creates both a pastoral responsibility and a practical opportunity.

At Salem Stones, we walk alongside Catholic cemeteries and parishes nationwide to develop cremation gardens or provide columbaria products that honor Church teaching, meet the needs of families, and strengthen the ministry of remembrance for generations to come.



The U.S. cremation rate reached 60.6% in 2023, according to the Cremation Association of North America (CANA), and is on track to reach 80% by 2045.



What's Possible

Flexible Options, Tailored to Your Cemetery or Parish

Every Catholic cemetery and parish is unique in size, tradition, and available space. The following examples show how cremation memorialization can take shape at different scales — but every solution we design is customized to fit your community's needs.



Small Footprint:

A Sacred Beginning

For parishes or Catholic cemeteries seeking to introduce cremation memorialization in a meaningful way but may have limited space, this is a common starting place. A smaller footprint could still accommodate a range of solutions, from a single columbarium to multiple columbaria with benches or personal cremation options. The details below are an example of how even a small footprint can provide a meaningful place for Catholic remembrance. Every solution is customized to your needs and space.

- Example configuration shown above: two 48-niche, 2-sided columbaria with four benches
- Ideal near the office, along a sidewalk, or beside an existing parish building
- Additional landscaping and walkways can be minimal while providing a welcoming place for remembrance
- Each element can be customized with stone colors, engravings, and sacred symbolism as desired
- Includes cost analysis, projected ROI, and sales strategy support



Medium Footprint:

A Parish Gathering Space

For Catholic cemeteries or parishes with modest open areas, this balanced approach creates a welcoming garden today while preparing for tomorrow's growth. A medium footprint often includes a center piece columbarium with accompanying smaller community or personal cremation options and seating areas.

- Example configuration shown above: a 72-niche hexagon columbarium, three memorial benches, along with multiple personal columbaria, cremation pillars, and cremation boulders.
- Additional walkways and plantings establish a peaceful environment.
- Creates a sacred garden of reflection, and provides **room to expand** in the future.
- Includes cost analysis, projected ROI, and sales strategy support



Large Footprint:

A Sacred Garden for Generations

For parishes and Catholic cemeteries with growing need and more space, a comprehensive sacred garden can become a central ministry of remembrance for generations. Larger areas like this can be designed and planned in phases for stewardship and financial sustainability.

- Best for spaces $\frac{1}{4}$ acre to 1+ acres
- May include: multiple community columbaria, memorial benches, personal columbaria, hedge estates, and walled plots
- Allows for phased growth and a custom design that reflects the character of the parish or cemetery grounds.
- Includes cost analysis, projected ROI, and sales strategy support



Phased Growth Flexibility for the Future

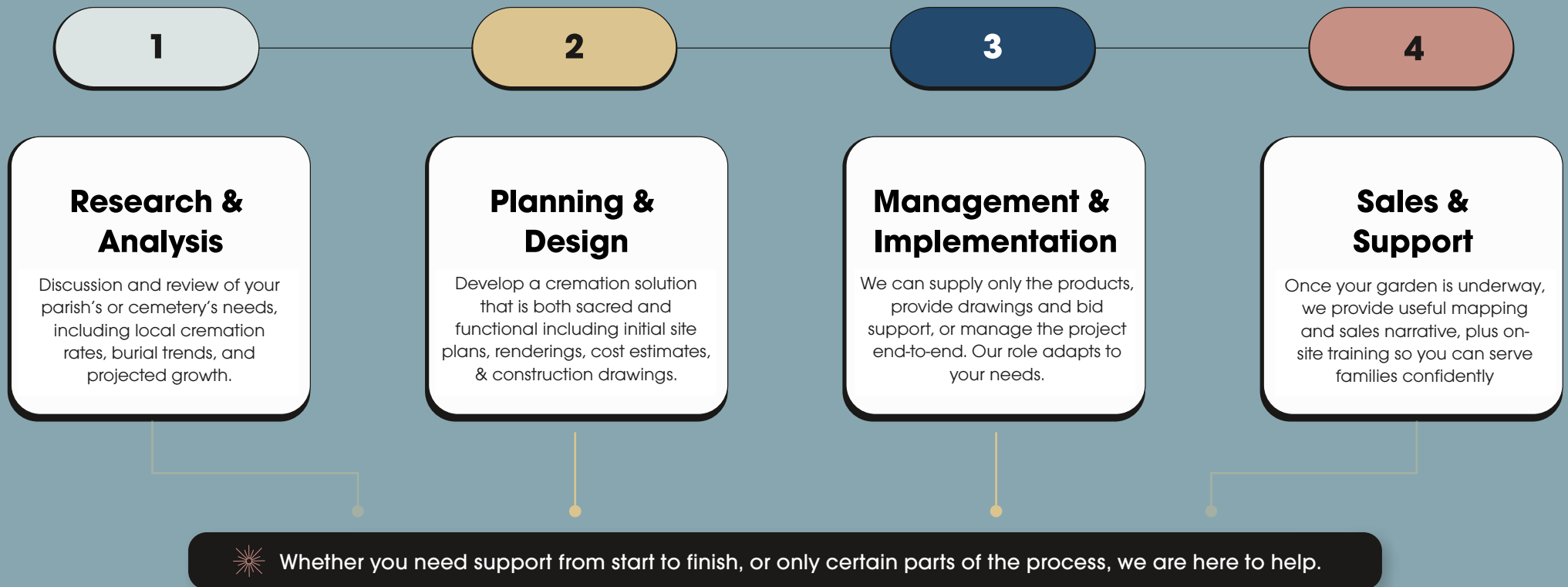
Many Catholic cemeteries and parishes begin with what they need today, then expand thoughtfully as demand grows. A phased approach allows you to:

