

Moral Considerations in Medical Education: Buying Unclaimed Human Cadavers

*Nicanor Pier Giorgio Austriaco, O.P.**

Providence College, Providence, Rhode Island, U.S.A.

Abstract: Is it morally virtuous for a medical school to buy and to use unclaimed cadavers? Because of his exalted status as the creature who is the *imago Dei*, the human person has an inviolable dignity that is his simply because he is the kind of being that he is. This is why we cannot buy and sell people. However, since you cannot distinguish the human person from his body without doing violence to his identity as an embodied creature, the same argument can also be made against the buying and selling of human bodies. I therefore conclude that it is immoral for unclaimed bodies to be used in medical schools, and even more morally problematic for them to be sold and to be bought. Instead, Catholic citizens should exercise the corporal act of mercy by providing for the burial of the bodies of these brothers and sisters of ours. And in response to the lack of cadavers, they should also organize programs to increase the bequeathing of bodies for medical education and research.

Keywords: *unclaimed cadavers, organ donation, informed consent, human dignity, human person, body donation*

*Nicanor Pier Giorgio Austriaco, O.P. can be contacted at naustria@providence.edu.

Introduction

In a newspaper article published in the *Philippine Daily Inquirer*, journalist Julie M. Aurelio revealed that unclaimed cadavers are sold to medical schools in the Philippines for prices between PHP 10,000 to PHP 40,000 (USD 220 to USD 880) per cadaver.¹ According to the article, burying an unclaimed corpse usually costs a mortuary around PHP 2,500. However, one of the funeral home owners interviewed by Aurelio has refused to sell unclaimed cadavers to medical schools. He explained, “But I think it is just wrong, even if it means getting back lost income.”

In this brief essay, I would like to explore this funeral home owner’s moral intuitions from the perspective of the Catholic moral tradition: Is it morally virtuous for a medical school to buy and to use unclaimed cadavers?² This inquiry involves two distinct disputed moral *questiones*. First there is the question regarding the morality of using unclaimed cadavers for medical education and research, and second, there is the question regarding the morality of buying and selling of these bodies.

To answer these questions, we will begin with an overview of the social context for this analysis, i.e., the need for cadavers in medical schools for education and for research. We then turn to a summary of the Catholic Church’s teachings regarding the body of the human person and possibility of donating it for medical education and research. Applying this teaching to the specific case at hand, I will conclude that it is immoral for unclaimed bodies to be used in medical schools, and even more morally problematic for them to be sold and to be bought. Instead, Catholic citizens should exercise the corporal act of mercy by providing for the burial of the bodies of these brothers and sisters of ours. And in response to the lack of cadavers, they should also organize programs to increase the bequeathing of bodies for medical education and research.

¹ Julie M. Aurelio, “What happens to dead nobody mourns?” *Philippine Daily Inquirer*, October 31, 2013. Available at <http://newsinfo.inquirer.net/517061/what-happens-to-dead-nobody-mourns>.

² For other perspectives, primarily from the secular tradition, see B.M. Riederer, “Body donations today and tomorrow: What is best practice and why?” *Clinical Anatomy* 29 (2016): 11-18; D.G. Jones, “Using and respecting the dead human body: an anatomist’s perspective,” *Clinical Anatomy* 27 (2014): 839-843; and D.G. Jones and M.I. Whitaker, “Anatomy’s use of unclaimed bodies: reasons against continued dependence on an ethically dubious practice,” *Clinical Anatomy* 25 (2012): 246-254.

The Societal Context: The Need for Cadavers in Medical Schools

Human cadavers have been used for scientific study since at least the third century B.C. when human dissection began in Alexandria,³ and they continue to be an invaluable resource for medical education and research.⁴ Indeed, though several medical schools have attempted to teach anatomy without cadaver dissection, they reinstated this pedagogical practice after they discovered that their students' knowledge of human anatomy had decreased.⁵ However, in many countries, medical institutions are struggling to obtain the necessary cadavers to meet their educational needs because of the insufficient number of donated bodies.⁶

