



Love Remains

A Catechesis on the Veneration of Relics

Mark E. Ginter, Ph.D.

Gardener's Servant Productions







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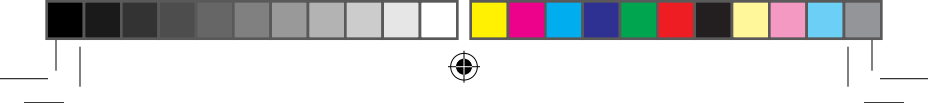
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Dedicated to the Families
in the Diocese of Springfield in Illinois.

May they radiate the joy of the Gospel of Jesus
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and play.

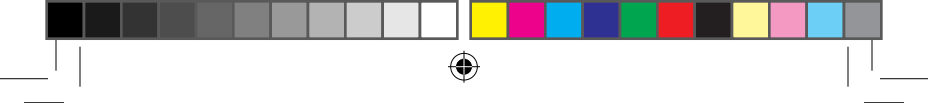


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Introduction

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavens...

(Eph. 1:3)



God holds nothing good back from his children. As the Letter to the Ephesians, in the New Testament, says above, God has given us “every spiritual blessing.” God our Father sent his Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, into a family so that we can be saved as his adopted brothers and sisters. God our Father sent the Holy Spirit as the Gift by which we become adopted sons and daughters through faith. Through the one, holy, catholic, and apostolic Church, we become God’s children. The blessings that God gives to his children are abundant. They are as countless as the blades of grass and as unique as each flake of snow. God’s blessings are not scarce.



Relics from officially recognized blessed and saints of the Church are among these spiritual blessings from heaven. Although a relic might be a single chip of bone from a saint, the blessings that shower upon the Church from this fragment are as abundant as the graces that come from the *only* Son of God, since he is the source of all grace towards us and every saint is grafted onto Christ as the branch is attached to the vine (see *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1997).

Humanly speaking, saints’ relics are like souvenirs of famous people or heirloom gifts that can never be replaced. For example, a baseball bat used by St. Louis Cardinal Hall of Famer Stan Musial



would be considered a highly prized souvenir. Many people want to see it and to touch it. Some even want to swing at a pitch with it, hoping that they could hit the ball as successfully as Stan “the Man” did during his storied career. Another example might be a wedding gift of a handmaid quilt that has been passed down from one generation to the next. The quilt could be reserved for display only, but it might become the occasion of much discussion and admiration, having priceless value. Both of these examples are simply human ways of respecting special items from the lives of special people. Saints’ relics fall into that general category of special items from the lives of special people, but they belong to an even more narrow category of special people in the Church because those people were testifiably temples of the Holy Spirit (see 1 Cor. 3:16-17).



This little booklet is intended to explain the faith, as it has been handed down to us, concerning the proper veneration of relics from the *beati* and *santi*. The most important truth about relics does not concern the physical matter itself, such as bone or hair or blood, but it concerns the person from whom that material object comes.






The Meaning of “Saint”


We could begin many ways, but let’s start with understanding the specific language of the Church about such matters.

To begin with, the term “saint” has an everyday meaning and a technical meaning. The everyday meaning refers to a person as very religious or very pious or, simply, very holy. St. Paul seems to have this everyday meaning in mind when he begins his Letter to the Ephesians,

Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, to **the holy ones** who are in Ephesus faithful in Christ Jesus (emphasis added).



The English translation here from the *New American Bible* uses the term “the holy ones” in place of the Greek term *hagioi*, and in place of the Latin term *sancti*, from which we get the word “saints.” Yet, St. Paul probably does not intend to refer to an exclusive club of people who have already achieved holiness. Rather, he is stating a theological truth that a person is already holy by belonging to Christ Jesus in the Church while still striving to attain that perfect holiness that belongs to God and which God wants us to have (see Rom. 12:1).



To borrow an example from the arts, think about a dramatic play. Let’s use *Murder in the Cathedral* by T. S. Elliot. Then, let’s say that I am the director. The date of the performance is Dec. 29, the exact date of the murder in the cathedral. To prepare for the performance, we need a cast of actors and actresses who will rehearse for the performance. Of course, we begin with auditions. I invite anyone to try out



for the play, but I ask them to prepare ahead of time part of the script as their example of acting. After the auditions are finished, I announce which persons will play which roles. I also handout a schedule of rehearsals so that everyone knows how much practice I expect of them in preparation for the performance. So, here is the question, before the performance on Dec. 29, are these men and women who auditioned “actors” and “actresses?” We are inclined to answer, “Yes,” because *they have been practicing* for their roles in the performance. Yet, they have not publicly performed. In other words, they have not achieved their goal. We might say that they are only *potential* actors and actresses. They become *real* actors and actresses during the performance. Likewise for us as disciples of Jesus Christ, we may refer to ourselves as holy ones, or saints in the everyday meaning, because we continue to prepare for the performance. In other words, we are *potential* saints as we practice to become *real* saints. This idea of potential and real is the basis of what is widely known as the “universal call to holiness,” or the universal vocation to be saints (see *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 2013).

