

# How do we plan for life everlasting?

**By Father Gerard Knapp, C.Ss.R.**

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Life everlasting or eternal life is a basic teaching of our Catholic Faith.

We affirm such every time we recite the Nicene Creed on Sundays and the Apostles' Creed at the beginning of the rosary. We enter eternal life only by passing through the gates of death. In addition to eternal life, we also affirm the resurrection of the body.

One of the best ways to prepare for death, eternal life and the resurrection of the body is by living a good and faithful life here on earth. As Catholics we do that by following the teachings of Jesus Christ and by participating in the sacramental life of the church.

In anticipation of death, many people invest time and energy preparing wills and health directives.

Other important factors for the Catholic to consider are the liturgical services that the church provides at the time of death – wake/viewing, funeral Mass and burial.

These steps witness to our faith in eternal life, honor the deceased, and help to bring solace to those who survive. Pre-planning for one's funeral personalizes the journey from life, through death, and into eternity. It also eases the burden on family and friends. The individual can pre-plan by selecting readings, hymns, homilist, casket, cemetery and the like.

Cemeteries have been part of the Christian tradition since the earliest of times. They are sacred grounds in which the faithful departed are interred. They serve as reminders for family and friends to pray for those buried there. They are also witnesses of the resurrection of the body on the last day.

With regard to burial, one can decide on interment of the body in a cemetery or a mausoleum, both of which should be blessed. There is also the possibility of cremation which the church has allowed for a number of years. If one chooses cremation, the church prefers that the body be present for the wake service and the funeral Mass after which the cremation takes place. The remains are to be interred in a cemetery or a mausoleum rather than being scattered about. This is further witness to the resurrection of the body.

*Redemptorist Father Gerard Knapp is an associate pastor at his childhood parish, Sacred Heart of Jesus/Sagrado Corazón de Jesús in Highlandtown. The Redemptorists operate four cemeteries in the Archdiocese of Baltimore - Most Holy Redeemer and Sacred Heart of Jesus in Baltimore, St. Mary's in Annapolis and St. Mary's in Ellicott City. To learn more, visit their facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/RedemCem>*