The shortfall of bodies bequeathed to science has encouraged medical schools throughout the world to use unclaimed bodies in their anatomy and physiology classes, a practice that has been around since the beginning of medical science.⁷ In the United States, every state requires that unclaimed bodies first be offered to the largest medical school in the region, or to a special office that distributes the bodies to schools of medicine, dentistry, physical therapy, mortuary science or others that use cadavers.⁸ In Europe, there is no legal consensus on the use of unclaimed

³ James Longrigg, "Anatomy in Alexandria in the Third Century B.C.," *British Journal for the History of Science* 21 (1988): 455-488. For a popularly written, historical, social, and cultural overview of the use of cadavers in the West, see Mary Roach, *Stiff: The Curious Lives of Human Cadavers* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2003).

⁴ For discussion and further references to the debate in the primary literature, see the following papers: Leslie Sargent Jones et al., "Medical Student Dissection of Cadavers Improves Performance on Practical Exams but not on the NBME Anatomy Subject Exam," *Medical Education Online* 6 (2001): 2; John P. Collins, "Modern approaches to teaching and learning anatomy," *British Medical Journal* 337 (2008): 665-667; H-W. Korf et al., "The dissection course – necessary and indispensable for teaching anatomy to medical students," *Annals of Anatomy* 190 (2008): 16-22; J. Cornwall and M.D. Stringer, "The wider importance of cadavers: Educational and research diversity from a body bequest program," *Anatomical Sciences Education* 2 (2009): 234-237.

⁵ Lawrence J. Rizzolo and William B. Stewart, "Should We Continue Teaching Anatomy by Dissection When...?" *Anatomical Record (Part B: New Anatomist)* 289B (2006): 215-218.

⁶ H. Gangata et al., "The reliance on unclaimed cadavers for anatomical teaching by medical schools in Africa," *Anatomical Sciences Education* 3 (2010): 174-183; O.B. Akinola, "Formal body bequest program in Nigerian medical schools: When do we start?" *Anatomical Sciences Education* 4 (2011): 239-242; J-T. Park et al., "The Trend of Body Donation for Education Based on Korean Social and Religious Culture," *Anatomical Sciences Education* 4 (2011): 33-38; S.A. Rokade and B.H. Bahete, "Body Donation: A Review," *Medical Journal of Western India* 41 (2013): 36-41.

⁷ For historical overviews of how anatomists have procured and used cadavers in education and research, see the following: M. Davidson, "Body Trouble," *New Physician* 44 (1995): 30-35; Richardson, Ruth Richards, *Death, Dissection, and the Destitute* 2nd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001); D. G. Jones and M.I. Whitaker, *Speaking for the Dead: The Human Body in Biology and Medicine*, 2nd ed. (Farnham, UK: Ashgate, 2009); and Raphael Hulkower, "From Sacrilege to Privilege: The Tale of Body Procurement for Anatomical Dissection in the United States," *The Einstein Journal of Biology and Medicine* 27 (2011): 23-26.

⁸ Anne Saker, "Disposition of unclaimed bodies in U.S. varies by state, jurisdiction," *The Oregonian*, June 14, 2009. Available at http://www.oregonlive.com/special/index.ssf/2009/06/disposition_of_unclaimed_bodie.html.

bodies by anatomy departments, though numerous countries and jurisdictions throughout the continent permit their procurement and use.⁹ In Africa, most of the cadavers used in medical school are unclaimed bodies from hospitals and prisons.¹⁰ Not surprisingly, these were bodies primarily of people from a low socio-economic status. In Asia, unclaimed cadavers are routinely used by medical schools in India¹¹, in China¹², in Indonesia¹³, in Taiwan¹⁴, among others, though not in Thailand.¹⁵ To the best of my knowledge, no formal studies have been undertaken to determine the extent of unclaimed cadaver use in the medical schools in the Philippines, though if the newspaper report cited earlier is to be believed – and there is no reason to think otherwise – the dissection of unclaimed Filipino bodies by Filipino medical students is commonplace.

