



A message to the faithful of the archdiocese from Archbishop Michael Jackels

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**5 May 2022**

**An update on 2021 essay about alternatives to traditional burial methods**

On 20 October 2021, an essay I wrote about alternatives to traditional burial methods was put up on the website. It mentioned two alternatives: alkaline hydrolysis, and recompositing, both of which are presently illegal in the State of Iowa.

I was proposing some out-of-box, but inside-the-circle thinking. The Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith has informed me that the proposal is outside the circle; at the time of writing, I was not aware of that opinion.

They also told me I did not accurately reflect Church teaching when I said that a burial place would be acceptable if it is blessed by clergy. It was feared that I was suggesting that *any* place is acceptable, even scattering ashes; I would never teach that.

No objection was made to the questions I raised in that essay about traditional burial practices here in the United States (nor did they offer any answers to those questions). So, further reflection is still in order:

1. Is it proper reverence to the body of a saint to have it cut up into pieces to be distributed worldwide as relics?
2. Or is it proper reverence to the body of the deceased to apply make-up to it, and dress it up like a child's doll in order to be viewed?
3. And how can we protect the earth, our common home, as our Holy Father Francis asks us to do, when traditional burial practices dump huge amounts of chemicals (embalming), metals (caskets), and concrete (vaults) into the environment?

The same Congregation asked me to remove my 20 October 2021 essay from our website, which has been done; and that I replace it with a new essay, herewith delivered; and that I acknowledge receipt of their letter, which has been mailed.

Michael O. Jackels

Archbishop of Dubuque

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