

International Crusade for Holy Relics USA

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Relics of saints: A tradition that won't die down

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By Cindy Wooden

Catholic News Service <<http://www.catholicnews.com/index.html>>

VATICAN CITY (CNS) -- Although for the past 20 years the Vatican has been placing greater restrictions on the distribution of relics, Pope John Paul II receives dozens of new relics each year.

The presentation of relics to the pope is a customary part of beatification and canonization ceremonies.

With his record pace of proclaiming new blessed and saints, Pope John Paul has amassed a record number of relics. Housed in reliquaries 12-20 inches tall running the gamut from almost-kitsch to serious sculpture, the relics are kept in a frescoed room near the pope's Redemptoris Mater Chapel and in a chapel in the apartment of the papal secretaries.

When Mother Teresa of Calcutta is beatified Oct. 19, the Missionaries of Charity plan to give the pope a reliquary containing a vial of her blood.

The exact design of the reliquary is meant to be a surprise, but it will include a flame, reflecting the words of Jesus that Mother Teresa heard addressed to her, "Come, be my light," said Missionary of Charity Father Brian Kolodiejchuk, the postulator promoting her cause.

A twin reliquary, also containing a vial of blood, will be placed at Rome's Basilica of St. John Lateran after the beatification for veneration.

The public veneration responds to a desire by many faithful "to make a connection, to see and to touch," Father Kolodiejchuk said.

Giving the pope a reliquary with the bones of a newly declared blessed or saint is common, but not obligatory; more and more often, "officials are not taking bones from the tombs of perspective saints," said Msgr. Enrico Vigano, an official involved in planning papal liturgies.

Often church officials and religious orders opt to use as relics blood drawn during the person's final illness or immediately upon his or her death, or

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hair or even pieces of the prospective saint's garments.

But in the case of martyrs, sometimes even that is not possible.

Jesuit Father Paolo Molinari, one of the busiest and longest-serving postulators, said the first beatification he was involved in was a case in point.

When Jesuit Father Jacques Berthieu was martyred in Madagascar in 1896, his body was thrown in a river and reportedly eaten by crocodiles.

Father Molinari said that during the 1965 beatification ceremony, he gave Pope Paul VI a copy of a letter written by Father Berthieu to his mother.

"If there are no remains, what can you do? Besides, I thought this made more sense," he said.

Father Molinari understands the importance many Catholic faithful give to relics, but he is not comfortable with disturbing the bodies of the dead to obtain them.

Father Kolodiejchuk said the Missionaries of Charity felt the same way.

"Especially when it was somebody you knew and loved, you do not want to disturb the body," he said.

The sentiments underlying the veneration of relics are noble, Father Molinari said.

"When we lose someone for whom we had affection, we are very attached to tender reminders of our love for them -- a photograph, a ring, a lock of hair. We cherish the object that keeps the bond alive even though we do not give it any special value or power," he said.

"We know this person is alive in God and we can talk to him or her and perhaps these objects serve to remind us of that fact. That is the value of relics," the Jesuit said.

The veneration of the tombs of mar-



Editor Wanted:

It has been a pleasure these past three years editing, publishing and distributing the ICHRusa's newsletter, *The Guardian*. I assumed this position when my schedule was not filled up as it has now become. With employment, my farm, and other activities, I am finding it harder to devote time to this publication.

I am, therefore, relaying my resignation as editor of this newsletter, effective December 31st 2003. I will put together two more issues this year.

If someone is interested in taking over this position, please contact Chev. Thomas Serafin (tom@ICHRusa.com) or myself (sam@gallicantu.biz). Some programs that are beneficial in creating this newsletter are: "MicroSoft Publisher" and "Adobe Acrobat."

Thank you Chev. Thomas and you members of ICHRusa for allowing me to serve this venerable organization.

Sincerely,

Samuel A. Mitchel, KHS

tyrs and the practice of building altars over them continue, in a way, but the Vatican and the whole Latin rite of the Catholic Church are moving away from the practice of collecting relics, dividing them into ever-smaller fragments and distributing them.