The Theological Tradition: Catholic Teaching on the Human Person and His Body

Made in the image and likeness of God, the human being is irreducibly corporeal and spiritual. He is neither a body nor a soul. He is an integral unity of both. Endowed with both intellect and will, the human being, of all the corporeal creatures on our planet, is uniquely a person. He alone is the “only creature on earth which God willed for itself,”¹⁶ and as such, has the “dignity of a subject and is of value in himself.”¹⁷ Because of his exalted status as the creature who is the *imago Dei*, the human person has an inviolable and an incomparable dignity that is his simply because he is the kind of being that he is. Thus, in the Church’s eyes, “[b]y virtue of

⁹ S. McHanwell et al., “The legal and ethical framework governing Body Donation in Europe – A review of current practice and recommendations for good practice,” *European Journal of Anatomy* 12 (2008):1-24.

¹⁰ H. Gangata et al., “The Reliance on Unclaimed Cadavers for Anatomical Teaching by Medical Schools in Africa,” *Anatomical Sciences Education* 3 (2010): 174-183.

¹¹ V.S. Pampilly, “Cadavers for anatomical dissection,” *Indian Journal of Medical Ethics* 2 (2005): 16-17; and P.S. Aneja et al., “Body Donation – A Dilemma Among Doctors,” *Journal of Evolution of Medical and Dental Sciences* 2 (2013): 2585-2593.

¹² David Barboza, “China Turns Out Mummified Bodies for Display,” *New York Times* August 8, 2006. Available at <http://www.nytimes.com/2006/08/08/business/worldbusiness/08bodies.html?pagewanted=print>

¹³ D.S. Atmadja and E. Untoro, “The Usage of the Voluntary Cadaver in Education of Medicine Through Silent Mentor Program,” *Indonesian Journal of Legal and Forensic Sciences* 2 (2012): 34-36.

¹⁴ S.C. Lin et al., “Silent virtuous teachers’: anatomical dissection in Taiwan,” *British Medical Journal* 339 (2009): 1438-1439.

¹⁵ A. Winkelmann and F.H. Guldner, “Cadavers as teachers: the dissecting room experience in Thailand,” *British Medical Journal* 329 (2004): 1455.

¹⁶ Vatican II, *Gaudium et spes*, §24.

¹⁷ Pontifical Council for Pastoral Assistance to Health Care Workers, *Charter for Health Care Workers*, §38.

its substantial union with a spiritual soul, the human body cannot be considered as a mere complex of tissues, organs, and functions, nor can it be evaluated in the same way as the body of animals; rather it is a constitutive part of the person who manifests and expresses himself through it.”¹⁸

What is the relationship between the human being and his body? In contrast to the secular bioethical tradition found primarily in the Western developed nations, which tends to see the body as something other than the person and as something belonging to the person, the Catholic tradition does not separate the human being from his body. Rather, the human body is personal, and the human person is embodied. Thus, citing Pope St. John Paul II, the *Charter for Health Care Workers* of the Pontifical Council for Pastoral Assistance to Health Care Workers concludes: “Every intervention on the human body ‘touches not only the tissues, the organs and their functions, but involves also at various levels the person himself.’”¹⁹ Human beings know this truth intuitively. When we touch another person’s arm, we touch him, and not just his body. When we kiss another person’s lips, we kiss her, and not just her body.

Finally, the Church’s affirmation of the dignity and inviolability of the human person is also the bedrock principle for her opposition to the buying and selling of human beings. As the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* declares: “The seventh commandment forbids acts or enterprises that for any reason - selfish or ideological, commercial, or totalitarian - lead to the *enslavement of human beings*, to their being bought, sold, and exchanged like merchandise, in disregard for their personal dignity. It is a sin against the dignity of persons and their fundamental rights to reduce them by violence to their productive value or to a source of profit.”²⁰

However, since you cannot distinguish the human being from his body without doing violence to his identity as an embodied person, the same argument can be made against the buying and selling of human organs. As the Catholic Bishops of the Philippines explained: “Human organ sale or trade, by its very nature is morally unacceptable. It is contrary to the dignity of the human person, his or her authentic autonomy and the essential equality of all persons. The dignity of the human person as the image of God includes not only his or her soul, but his or her corporeal being.

¹⁸ Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, “*Donum vitae*: Instruction on Respect for Human Life in its Origin and on the Dignity of Procreation Replies to Certain Questions of the Day,” §3.

