



SACRED CONGREGATION FOR THE DOCTRINE OF THE FAITH

***Letter to the Bishop of Cleveland
regarding doubtful propositions regarding the cremation of fetuses
or human body parts****

In a letter dated 16 November, 1966, the Reverend N.N., the chaplain of Evangelical Deaconess Hospital in the city of X., proposed to this Sacred Congregation two questions for which he sought a solution.

a) Whether it is licit for Catholics, of their own free will, to order that their own amputated members or those of others, as well as notable sections that are cut out [of the human body] be cremated, even apart from circumstances surrounding the case in which cremation would be imposed by medical or social reasons.

b) Fetus which have not completed 17 weeks of gestation – many of which are baptized – and notable parts of the human body are rarely buried but are usually cremated.

Is this practice intrinsically to be reprobated according to the fundamental principles of morality?

I inform you that the Fathers of this Sacred Congregation examined the questions proposed and, in the Plenary Session on Wednesday, the 1st of March of this year, decreed:

If there is a reasonable cause present which does not permit the burial of a fetus or member of the human body, there is no objection on the part of the Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith to cremation.

* *LE* 3543