

## nEw Judas, same Betrayal!

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 the shady merchants of earlier days. High tech sophisticated Internet service providers have replaced the dark alleys and meeting places.

It was in late 1998 that relics began to appear on an Internet auction house. The first incident was by individuals making relics available for what they believed to be a reasonable donation. All in all this was an honest and harmless attempt to make relics available for veneration. 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, educated as to the Code of Canon Law, and made aware of the offensive nature of this practice.

Currently the sale of relics of Christian saints is rampant on the Internet. In the beginning online auction houses created (albeit unknowingly), a platform for individuals to sell the remains of our great saints. They now knowingly maintain this sacrilegious marketplace. Over the past 7 years, the increased theft of relics from places of worship, and the increasing concern over simony and the authenticity of numerous relics has become a legitimate concern. 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. Equally confounding is that Catholics and Christians alike are selling relics, while professing different ideals, ideals of convenience.

What appears in the past to have been a valid reason why not to sell, seems at present, a better reason to sell. For the uncaring, the pursuit of cash at the expense of others appears to be the driving force. The purses of the morally bankrupt are being lined with silver, the same silver paid out 1,972 years ago.

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 establishment of firm doctrinal changes.

Simony (SAI-muh-nee); is the selling or purchasing of spiritual things, which is forbidden by both natural law and ecclesiastical law. Canon Law governs ecclesiastical while Natural Law is man's reasoned participation in God's eternal law. The Catholic Church possesses the power to interpret and to help others understand the natural law, which is knowable by all human beings. 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 relics of which I am concerned are 1st class, the body remains of holy individuals who have fought the battles that Satan had put upon them, and they now wear the crown. These relics deserve to remain dignified, not sold as novelties! The relic merchant cares nothing for the lives of the saint(s), his or her sufferings and trials, the spiritual implications! They use a moronic 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 sacrament of the Christian community, 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 seller's mentality is; offend you first, offend your values, your morality, your traditions, your faith, and presume you are stupid. Remove the relic and you have in most cases a \$5.00 locket (theca). The relic in the theca is the jewel of the Christian community.

I have come across a litany of excuses why the seller believes he/she can sell a relic, the explanations vary. The most common is that they are selling the locket (theca) not the relic. The creative salesmanship of the "neo-middle ages" merchant is obvious, the crassness of today's Judas is painfully obvious. Let us not forget his driving motivation, MONEY.

For a relic to be a valid for public veneration it must have proper documentation. If a person is selling a relic that is undocumented it is possible that it might be a fraud. If it is a documented relic, the general sale of relics is a violation of the Code of Canon Law and a questionable act in Civil Law as well as a possible violation of Penal Codes. Why then would a company want to participate in commerce that is offensive to the Christian community and has possible legal implications in City, County, State, and Federal laws?

I find it interesting how the same establishment that keeps the auction houses from censoring incoming auction copy is the same system that cannot enforce restrictions because of lack of regulations. I really believe that the auction houses could do something if they honestly cared.

The sin of simony has existed throughout time, fueled by the same human weakness and greed. The auction houses refer to themselves as communities; they proudly publicize their charitable donations, yet they refuse to stop aiding and abetting in the sale of the remains of the children of the

same God they revere and value so much, "In God We Trust." I guess His money is as good as anyone else's is! I wonder if the benefactors of the stock proceeds of these companies feel the same.

A society cannot survive if we choose to ignore the teachings of the past. The widespread "middle-ages" mentality towards the sales of relics on the internet is a mind numbing reality. To the auction houses I say; "you are no longer ignorant to the gravity of your complicity in the sale of religious relics on the internet. To the relic sellers I say; "Of two things I am sure. First, we will all die. Second, we will all be judged."