¹⁹ Pontifical Council for Pastoral Assistance to Health Care Workers, *Charter for Health Care Workers*, §40. Citing John Paul II, “To the participants at a congress for Obstetricians”, Jan. 26, 1980, in *Insegnamenti* III/1, p. 192, §2. Cf. John Paul II, Encyclical, *Veritatis splendor*, §13.

²⁰ *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, §2414.

Hence, our body ought not to be treated as a commodity or object of commerce, which would amount to the dispossession or plundering of the human body.”²¹ It is especially tragic that the commercialization of organ exchanges has led to the exploitation of the poor, especially in developing countries like the Philippines and Bangladesh.²²

The Theological Tradition: Catholic Teaching on Informed Consent and Organ Donation

Affirming the dignity and inviolability of the human person is also the basis for Catholic Church’s insistence on the need of informed consent for medical treatment. The *Charter for Health Care Workers* will teach that the human person, “should be called upon to share in the improvement of his health and in becoming cured. He should be given the opportunity of personally choosing, and not be made to submit to the decisions and choices of others.”²³ In the same vein, the *Ethical and Religious Directives* of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops also includes the following directive: “The free and informed consent of the person or the person’s surrogate is required for medical treatments and procedures, except in an emergency situation when consent cannot be obtained and there is no indication that the patient would refuse consent to the treatment.”²⁴

Notice that the doctrine of informed consent acknowledges that certain situations exist when the consent of the patient can be presupposed. The *Charter for Health Care Workers* teaches that with regards to a patient who is incapacitated,

the health care worker can, and in extreme situations must, presume the consent to therapeutic interventions, which from his knowledge and in conscience he thinks should be made. If there is a temporary loss of knowing and willing, the health care worker can act in virtue of ‘the principle of therapeutic trust,’ that is the original confidence with which the patient entrusted himself to the health care worker. Should there be a permanent loss of knowing and willing, the health care worker can act in

²¹ Catholic Bishops’ Conference of the Philippines (CBCP), “CBCP Statement on Organ Donation Against Organ Sale,” January 27, 2008.

²² Nancy Scheper-Hughes, “The Tyranny of the Gift: Sacrificial Violence in Living Donor Transplants,” *American Journal of Transplantation* 7 (2007): 507-511; and Monir Moniruzzaman, “Living Cadavers’ in Bangladesh: Bioviolence in the Human Organ Bazaar,” *Medical Anthropology Quarterly* 26 (2012): 69-91.

²³ Ibid., no. 72. Citing Pope John Paul II, “To the World Congress of Catholic Doctors,” Oct. 3, 1982, in *Insegnamenti* V/3, p. 673, n. 4.

²⁴ United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB), *Ethical and Religious Directives for Catholic Health Care Service*, 5th ed., §26.

virtue of ‘the principle of responsibility for health care,’ which obliges the health care worker to assume responsibility for the patient’s health.²⁵

Situations that justify presumed consent include emergency situations where health-care providers can presume that the patient would have allowed them to act on his behalf to preserve his own good, and societal crises where legal or military directives can prescribe particular medical interventions including mandatory immunization and drug consumption to protect not only the patient’s own good but also the common good of his society.

Given her teaching on informed consent for all medical interventions, it should not be surprising that the Catholic Church also requires informed consent for organ donation.²⁶ The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* makes clear that the organ donor must give his free and informed consent prior to his death, or his next of kin must do so at the time of his death: “Organ transplants are not morally acceptable if the donor or those who legitimately speak for him have not given their informed consent.”²⁷ Here the *Catechism* echoes Pope Pius XII: “Generally speaking, doctors should not be permitted to undertake excisions or other operations on a corpse without the permission of those charged with its care, and perhaps even in the face of objections previously expressed by the person in question.”²⁸ In the Philippines, the Organ Donation Act of 1991 (Republic Act 7170) requires that informed consent be obtained before organ donation and transplantation.²⁹

There are at least two reasons for the need for informed consent in organ donation. First, as we noted above, informed consent affirms and protects the intrinsic dignity and inviolability of the human person. It does this in two ways. It acknowledges that the cadaver of a human person, though it is not intrinsically valuable, still needs to be respected because the respect for the dignity of the human person made in the image and likeness of God requires that we also honor his moral remains. As Pope Pius XII taught in 1956:

²⁵ Pontifical Council for Pastoral Assistance to Health Care Workers, *Charter for Health Care Workers*, no. 73.