When we see someone acting in a pious or holy manner, we might even be inclined to think of that person as a saint. We might say, “My grandma was a saint. She went to Mass everyday, was always praying the rosary, and she never said a bad word about anyone.” Be watchful! Sometimes, we use another person’s behavior as an excuse for us not to act like that person because she is so much closer to God than we can ever imagine ourselves to be. Yet, it is exactly these locally known and easily recognizable holy ones for which the Church has given us the Solemnity of All Saints on Nov. 1.



They make the everyday meaning of “saint” something that we can all relate to. When they have died, we acknowledge that they have performed remarkably and humbly as a disciple of Jesus Christ would act. Since we know them rather well, then we should also imitate their virtue.

The technical term “saint” refers to a person who is dead, but whose soul the Church fully believes and officially proclaims is in heaven now. Possibly the most widely seen and heard saint ever is Pope St. John Paul II. He lived from 1920 to 2005. He was elected pope in 1978. As pope, he travelled to more countries than any pope ever has. He spoke more languages than any pope ever has. He wrote more documents than any pope ever has. He blessed more people than any pope ever has. However, his formal acts as pope are not necessarily the reason he is officially recognized now as a saint. Rather, it was the way that he acted when he travelled, it was the way that he spoke when he used all of those languages, it was the theology that he wrote in all of those documents, and it was the love that he conveyed when he blessed those billions of people that convinced so many Catholics and non-Catholics alike that this man is a saint. So, at his funeral in April 2005, there was an immediate and extremely wide recognition, called the “sense of the faithful,” that this man was a saint in the everyday meaning and that the Church should act officially to add the technical title of “Saint” to his name, post-humously.

Steps in the Process of Canonization

The reason “saint” has a technical meaning is be-





cause there is an official process within the Church that is applied before such recognition is given. Usually, the process involves the following stages:

1) The person must be dead for at least five (5) years. The reason for waiting this length is so that the impulse of popularity that comes from mere human recognition at the time of a person's death needs time to die down. By comparison, in Major League Baseball, there is a similar wait time for eligibility into the Hall of Fame. For centuries the Church, though, has been showing this kind of patient restraint about recognizing saints while baseball is a relatively young sport. Most saints are dead for decades or centuries before they are canonized. However, if the pope discerns that there is no taint of human ambition to be gained from immediate recognition, this time limit may be waived so that the next stage can proceed.

For example, after Mother Teresa of Calcutta, foundress of the Missionaries of Charity, died on Sept. 13, 1997, Pope John Paul II waived the five year waiting period and initiated the cause for her canonization immediately with papal sponsorship of all expenses associated with the process because her community does not have the funds since they serve the poorest of the poor. Six years later, Pope John Paul II beatified her on Oct. 19, 2003, and we invoke her today as Blessed Teresa of Calcutta.

2) The local, or diocesan, phase involves an examination of the person's whole life, including that person's actions and writings and the testimony of still living witnesses, if there are any. A person or a group recognized by the Church asks for this examination; that person is called the petitioner.





The examiner employs a specialist, like a theological detective, to assemble all of the evidence about the dead person's life. This specialist is called the postulator. The local phase is presided over by the diocesan bishop. At the end of the phase, if the examination is resolutely favorable, the diocesan bishop can proclaim the dead person "Servant of God." Prayers for the servant of God to be canonized a saint may be offered on behalf of anyone.

For example, on Sept. 29, 2014, Fr. Augustus Tolton (1854-1897) was officially recognized as "Servant of God" at a ceremony in the Archdiocese of Chicago with officials, though, from the Dioceses of Springfield in Illinois and Jefferson City, Missouri participating because he lived and worked in those places as well. Prayers for Fr. Tolton to be canonized a saint may now be offered on behalf of anyone.

3) The next phase takes place in Rome. The cause for canonization is forwarded to the Congregation for the Causes of Saints. This Congregation works for the pope. More information about their duties may be found on the Vatican's website: <vatican.va.> They are like a research laboratory where all of the forensic evidence about a person's life is assembled and debated. The life of the servant of God is re-examined for a witness to extraordinary virtue, e.g., faith, hope, charity, prudence, justice, temperance, fortitude, etc. If the theologians and bishops and cardinals who belong to this Congregation agree that the servant of God lived an heroically virtuous life, then that person is recognized officially as "Venerable."