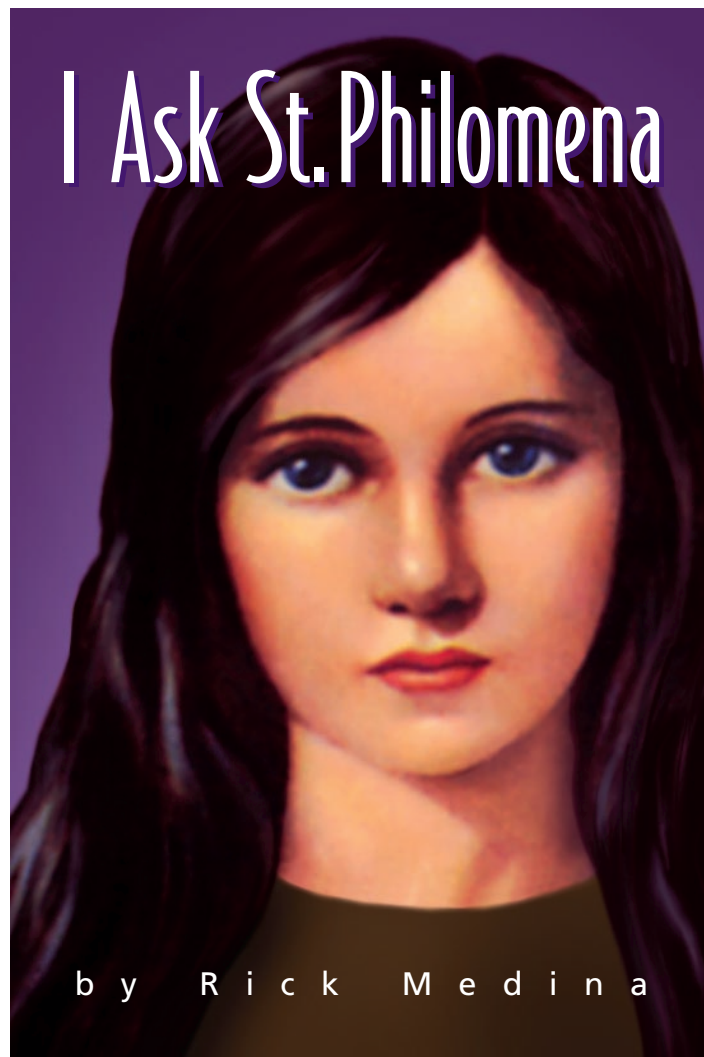
While Byzantine Catholics continue to celebrate the Divine Liturgy with an "antimension" -- an altar cloth containing a small envelope of relics -- Latin-rite churches no longer have to have slivers of relics sealed in their altars.

When relics are placed in new churches today, they often are large enough to be identifiable as a body part

and are placed in a tomb-like urn under the altar, reflecting the original Christian practice of building altars over the tombs of the martyrs.

"When the Emperor Constantine honored St. Peter," Father Molinari said, "he did not move the body. He placed an altar over the tomb and built a church around it."

(Continued on page 4)



When considering the most mysterious and powerful saints, Philomena is second to few. In seeking a patroness with the compassion to facilitate a divine intercession, Philomena may be second to none.

The only person canonized solely on the basis of the astonishing miracles Our Lord has performed through her, Saint Philomena's clients report petitions answered swiftly and with lavish generosity. Often referring to her as a close friend, today's faithful seek Saint Philomena in all spiritual and temporal needs.

I Ask Saint Philomena provides heartening information about enhancing the efficacy of prayer through a spiritual union with the saints. It offers directions for approaching a celestial patron, and creative suggestions for developing a *dynamic* relationship. The lessons are enriched with reflections on the author's fascinating rapport with his own powerful patroness. The result is a refreshing examination of the *Cult of Saints*, an enduring pillar and potent treasure of Roman Catholicism.

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According to author Rick Medina, he was not seeking a spiritual patron. It was St. Philomena's persistence — her playful charm and support — that brilliantly won him over.

Here's the fascinating story of how an early Roman martyr befriended a twenty-first-century American, and how their relationship led him to a deeper understanding of the Church's teaching on the Communion of Saints. The author reveals effective ways to grow closer to Our Lord through His most celebrated servants.

I Ask Saint Philomena also includes valuable insight on:

Methods for finding **your** patron saint

Enhancing the power of **your** prayers

Recognizing heavenly guidance in **your** daily life

Developing **your** own dynamic devotions and spiritual alliances

"The saints were people just like us. What distinguished them were their extraordinary levels of faith and service to Our Lord. Instead of looking up to your patron saints, look into them. Let their lives inspire you to go and maximize your role in tending to your brothers and sisters in Christ." --

From I Ask Saint Philomena

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Rick Medina
is a member of **ICHRusa**





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