²⁶ For a discussion of the need for informed consent in organ donation, see my “Presumed Consent for Organ Procurement: A Violation of the Rule of Informed Consent?” *National Catholic Bioethics Quarterly* 9 (2009): 245-252. The paragraphs that follow are heavily indebted to this earlier essay.

²⁷ *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, §2296.

²⁸ Pius XII, “Allocution to a Group of Eye Specialists, May 14, 1956” in *The Human Body: Papal Teaching*, Selected and arranged by the Monks of Solesmes (Boston: St. Paul Editions, 1960), pp. 371-384; p. 382.

²⁹ Republic of the Philippines, Congress of the Philippines, “Organ Donation Act of 1991,” January 7, 1992. Available at http://www.lawphil.net/statutes/repacts/ra1992/ra_7170_1992.html.

The human body deserves to be regarded entirely differently [from the dead body of an animal]. The body was the abode of a spiritual and immortal soul, an essential constituent of a human person whose dignity it shared. Something of this dignity still remains in the corpse. We can say also that, since it is a component of man, it has been formed 'to the image and likeness' of God... Finally, the dead body is destined for the resurrection and eternal life. This is not true of the body of an animal.³⁰

Next, it acknowledges that the human person, as someone made in the image and likeness of God, is only a steward and not the master of his own body. Accordingly neither he nor anyone else, certainly not society, may treat either his body or his organs as property that can be taken and distributed at will. As Pope Pius XII taught: "God alone is the lord of man's life and bodily integrity, his organs and members and faculties, those in particular which are instruments associated in the work of creation. Neither parents, nor husband or wife, nor even the very person concerned, can do with these as he pleases."³¹

Second, informed consent for organ donation also respects and acknowledges the essential formality of the transplanted organ as a *gift* that one person gives to another. For the Catholic moral tradition, organ donation is justified by the principle of charity. The person who donates an organ to a patient is making a genuine act of sacrifice modeled after the Lord's sacrifice of Himself on the Cross. In doing so, the donor fulfills the Lord's great commandment to His disciples: "This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. Greater love has no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends" (Jn. 15:12-13). Organ donation is an act of self-gift of the human person. As Pope St. John Paul II emphasized in an address to an International Congress on Transplants: "Every organ transplant has its source in a decision of great ethical value: 'the decision to offer without reward a part of one's own body for the health and well-being of another person.' Here precisely lies the nobility of the gesture, a gesture which is a genuine act of love."³²

However, a necessary dimension of a gift as gift is that it must be given.³³ It must be endowed. One cannot receive a gift from the other if the other has not

³⁰ Ibid., pp. 380-381.

³¹ Pope Pius XII, "Allocution to the Fourth International Congress of Surgeons, May 20, 1948," in *The Human Body: Papal Teaching*, Selected and arranged by the Monks of Solesmes (Boston: St. Paul Editions, 1960), p. 97.

³² John Paul II, "Address to the International Congress on Transplants, August 29, 2000," *National Catholic Bioethics Quarterly* 1 (2001): 89-92, p. 90.

³³ For a phenomenological study of the gift, see Kenneth L. Schmitz, *The Gift: Creation* (Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 1982), pp. 34-63. Also see the insightful observations by Robyn Horner in *Rethinking God as Gift: Marion, Derrida, and the Limits of Phenomenology* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2001), pp. 1-18.

consented to the giving. In effect, without the giver's consent, the so-called gift has been taken rather than has been received. Thus, as Pope Benedict XVI taught in an address to the participants of the international congress, "A Gift for Life. Considerations on Organ Donation," held in Rome from November 6-8, 2008: "With frequency, organ transplantation takes place as a completely gratuitous gesture on the part of the family member who has been certifiably pronounced dead. In these cases, informed consent is a precondition of freedom so that the transplant can be characterized as being a gift and not interpreted as a coercive or abusive act."³⁴ In other words, without informed consent, a transplanted organ ceases to be a gift. It is something taken. Some may even say that it is something stolen.