For example, in March 2008, Pope Benedict XVI





declared the Servant of God Fr. Michael McGivney (1852-1890) “Venerable.” Fr. McGivney is the founder of the Knights of Columbus. Since he is not recognized as a saint, yet, prayers for his canonization may be offered on behalf of anyone.

4) The next phase requires moral certainty by the members of the Congregation in one of two areas. Either the person died as a martyr of the Catholic faith, or a miracle has been performed through this person’s intercession. Usually, the miracle takes place after the person has been officially recognized as venerable. Usually, the miracle is a type of scientifically inexplicable medical cure. If certainty can be attained in either option, then the person may be officially recognized as “Blessed.” The official ceremony, called a beatification, may take place in the person’s home diocese by an official delegate of the pope. The blesseds are sometimes referred to by their Latin name *beati*. The blessed’s feastday is assigned to the official church calendar and may be celebrated in the local diocese where the whole process began.

For example, Venerable Louis (1823-1894) and Zélie (1831-1877) Martin, the parents of Saint Thérèse of Lisieux, were beatified on Oct. 19, 2008, in Lisieux, France by Cardinal José Saraiva Martins, Delegate of Pope Benedict XVI. Now, prayers may be directed toward them, seeking their intercession. Their image and their relics may be venerated. Their feastday is their wedding date, July 12, and it may be celebrated in their local diocese and in other places after permission has been granted by the Congregation for the Causes of Saints to that diocese. This celebration of these *beati* is technically called their “cult,” from the Latin word *cul-*





tus, meaning, in this case, “to honor, reverence, or respect.” Sometimes, in English, the word “cult” has a very negative popular meaning. However, that meaning is a distortion of the original sense of the word.

5) The next phase builds upon the previous phase. Once a person is declared blessed, then a miracle has to be performed through this person’s intercession. As in the previous phases, the postulator presents a case to the Congregation that the blessed should be officially recognized as a “Saint” by the entire Church. The members of the Congregation must arrive at moral certainty, and the pope makes the final act of approval and celebrates the canonization. The word canonization comes from the Greek word “for measuring stick” or “list.” In this case, the person’s name is added to the official list of saints in heaven known by the Church on earth. The saints are sometimes referred to by their Latin name *sancti*. The official publication of this list is known by the Latin name *Martyrologium Romanum* (Roman Martyrology). It was first compiled in 1583, and its most recent edition is 2005. There are approximately 7000 *beati* and *sancti* mentioned. Their place in the Roman Martyrology determines their place in the liturgical calendar. As of now, there is no official English translation of the entire, 2005 edition of *Martyrologium Romanum*.

For example, Pope Francis officially canonized Pope Blessed John Paul II on April 27, 2014. His feastday is October 22, the date that he was officially installed as pope in 1978. During the homily at Pope St. John Paul II’s canonization, Pope Francis referred to him as “the pope of the family,” but his image and relics may be venerated throughout





the whole Church by anyone, and his *cultus* may spread far and wide.

6) Very rarely, the pope will recognize some saints as “doctors of the Church.” The word “doctor” comes from the Latin word *docere* which means “to teach.” As of November 2014, there are thirty-five (35) doctors of the Church from throughout the 2000 year history of the Church and from various countries and cultures. Primarily in their writings, these doctors of the Church express the truth of the Catholic faith in the most precise way. As it were, they magnify the teaching of the Lord Jesus Christ in a particularly clear way with the terminology of their particular time and place.

For example, on Oct. 19, 1997, Pope John Paul II declared St. Thérèse of Lisieux, the “Little Flower,” (1873-1897), a doctor of the Church with these words from his homily that day,

4. Thérèse of the Child Jesus and the Holy Face is the youngest of all the “doctors of the Church,” but her ardent spiritual journey shows such maturity, and the insights of faith expressed in her writings are so vast and profound that they deserve a place among the great spiritual masters.

...“Charity,” she wrote, “gave me the key to my vocation...I understood that it was love alone that made the Church’s members act, that if love were ever extinguished, apostles would not proclaim the Gospel and martyrs would refuse to shed their blood. I understood that love includes all vocations...Then in the excess of my delirious joy, I cried out:





‘O Jesus, my Love...at last I have found my vocation; my vocation is Love!’”

5. Thérèse of Lisieux did not only grasp and describe the profound truth of Love as the centre and heart of the Church, but in her short life she lived it intensely. It is precisely this *convergence of doctrine and concrete experience*, of truth and life, of teaching and practice, which shines with particular brightness in this saint, and which makes her an attractive model especially for young people and for those seeking true meaning for their life.

