

INTERNATIONAL CRUSADE FOR HOLY RELICS

How to identify and authenticate a relic.

The word relic (Latin, relinquo: I leave, abandon) generally means a part, sometimes of considerable size, of the remains of a martyr or a saint. Such a part of a human body, either a minute fragment or one entire limb, with the approval of ecclesiastical authority, can be the object of public and solemn veneration.

Relics, the word includes the bodies of departed saints, fragments of their bodies, articles or portions of articles which they have used, such as clothes, vestments, rosaries, and the like. The Church also venerates relics of Christ and His Blessed Mother. Such are the holy nails, lance, spear, fragments of the True Cross, the girdle, veil, etc., of the Blessed Virgin. The devotion to relics, solemnly approved by the Council of Trent (sess. xxv. DC Invoc. Sanct.) rests on two great principles of Catholic belief.

RELIC CLASSIFICATION

What we have attempted to do is consider what has become obvious to the multi-denominational array of relic guardians. The current standards for relic classification are noticeably different between the Catholic and Orthodox Churches. We have found that this is difficult, confusing, and sometimes personally troubling to have to pigeonhole a relic into the existing three relic classes.

To the existing and widely accepted first class, second class, and third class, the ICHRusa has added three additional

categories to each class. The proposed ICHRusa relic classification will be:

First Class - The bodies of saintly persons or any of their integrant parts, such as limbs, ashes, and bones.

1st Order: *Distinguished relics* - the body: *the head; the arm; the forearm; the heart; the tongue; the hand; the leg; that part of the body in which a Martyr suffered, provided that it is entire and not small.*

2nd Order: Altar stone, Antimension, relic of approved Eucharistic miracle [flesh – blood of DNJC], relic required for placement in a consecrated fixed [permanent] altar according to the new norms, bone (ex ossibus) larger than 2 1/2 inches.

3rd Order: Relics confected in thecae by the Catholic Church or mounted in wax by Orthodox churches. This also applies to non-mounted authenticated small 1st class relics.

Second Class - Objects that have come in physical contact with living Saints and are thereby sanctified (for instance, the instruments wherewith a martyr has been tortured, the chains by which he was bound, the clothes he wore, objects he used).

1st Order: *Relics of the Cross*, relics of the true Cross is to be understood as applying to any authentic relic of the Passion.

2nd Order: Complete personal item, letter and/or writing of Saint.

3rd Order: Relics confected by Religious Communities, small pieces of

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garments attached to prayer cards while individual progressed through the process, i.e.; Servant of God and Venerable.

Third Class - Bits of cloth touched to an actual 1st or 2nd class relic.

1st Order: large piece of original coffin [21/2 inches], burial lines, garment that adorned the incorrupt body of a Saint, Veil of Our Lady of Loreto, Effigy touched to the Veil of Veronica, replica's of the Nails that crucified DNJC. **DOCUMENTED**

2nd Order: Prayer cards, hand made cloth ovals, and mementoes confected by Religious Orders and/or Communities. **SEALED but UNDOCUMENTED**

3rd Order: Item from the birthplace, site of Martyrdom, place of natural death, burial [grave] site, or significant Biblical location. Cloth or item touched to a major reliquary within a recognized shrine or tomb. Manufactured medals from private companies in Rome, distributed as souvenirs.

THE AUTHENTICS

The document that accompanies a relic is often times referred to as the authentic. On the document there is a variety of useful and necessary information. On the top of the document is the name of the ecclesiastic who has authenticated the relic as genuine; this could be the Postulator General of the religious order whose logo appears or, the Vicar General.

Next is the body of copy that is usually written in Latin; I'll translate it into English.

"To all and any who will read this document. We, the Pro-Postulator in the Cause of (Beatification and) Canonization of _____ guarantee and testify that from the authentic Relics, which are preserved, we have extracted a particle from _____ of the same _____ and have placed it in a _____ case covered by crystal, bound by red colored thread and sealed with the seal of our office."

Rome (Date)

Signature

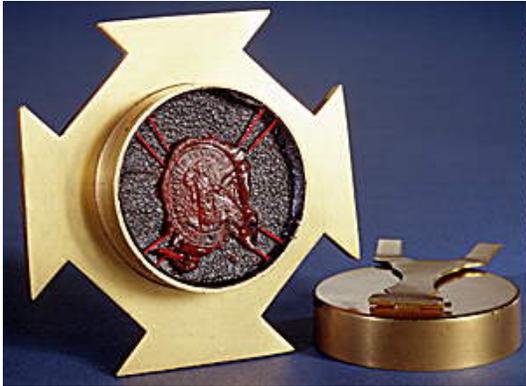
[Seal]

This document is a public acclamation as to the authenticity of the relic itself, of which a high-ranking ecclesiastic has signed his name.

Typed or hand written into the blank areas are the name and the abbreviation of the cause of their sainthood and the individuals station in religious life, as well as any distinction of honor that the Church might have placed on them posthumously. There is also a description of the relic itself, (described below) and a description of the locket or reliquary that it is placed in.

On the bottom of the authentic is the date of issuance, the seal of the office, registrar number and the signature of the authenticator.

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Underneath the back cover of the relic locket there is a seal of red wax. The relic itself is held in place in the locket by threads that cross over it. The threads are fed through the walls of the locket on opposing sides and it is sealed shut with a wax seal bearing the insignia of issuing religious authority and their orders initials. This seal and its locking procedure (threads and seal) should never under any circumstances be broken. It protects the integrity and validity of the authentication. Even if the papers are lost and the seal is intact it is difficult but not impossible to have new papers generated in Rome.

In the process of trying to identify the specific relic you have accompanied by the document you will find that the explanation will be in Latin. I have compiled a glossary to provide you with the definitions of the most commonly used words:

arca mortuaria - mortuary box, container
arca sepulerali - coffin
breviario - breviary
coronse spinse D.N.J.C. - crown of thorns of Our Lord Jesus Christ
[cravio] corporis - body
de velo - from the veil
domini nostri jesu christi, D.N.J.C. - Our Lord Jesus Christ
domo - house

ex bireto - from the biretta
ex capillus - from the hair
ex carne - from the flesh
ex cineribus - from the ashes
ex indumento - from the clothing
ex ligneo pulvere, mixto pulveri corporis, quem residuum continebat prima capsula funeralis - from the remains of the wood, mixed with the dust of the body, the residue of which was contained in the first box, [or sarcophagus]
ex ossibus - from the bones
ex praecordis - from the stomach or intestines
ex praesepis - birthplace of D.N.J.C.
ex pelle - from the skin
ex pluviali - cope [cloak wore for Benediction]
ex sportula - from the little basket
ex stipite affixionis - probably means "from the whipping post"
ex strato - from the covering [blanket]
ex tela serica quae tetigit cor - from the silk cloth which touched the heart
ex tunica - from the tunic

Now let's move forward to the initials that follow the name to which the relic belongs:

AP. - Apostle
C. - Confessor
D. - Doctor of the Church
E. - Bishop
EV. - Evangelist
F. - Founder of Order
Lev. - Deacon
M. - Martyr
Poen. - Penitent
PP. - Pope
Reg. - King or Queen
V. - Virgin
Vid. - Widow