

# Faith Digest: Monks free to make caskets

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**Court affirms monks' right to sell caskets.** A group of Catholic monks can continue selling their handmade caskets after the U.S. Supreme Court declined to hear an appeal from the Louisiana State Board of Embalmers and Funeral Directors in their case against the brothers of [St. Joseph Abbey](#). In 2007, the abbey began selling handmade coffins, prompting the board to file a lawsuit that argued Louisiana law required a funeral director's license for casket sales. The monks later brought suit in federal court and were upheld by both the Eastern District of Louisiana in 2010 and the 5th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals in March 2013. The funeral directors appealed to the Supreme Court. By not agreeing to hear the case, the Supreme Court let stand the appeals court ruling. The 5th Circuit said in its decision that Louisiana does not regulate the use or construction of caskets. People may purchase any casket from out of state, and Louisiana law does not require the use of a casket at all.

**Woman sues InterVarsity over firing after divorce.** A Michigan woman filed a wrongful-termination lawsuit against [InterVarsity Christian Fellowship](#), saying she was fired because of her divorce, even though two male colleagues kept their jobs when they went through divorce and



remarriage.

InterVarsity students gather. (Photo courtesy InterVarsity Christian Fellowship) Alyce Conlon worked for the evangelical campus ministry as a spiritual director at the Grand Rapids office from 2004 until she was let go in December 2011, according to a suit filed in the U.S. District Court for the Western District of Michigan. Conlon was placed on paid leave early in 2011 after informing supervisors that she and her husband were considering separation or divorce. Despite following InterVarsity's requirements for divorce procedures, the ministry let her go because she was not successful in reconciling her marriage, her lawyer alleges. InterVarsity issued this public statement: "A vital element of the First Amendment's guarantee of religious liberty is the freedom of religious employers to make hiring decisions through the use of faith-based criteria. As a Christian organization, InterVarsity Christian Fellowship's credibility and witness depends on its ability to hire and retain personnel who share and abide by InterVarsity's faith commitments. It is deeply regrettable that a former employee has chosen to challenge this key constitutional liberty." When dealing with employment issues and divorce, InterVarsity ministry leaders take into consideration who initiated the divorce, the impact on work competency and funding and the effect on colleagues, students, faculty and donors, according to the suit.

**Brunei to implement Shariah penal code.** The sultan of Brunei announced he will rule his oil-rich Islamic country according to Shariah

laws, including death by stoning for adultery, the amputation of limbs for theft, flogging for alcohol consumption and abortion, and other punishments. The Shariah penal code will begin in phases starting in April 2014, said Sultan Hassanal Bolkiah, according to Agence France-Presse. The laws and punishments apply only to the Sunni Muslim majority in the Southeast Asian country that enjoys one of the richest economies in Asia, based on extensive fields of petroleum and natural gas.