So, although we have just learned that there is a technical difference between a “blessed” and a “saint,” they are practically interchangeable in their everyday meaning. An important passage from the Book of Revelation helps us to see this.

Here is what sustains the holy ones who keep God’s commandments and their faith in Jesus. I heard a voice from heaven say, “Write this: Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on.” “Yes,” said the Spirit, “let them find rest from their labors, for their works accompany them” (Rev. 14:12-13).

The “holy ones” here is the Greek equivalent for “saint.” “Blessed” here is the Greek word *makarios*. The Latin translation of *makarios* is *beatus*, from which the word “beatification” comes. It means the one who has divine happiness. The “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ” from Eph. 1:3 at the beginning of this booklet is the Greek word *eulogos*, as in eulogy. Literally, it means “good word.” To “bless the Lord” is to say





a good word about the Lord, but to say that “the Lord is blessed” is to say that God is divinely happy. The point is this: there are two words in the New Testament for the one word in English, “blessed.” Practically speaking, to ask Blesseds Louis and Zelig Martin to pray for us is just like asking St. Teresa of Lisieux to pray for us. All blesseds are officially recognized by the Church on earth as enjoying divine happiness now just as all officially recognized saints enjoy divine happiness now.

In review, the word “saint” has an everyday meaning and a technical meaning. The technical meaning may be used only after a thorough, formal process by the Church, first at the diocesan level and then at the universal level. The number of saints in the everyday sense is countless, but the number of saints in the technical sense is officially recorded and represents the diversity of the Mystical Body of Christ. The images and relics of these officially recognized saints may be venerated by the Christian faithful on earth.

**Divination:
sinful contact with the dead**

The reason that so much formality is attached to the process of canonization, that is, the process of recognizing saints, is because Divine Revelation teaches us that we who live on earth are in a communion with those who have already fallen asleep in Christ Jesus (1 Thes. 4:13-18). In other words, because human beings have immortal souls, the living may still have contact with the dead (see *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 366).





Just like any other human action, we need to clarify the morality of the action of contacting the dead. Unfortunately, some Christians lump all contact with the dead into a human act that threatens one's eternal salvation, divination. This judgment simply muddies the water of Baptism, so to speak. First, what we need is clarity about what human acts threaten discipleship of Jesus Christ and what acts strengthen discipleship. Then, we can speak about the act of divination specifically as sinful contact with the dead and the act of veneration specifically as meritorious contact with the dead.

Based upon the ancient rules of ethics, every human action may be judged upon the who, what, why, where, when, and how of the action. These are called the “sources of morality,” and they may be reduced to three: the object, the intention, and the circumstances (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1750). The most important “source” is the object of the act; this may be likened to the definition of the action.

Let me give you an example that might be clearer than the action of contacting the dead: killing a person. Just by stating this physical action, you don't know what kind of judgment to make, even though you are inclined rather quickly to think that it is wrong, that it is immoral, because every human person has intrinsic value and dignity. Likewise, we have an immediate reaction against the idea of contacting the dead because, on the surface, it seems horrific. However, when I begin to add the details of who, what, why, where, when, and how, you will come to understand that the judgment about the action is quite different in one case than it is in another case. In one moral action,





it is judged vicious while in the other moral action it is judged virtuous. These judgments mean that, in truth, two fundamentally different actions are involved.

For example, in the first case, I describe for you the abortionist who removes a 12 week old healthy human fetus from a healthy woman's womb by cutting up the child's body parts and then by suctioning them out for a fee of \$500 for a 15 minute procedure in his stand alone clinic as part of his daily business. In the second case, I describe for you the man who acts to protect his wife by fatally stabbing an intruder in his house while the intruder was assaulting the man's wife. These two cases identify categorically different human acts even though both are the physical act of killing a person.



In the first case, the killing of a person is vicious because it is a direct abortion.



Human life must be respected and protected absolutely from the moment of conception...Since the first century the Church has affirmed the moral evil of every procured abortion. This teaching has not changed and remains unchangeable. Direct abortion, that is to say, abortion willed either as an end or a means, is gravely contrary to the moral law (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 2270-2271).

In the second case, the killing of a person is virtuous because it is the protection of the innocent.

Love toward oneself remains a fundamental principle of morality. Therefore it is legitimate to insist on respect for one's own right





to life. Someone who defends his life is not guilty of murder even if he is forced to deal his aggressor a lethal blow...Legitimate defense can be not only a right but a grave duty for one who is responsible for the lives of others (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 2264, 2265).

