



# CATHOLIC CHURCH'S TEACHING ON ALKALINE HYDROLYSIS

## OVERVIEW

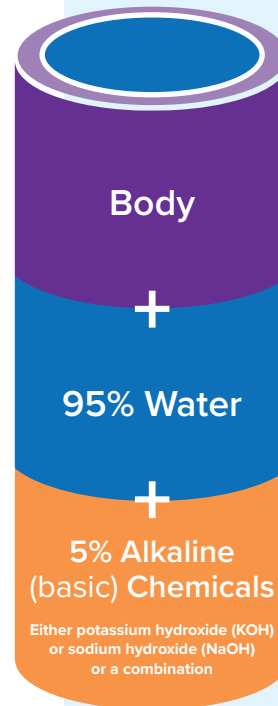
In March 2023, the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) Committee on Doctrine issued a pivotal statement titled "On the Proper Disposition of Bodily Remains." This document addresses the church's stance on the respectful treatment of human remains, including those processed through alkaline hydrolysis..

## KEY POINTS FROM THE USCCB STATEMENT:

The statement highlights that while alkaline hydrolysis leaves behind bone fragments that can be pulverized and placed in an urn, the majority of the body is dissolved into liquid. This liquid, treated as wastewater, is viewed as not providing adequate respect for the human body. Moreover, it does not visibly manifest the church's belief in the resurrection of the body, an essential tenet of Catholic faith.

## GUIDANCE FROM CATHOLIC CEMETERY CONFERENCE:

Reflecting the USCCB's guidance, the Catholic Church does not advocate for or support the use of alkaline hydrolysis. The process is seen as lacking in the reverence owed to the bodily remains of the deceased, a reverence that is integral to expressing our faith and hope in bodily resurrection.



The hydroxide breaks the bonds between chemicals in the body (a process called hydrolysis), converting them to basic building blocks. Heat is used to speed up the process.

Sterile Effluent  
(water, salt, sugars, amino acids, peptides)

Bone Fragments  
(calcium phosphate)

## PASTORAL CONSIDERATIONS:

However, the Church also demonstrates pastoral care in these matters. Should remains processed through alkaline hydrolysis be presented to a Catholic cemetery, the cemetery, with the consent of the diocesan bishop, may allow for the interment or entombment of these remains.

In such cases, the Catholic Cemetery is expected to treat these remains with the same level of care and respect afforded to traditionally cremated remains, following established procedures and guidelines for burial or entombment.