



THE CATHOLIC
CEMETERIES

Where remembrance begins

NATURAL BURIAL

BEING A FRIEND OF THE EARTH

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IF YOU ARE LIKE ME, you have been concerned with all the news about how climate change is affecting us here and now. Yes, I recycle, try to schedule errands so that I am driving the least bit possible, use LEDs, am pollinator friendly, keep my thermostat low/high depending on the season, re-use rather than throw out etc. But as I am in process of pre-planning for my death, how can I continue to care for the earth?

First, I believe that every little thing I do really does ripple out and have meaning. So, I know that what I want done with my body after death has an impact on the earth. When I was young, over 30 years ago mind you, I thought cremation would be the least impact on the earth. It appeared it was the only alternative to being put in a casket, getting embalmed, having a vault in the earth. And then, about 10 years ago I heard about natural burial and I began to study what options would be better for the earth.

I found these facts, which have been updated to the present day data:

- Nearly 4 Million gallons of toxic embalming fluid is used annually. This is enough to fill 6 Olympic sized swimming pools.
- About 13 000 tons of steel and 1.5 million tons of concrete are used for burial vaults annually which could pave a new interstate between Washington D.C. and Baltimore every year. It's enough to build 100 000 swimming pools every year.
- If all burials in the U.S.A. used wooden caskets it would be 150 board million board feet of hardwood annually. Laid lengthwise, that's 1.14 Times the circumference of the earth.
- If thinking cremation is better, according to the National Geographic, 534.6 pounds of Carbon Dioxide is produced with every cremation in the U.S.A. Other emissions include Carbon Monoxide, Mercury, Sulfur Dioxide, Nitrogen Oxides, particulate matter, Hydrogen Fluoride (HF), Hydrogen Chloride (HCL), NMVOCs as well as other heavy metals and persistent organic pollutants.
- Cremations in the U.S.A. emit 360,000 tons of carbon dioxide annually. Your car would emit that much CO₂ if you drove to the sun and back 5 times.

I'm not only convinced, but have become an advocate of natural or green burial. This burial is a way of caring for the body with a minimal impact on the earth. It uses non-toxic and biodegradable materials, such as caskets and shrouds. There is no embalming, no burial vaults or liners. They body naturally returns to the earth, from where we initially came.

If you are interested in preserving our earth, even in death, please explore our website for more information on green burial.

“To live in this world you must be able to do three things: to love what is mortal; to hold it against your bones knowing your own life depends on it; and, when the time comes to let it go, to let it go.” (Mary Oliver from “In Blackwater Woods”)