We should also note that Pope Benedict, in the same address in 2008, used the same theological arguments that he had put forward to justify organ donation, to condemn the buying and selling of human organs: "The possibility of organ sales, as well as the adoption of discriminatory and utilitarian criteria, would greatly clash with the underlying meaning of the gift that would place it out of consideration, qualifying it as a morally illicit act."³⁵ It is immoral to buy and sell human organs for the same reasons that it is immoral to buy and sell human beings.

The Theological Tradition: Catholic Teaching on Body Donation

Returning to the Catholic Church's teaching on body donation to science, Pope Pius XII proposed in a speech to a group of eye specialists on May 14, 1956, that the dissection of a cadaver for medical research to help the suffering is not immoral as long as the body is treated with reverence: "The public must be educated. It must be explained with intelligence and respect that to consent explicitly or tacitly to serious damage to the integrity of the corpse in the interest of those who are suffering, is no violation of the reverence due to the dead."³⁶ *The Charter of Health Care Workers* echoes the pope: "A corpse is no longer, in the proper sense of the term, a subject of rights, because it is deprived of personality, which alone can be the subject of rights." Hence, 'to put it to useful purposes, morally blameless and even noble' is a decision "not be condemned but to be positively justified."³⁷ *The Catechism of the Catholic*

³⁴ Benedict XVI, "Address of His Holiness Benedict XVI to Participants at an International Congress Organized by the Pontifical Academy for Life," November 7, 2008. Available at http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/benedict_xvi/speeches/2008/november/documents/hf_ben-xvi_spe_20081107_acdlife_en.html.

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Pope Pius XII, "Allocution to a Group of Eye Specialists," pp. 380-381.

³⁷ Pontifical Council for Pastoral Assistance to Health Care Workers, *Charter for Health Care Workers*, §87.

Church is more definitive regarding body donation for medical purposes: “Autopsies can be morally permitted for legal inquests or scientific research.”³⁸

Not surprisingly, in the same speech to the eye specialists in 1956, Pope Pius XII linked the reverence due to the human body to its origin and its destiny: “The body was the abode of a spiritual and immortal soul, an essential constituent of a human person whose dignity it shared. Something of this dignity still remains in the corpse. We can say also that, since it is a component of man, it has been formed ‘to the image and likeness’ of God ... Finally, the dead body is destined for the resurrection and eternal life. This is not true of the body of an animal.”³⁹

Finally, note that Pope Pius XII stipulated that consent must be given for body donation. When one gives one’s body to science, one consents explicitly or tacitly to dissection of one’s body. This is in accord with the Church’s teaching on organ donation. The human body can never be taken or bought. It always has to be given.

Theological Analysis: The Purchase and Use of Unclaimed Bodies

Returning to the focus of this essay, in my view, a medical school may neither buy nor use an unclaimed cadaver for medical or scientific purposes. First, it is immoral to buy and to sell human beings, human organs, and human bodies, because these practices would undermine the dignity of the human person. Recall the statement of the Catholic Bishops of the Philippines cited earlier that explained: “Our body ought not to be treated as a commodity or object of commerce, which would amount to the dispossession or plundering of the human body.”⁴⁰

Next, it is immoral to use unclaimed cadavers for medical dissections precisely because the deceased did not give his consent for his body to be used in the service of science. Without this consent, an unclaimed cadaver cannot be a gift. Once again, it is something taken. Once again, some may even say that it is something stolen.

Several objections could be made to these conclusions. First, some could claim that it is reasonable to presuppose that the deceased would have given consent to donate his body to science had he been asked. In response, the evidence suggests

³⁸ *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, §2301.

³⁹ Pope Pius XII, “Allocution to a Group of Eye Specialists,” pp. 380-381.

⁴⁰ CBCP, “Statement,” January 27, 2008.

otherwise. There is a dearth of donated cadavers in medical schools precisely because it is uncommon for individuals to choose this option for their remains. Thus, it is more reasonable to presuppose that any individual who did not give consent for his body to be used for medical dissection would have done what most people today would have done, and that is to withhold their consent.

