

StoneMor Corporation Cashing In On Catholic Cemeteries

In Greater Philadelphia, StoneMor Partners is planning to cash in on the consecrated grounds of the Catholic cemeteries. After purchasing the management rights to 13 Catholic cemeteries, with an initial payment of \$53 million for a 60-year contract, StoneMor is intent on commercializing the sacred grounds of remembrance for faithful Catholics, while disguised behind the robes of the church.

“We actually felt that for marketing it was better to have the church still perceived [as the owner].”

~ Ray Smith, V.P. Marketing, StoneMor*

StoneMor is the second largest owner and operator of cemeteries in the U.S. Like any publicly-traded corporation, their stock holders demand a high return on their investment. The company’s sales force uses cemetery records to contact families and subject them to high-pressure sales tactics that maximize company profits. In some cases, families are confronted about purchasing funeral merchandise for other family members, while they are making arrangements for the burial of a loved one.

“[T]hese cemeteries have for the most part never sold the merchandise or the other services. And there is – we don’t know exactly, but somewhere between 60,000, 70,000, 80,000 living members of the Catholic community in Philadelphia that own their interment rights but they don’t own their vault, they don’t own their marker, they don’t own their casket and they don’t own the opening and closing. So there is going to be the enormous opportunity for the company to market just to their own lot owners...”

~ Ray Smith, V.P. Marketing, StoneMor*

* Transcript from Investor’s Day Conference - November 18, 2013.



You Can Rely On Your Local Funeral Director

As local funeral directors, we understand the importance of community, the significance of tradition and the value of family. We serve families with care and compassion and hold integrity and fairness in high regard. We have been here for our communities for generations.

Ask Us – We Are Here To Help

If you have questions about pre-need arrangement, please contact your local funeral director. As a licensed professional, they will be able to provide you with information to help you make the best choice for your family.

Unfortunately, not everyone believes in treating customers with the same respect. For some profit-driven corporations, a casket or a cemetery plot is just another sale and making the quota is more important than building relationships with families.

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“The true story of StoneMor, however, is even more troubling... This story adds skewed incentives, deception, greed, and unethical behavior by a management team that engaged in precisely such behavior with a prior company.”

~ Seeking Alpha - Value Sleuth
The Impending Implosion Of StoneMor Partners



What You Need To Know To Protect Your Family

We support families being prepared for the inevitable. Pre-need arrangements make good financial and emotional sense, but those arrangements should add peace of mind to your family, not additional stress or financial burden.

We can't stop these high pressure tactics from happening, but we can alert consumers to the unscrupulous corporations that use them. If you are contacted by a company selling caskets, vaults or cemetery plots, don't be afraid to ask questions.

Contact your local funeral director or visit www.pfda.org for more information on making the right pre-need decision.

Questions To Ask & Things To Do - To Protect Yourself

- ✓ Ask all salespersons to identify themselves, the company they represent and what services they are selling.
- ✓ Find out what exactly is covered. Even if you buy a casket or cemetery lot, you will still need the services of a local funeral director.
- ✓ Make certain that everything that is promised is put in writing and attached to the contract, including your right to cancel.
- ✓ Ask if 100% of the funds are protected and transferable.
- ✓ Find out the name of the bank or insurance company that is acting as the trustee of your pre-arrangements.
- ✓ When purchasing a pre-need plan, a licensed funeral director is usually the best source. Ask to see the professional license of the person you are dealing with.

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Catholics Should Be Concerned About Cemetery Takeover

Few rituals hold as much significance as the funeral. Funeral services allow families to mourn the loss of a loved one; to celebrate a life well lived. The sacred grounds of our Catholic cemeteries provide a dignified way to memorialize a person's presence in the world.

StoneMor Partners wants to change all of that.

StoneMor has purchased the management rights to 13 Catholic cemeteries in our area with an initial payment of \$53 million to the Archdiocese of Philadelphia. With high pressure sales tactics and questionable business practices, the second largest owner and operator of cemeteries in the U.S. is cashing in on Catholic cemeteries throughout Greater Philadelphia.

The decision to contract out the church's cemeteries may help the Archdiocese's cash flow, but it destroys the sanctity of Philadelphia's 13 Catholic cemeteries. With a 60-year contractual agreement, StoneMor is intent on commercializing the sacred grounds of remembrance for faithful Catholics, while disguised behind the robes of the church.

Rather than treating these cemeteries as an extension of the Church and a consecrated burial place, StoneMor sees nothing more than an opportunity to make a profit. In presentations to stock investors, their executives have made no secret about their plans.

The company intends to hire up to 100 sales people to canvas southeastern Pennsylvania and beyond. StoneMor's sales force uses cemetery records to contact families and subject them to confrontational, scare tactics to sell burial plots, caskets and preneed services. All of this is done in the name of profit, with no concern for the sacred location or the family's needs.

Local funeral directors throughout the five-county region understand the importance of community and the value of building relationships with families. We serve families with care and compassion, holding integrity and fairness in high regard. Respecting the wishes of all faiths and denominations is an important part of what we do, and we know the value placed on burial in a Holy Catholic cemetery.

While we can't stop StoneMor or other unscrupulous companies from using high pressure tactics, we can help consumers understand who they are dealing with. Don't be misled. The sacred ground of Philadelphia's Catholic cemeteries was sold to the highest bidder, who is intent on making a profit.

Sincerely,

T.J. Fluehr

T.J. Fluehr, Supervisor