- **Start strategically** – Launch with core elements that serve immediate needs and create a welcoming sacred space
- **Grow sustainably** – Add capacity, without overextending on the initial investment
- **Adapt to your community** – Respond to actual demand patterns and family preferences as they emerge



Tailored Support from Salem Stones For Wherever You Are in the Process

We understand the unique considerations Catholic churches face. We've guided parishes and dioceses nationwide through planning, design, and installation of cremation gardens.



Planning Checklist

Key questions and considerations for developing the right Catholic cremation memorialization. Use this checklist to ensure you've discussed important planning details. We're here to provide additional context and guidance as needed — from visioning and budgeting to design, installation, and community engagement.

Space & Setting

- ☐ Available space and preferred location
- ☐ Ability to expand in the future
- ☐ Is the site accessible for delivery & installation (overhead obstruction free)?

Budget & Stewardship

- ☐ Budget for initial phase
- ☐ Phased growth plan if needed
- ☐ Additional site-related costs (site prep, landscaping, permitting)
- ☐ Long-term sustainability and projected ROI (if applicable)

Implementation

- ☐ Installation approach
- ☐ Target Timeline for opening
- ☐ Warranty and quality standards

Parish & Cemetery Goals

- ☐ How many families do we serve today?
- ☐ Current cremation vs. full body burial rates in our community
- ☐ Anticipated growth in demand in our community
- ☐ Pastoral intent (introduce, expand, or create a signature garden)

Design & Elements

- ☐ Capacity needed now and over time
- ☐ Single vs. companion niches
- ☐ Granite colors and personalization plans
- ☐ Elements to include (columbaria, benches, memorials, etc.)
- ☐ Landscaping, walkways, and prayer space needs

Community Engagement

- ☐ How will we introduce the garden to parishioners and families?
- ☐ Need for maps and diagrams
- ☐ Staff training requirements
- ☐ Plans for consecration and dedication



Tip: Use this checklist with your parish council, cemetery board, or diocesan leadership.



Why Work With Salem Stones

Trusted expertise to plan, design, and implement Catholic cremation gardens.

We have helped Catholic cemeteries and parishes nationwide create cremation gardens that are beautiful, faithful, and fully aligned with Church teaching. When you work with Salem Stones, you gain more than a supplier—you gain a partner who understands the pastoral responsibility, the financial realities, and the sacred trust you hold in serving Catholic families.

What's more, our customers come to expect:

- A seamless design and ordering process
- Top-tier granite quality, selection, and inventory
- Unmatched turnaround times
- An unwavering commitment to superior customer service



Contact Us

Questions About This Info or How to Get Started?

We would be honored to help your parish or cemetery explore cremation garden opportunities. Together, we can create a sacred, permanent place of remembrance for Catholic families today, and for generations to come.

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