Next, some could propose that unclaimed bodies can be used for scientific and medical research, even without the consent of the deceased, because these bodies are being used in service of the common good. In the view of these interlocutors, the practice of using unclaimed cadavers without the consent of the deceased is legitimized by the many lives that will be saved by the physicians and scientists who benefit from their use. In response, as we discussed above, the only times when consent can be presumed are scenarios where doing so would preserve and promote either the patient's own good alone or his own good and the common good together. Using an unclaimed cadaver for medical or scientific purposes does not fit either of these scenarios precisely because the practice does not promote the good of the deceased in any way. Instead, it subordinates and instrumentalizes his good to the good of others. This would be a violation of his dignity. It is even more unjust because most unclaimed bodies come from the indigent poor who are routinely exploited in our societies.

Responding to Two Contemporary Challenges

The temptation to buy and to use human cadavers for medical education and scientific research exists because of two contemporary challenges. First, as we discussed above, there is the challenge of the lack of cadavers for medical training. However, there is an alternative to using unclaimed cadavers: Medical schools around the globe are using plastinated bodies and specimens or 3D printed cadaver replicas as an alternative to traditional cadaver work in the anatomy lab.⁴¹ Early studies suggest that these approaches do not compromise the quality of the student's training. Additionally, there should also be an effort to organize programs to increase the bequeathing of bodies for medical education and research. As I have discussed in

⁴¹ P.G. McMennamin et al., "The production of anatomical teaching resources using three-dimensional (3D) printing technology," *Anatomical Sciences Education* 7 (2014): 479-486; B.H. Fruhstorfer et al., "The use of plastinated prosections for teaching anatomy—the view of medical students on the value of this learning resource," *Clinical Anatomy* 24 (2011): 246-252. Also see the news report: Tanya Lewis, "Plasticized Bodies Come to Singapore Medical School," May 28, 2013. Available at <http://www.livescience.com/34680-plastic-bodies-used-in-med-school.html>

more detail elsewhere, a system of mandated choice to educate citizens so that they may be more willing to donate their bodies for medical and scientific purposes may enhance organ donations.⁴²

Second, there is the challenge of what we should do with the unclaimed bodies. Instead of buying, selling, and using the bodies of our brothers and sisters, Catholic Christians should take the lead in society and provide the means for their burial. The cemeteries of the Archdiocese of Chicago in the United States have helped bury the bodies of about 200 unidentified and unclaimed persons in recent years.⁴³ As Roman Szabelski, executive director of Catholic Cemeteries of the Archdiocese of Chicago explained during a newspaper interview, “They are somebody’s mother, brother, sister, spouse, child, whatever, and it’s regretfully because of their own situation that they are left to be street people, so to speak, and to die alone. We as a society, we as a Church, step up and pray for those and mourn for those people who have died, realizing that they are a gift of God, and they should be recognized and honored even in death.”⁴⁴ Similar internments have been reported in the Archdiocese of Los Angeles and in the Diocese of Lafayette in Louisiana, also in the United States.⁴⁵ For centuries, burying the dead has been one of the corporal works of mercy. It remains the preeminent solution to the challenge of unclaimed bodies.**PS**

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⁴² N. Austriaco, “Presumed Consent for Organ Procurement: A Violation of the Rule of Informed Consent?” *National Catholic Bioethics Quarterly* 9 (2009): 245-252.

⁴³ CAN/EWTN News, “Chicago Archdiocese Buries Unidentified Persons Who Are ‘Known to God,’” November 24, 2015. Available at <http://www.ncregister.com/daily-news/chicago-archdiocese-buries-unidentified-persons-who-are-only-known-to-god>.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Brian Roewe, “Louisiana cemetery to take in unclaimed bodies,” *National Catholic Reporter*, April 28, 2012. Available at <https://www.ncronline.org/news/faith-parish/louisiana-cemetery-take-unclaimed-bodies>; David Montero, “Remains of 1,489 unclaimed, unidentified people buried with respect,” *Los Angeles Daily News*, December 10, 2014. Available at <http://www.dailynews.com/general-news/20141210/remains-of-1489-unclaimed-unidentified-people-buried-with-respect>

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