

**Eligibility and Number of Co-burials at Catholic Cemeteries
To Be Relaxed from 1 Jan 2020**

From 1 January 2020, the Diocesan Board of Catholic Cemeteries will relax the definition of “Relative” and the number of co-burials in permanent burial lots, permanent urn burial lots and niches.

Key changes include:

1. Space permissible in the burial ground and in a dignified manner, multiple co-burials in permanent burial lots, permanent urn burial lots, or urn niches may be permitted.

	Co-burial		
	Encoffined human remains*	Exhumed human remains	Ashes
Permanent burial lot	✓	✓	✓
Permanent urn burial lot		✓	✓
Urn niche			✓

** Only one set of human remains can be buried in a permanent burial lot at any given time.*

2. In the revised Rules of Catholic Cemeteries, “Relative” is redefined as:
 - (a) the spouse of the deceased first interred;
 - (b) the father, mother, grandfather, grandmother, great-grandfather or great-grandmother of the deceased first interred or of the spouse of the deceased first interred;
 - (c) a brother or sister of the deceased first interred or of the spouse of the deceased first interred or of the persons referred to in paragraph (b) above;
 - (d) the spouse of a person referred to in paragraph (c) above;
 - (e) a descendant of the deceased first interred or of the persons referred to in paragraph (b) or (c) above;
 - (f) the spouse of a person referred to in paragraph (e).

Rev Dominic Chan, ex-officio member of the Board said through the amendment, the Board strives to maximize land resources while allowing deceased members of the family to stay together in their final resting place. In a place where land resources are scarce and the number of burial grounds inadequate, the relaxation aligns with Government policy and helps address imminent needs.

Before the amendment, only the spouse, unmarried child, brother or sister could be co-buried with the first interred. With the amendment, the coverage extends to almost all the family members as long as they are Catholic. Mr Daniel So, Chairperson of the Board, said this was quite a major change. “Since 1988, permanent burial lots and permanent urn burial lots were no longer allocated by the Diocese. If families had been allocated one, they can now fully utilize it and turn it into a de facto burial ground for the family”, added Mr So.

Families who opt to co-bury (encoffined) relatives into a permanent burial lot, they will have to first exhume the human remains of the interment prior to the co-burial and consider building an underground chamber to prevent the grave from tilting or collapsing in the future.

When applying for co-burials, families will need to present (1) the original receipt issued in relation to the first or subsequent interment(s); (2) original documents for proof of relationship between the deceased to be co-buried and the deceased first interred or any one of the relatives co-buried; (3) a diagram illustrating the family relationship between the deceased to be co-buried and the deceased first interred, and all the other documents required.

In the future, if families wished to export the first interred from the cemetery, all deceased co-buried thereafter would have to be exported as well. However, if they were only exporting the deceased co-buried thereafter, they might do so by producing the original receipt of the deceased concerned.

Faithful in general welcomed the new arrangement and found it meaningful to allow deceased members of the family to rest in the same place.