

## **Electronic Simony**

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**Simony (SAI-muh-nee):**

*The selling or purchasing of spiritual things, which is forbidden by both ecclesiastical (Canon)law and natural law.*

**Canon Law:**

**Canon 1171 - Sacred things, which are destined for divine worship through dedication or a blessing, are to be treated with reverence and not to be employed for improper or profane use even if they are under the control of private individuals.**

**Canon 1190 - It is strictly forbidden to sell sacred relics.**

**Canon 1376 - One who profanes a movable or immovable sacred thing is to be punished with a just penalty.**

**Natural Law:**

*Man's reasoned participation in God's eternal law.*

**Natural law is promulgated by God and is the “objective order” established by Him; furthermore, man uses his reason to promulgate the dictates of natural law, which is autonomous. The development of society means an increase in the specific dictates of natural law, so that what was once implicit gradually becomes explicit. The Catholic Church possesses the power to interpret and to help others understand the natural law, which is knowable by all human beings.**

After years of intense efforts to stop Simony, I have concluded that this unfortunately is a two-fold problem. First, the religious, the church, and/or community who have stopped believing in the Communion of the Saints are selling their bodily remains for mere profit. Second, the businessman and/or individual profiteer out to make a quick buck at the expense of another's beliefs. Hand in hand, it is a most difficult adversary. Lost faith and no faith, a most successful business partnership, void of any conscience.

Due to the abuses associated with the buying and selling of relics (which unfortunately included frauds and thefts), the Mother Church was forced to address the situation in the early Church with the establishment of firm doctrinal changes. The sad thing was and still is that some of the abuse stems from within. I find it particularly interesting that the majority of simony is conducted by the very people who in the past and at present do not believe in Christ, His Church, the saints, and more than likely do not belong to the established Christian community. It is interesting how a person who does not believe that a relic could possibly be the authentic remains of a Christian saint can then turn around and auction it off to others.

The arrival of the electronic Internet medium has created a pathway to the "middle ages". What was once a well guarded and lucrative underground trade has now come to prominence worldwide through the Internet super highway. Individuals with bogus names and secret identities have replaced shady merchants of earlier days. High tech sophisticated Internet providers have replaced the dark alleys and meeting places. A trade that was once subject to local demographics can now spread worldwide in a microsecond.

These relics; the majority 1st class, are the body remains of holy individuals who have fought the battles that satan had put upon them, and they now wear the crown. These holy relics deserve to remain dignified, not sold as novelties. Relic sellers use the argument that they are not selling the relic, only the locket; the relic is supposedly a gift. It is bad enough that they are sacrilegiously desecrating a spiritual sacramental of the church, but to add insult to injury they de-emphasize the contents of the locket by openly admitting that to them, "*the relic is of no value*". The relic in the locket is the jewel of the Christian community.

It was in late 1998 that relics began to appear on an Internet auction house. E-mails from concerned Catholics, Christians, and non-Christians started appearing on a daily basis at the ICHRusa office. The officers of the auction house were notified and educated as to the violations regarding the sale of relics in Canon Law. Relic sellers were contacted when possible and educated as to the Code of Canon Law and made aware of the offensive nature of this practice. It did not take long for a second Internet auction house to appear and provide another platform for the unscrupulous to earn their 30 pieces of silver.

The auction houses have attempted to slow down and in some cases stop auctions offering 1st class relics for sale. Through our efforts, a major auction house rewrote their guidelines for *prohibited* items on their website to include human remains (1st class relics). Enforcing it seems to be a problem. The sellers have changed their vocabulary and some cases the damage is done before the offending auction is brought to the attention of the auction house representative. Once the violation is brought to their attention, closing it is another story. First, they say they cannot censor before the posting of a sale, and then when a sale is brought to their attention they say they do not have the expertise to determine if it is a violation of policy. We must all work together to **stop** this electronic "dark age" mentality!