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Burying the dead

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I am not one of those Catholics who was forced to memorize the spiritual and corporal works of mercy, but I know how to use Google. So I know that, in addition to feeding the hungry, clothing the naked and visiting the sick, Christians are called to bury the dead. Which is why I'm saddened to see the news that cemeteries are refusing to bury the body of Boston Marathon bombing suspect Tamerlan Tsarnaev.

While it's understandable that victims and their families, as well as all who were terrorized by the events of last month, might have an emotional response to the cause of their pain having a final resting place, our faith--and our common humanity--calls us to be better than the Tsarnaev brothers. Seriously--the most productive way you can channel your hurt and frustration is to carry a picket sign that says, "Bury the garbage in the landfill"?

Other notorious evil-doers have been buried: Presidential assassins Lee Harvey Oswald and John Wilkes Booth are buried in the Dallas area and Baltimore, respectively. Oklahoma City bomber Timothy McVeigh was cremated, but Islam does not allow cremation.

Clearly, cemeteries fear vandalism if they were to bury Tsarnaev--or the wrath of other customers. According to this article, "Back in the 1920s, it was common for Catholic cemeteries in Chicago to refuse burial in consecrated ground to members of the Capone mob and other outfits who were victims of gangland violence."

I've yet to hear of any Catholic cemeteries or individuals stepping up to rectify the lack of a burial site for Tsarnaev, but a retired Vermont man has offered a family plot in Connecticut to the family, saying he is doing it in memory of his mother, "who taught Sunday School at the Mt. Carmel Congregational Church for 20 years and taught me to ?love thine enemy.?"

The resurrection of the body notwithstanding, here on earth our bodies lose their individuality and become part of the common soil after we die. "Ashes to ashes, dust to dust." Let's recognize that common humanity--no matter how heinous the crimes in life--and leave the judging to God.

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