Concerning contact with the dead, we must make similar distinctions so as to understand properly which action is vicious and which action is virtuous. While the physical actions might be identical, the moral actions are not. In this distinction lies the difference between hell and heaven, the recompense of the bad and the good (see Mt. 25:31-46).

In the time of the Old Testament, contact between the spiritual world and the physical world was presumed to be an integral part of life. Sometimes, this contact was condemned and sometimes it was welcomed. The discernment of when communication between the living and the dead is immoral and when it is moral belongs to the Church since she is given “the keys to bind on earth what is bound in heaven and to loose on earth what is loosed in heaven” (Mt. 16:18-19, see also *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 881).

The kind of contact between the living and the dead that is condemned is called necromancy. This term comes from two Greek words that mean “to call up the dead.” During the time when the Israelites were wandering in the desert after they had received the Ten Commandments and before they had settled in the Promised Land, Moses gave them more laws to guide their everyday lives. Sometimes these laws resembled the laws of their neighbors, and sometimes they were unique to





their belief in one God.

The person who claims that the soul of a dead person speaks through him/her is called a medium. Mediums claim to be “possessed” by a spirit and speak in the name of that spirit. Prophets also speak in the name of a spirit. True prophets speak in the name of God and are inspired by the Holy Spirit, who never “possesses” a person because the Holy Spirit always respects a person’s freedom. False prophets speak in the name of another spirit and claim credibility by showing signs of being “possessed.”

The further laws that Moses gave about mediums reflect Israel’s belief in one God. Usually, since there is one God, then there is one prophet speaking for God. To replace belief in one God with belief in other gods or things is called idolatry. If there is more than one prophet speaking, then, usually, there is more than one god claiming to be at work. Even if a false prophet, or a medium, is possessed by a spirit that does not explicitly claim to be the one God, that medium, through the alleged spirit, is usurping God’s absolute power. This kind of idolatry is referred to as divination. In other words, it claims divine power without really being the sole source of that power.

So, in review, let’s understand these terms again: idolatry is the worship of gods other than the one true God. Divination is a type of idolatry because it claims to have some control over God’s power to rule all things at all times. Necromancy, practiced by mediums, is a type of divination because it claims the specific power to call up the dead by overthrowing, as it were, God’s absolute control





over death and life.

For disciples of Jesus Christ, the moral law of the Old Testament still remains. Based upon the encounter between Jesus and a rich young man (Mt. 19:16-30; Mk. 10:17-31; Lk. 18:18-30; see also Rom. 13:9),

following Jesus Christ involves keeping the Commandments. The Law has not been abolished, but rather man is invited to rediscover it in the person of his Master who is its perfect fulfillment (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 2053).

In Lev. 19:31 and Deut. 18:11, the use of mediums is forbidden. While there are ceremonial rules that Christians are not obliged to follow from these Old Testament books, this prohibition against mediums must still be followed by the disciples of Jesus Christ. The Deuteronomy text, though, gives us much more to understand about what spiritual activity is forbidden and what spiritual activity is required. In the following verses, Moses is speaking to the Israelites, but he is doing so as an authentic prophet of God. So, he is speaking in God's name.

When you come into the land which the Lord, your God, is giving you, you shall not learn to imitate the abominations of the nations there. Let there not be found among you anyone who causes their son or daughter to pass through the fire, or practices divination, or is a soothsayer, augur, or sorcerer, or who casts spells, consults ghosts and spirits, or seeks oracles from the dead. Anyone who does such things is an abomination to the





Lord, and because of such abominations the Lord, your God, is dispossessing them before you. You must be altogether sincere with the Lord, your God. Although these nations whom you are about to dispossess listen to their soothsayers and diviners, the Lord, your God, will not permit you to do so (Deut. 18:9-14).

Building upon the prohibitions in Sacred Scripture mentioned above, the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* explains the sin of idolatry as contrary to the observance of the First of the Ten Commandments. Idolatry falls under the category of superstition. Superstition turns the worthy worship of God into a magical practice. It claims that the mere external performance of certain prayers and sacramental signs, like the relics of saints, have a spiritual effect without the cooperation of a person's will to work with God's grace of conversion (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 2111). Going back to the example of Stan Musial's baseball bat, it would be superstitious to believe that anyone can hit the ball just as well and as often as he did simply by using that bat rather than by the difficult and lifelong training to be one of the League's best hitters. Likewise, it would be superstitious to believe that one could effect miraculous cures simply by having a relic of St. Pio of Pietrelcina ("Padre Pio"), who was widely known for many miracles. Rather, miracles and healings are charisms that the Holy Spirit gives to members of the Church with a view to their use for the common good of the Church (1 Cor. 12:7). Openness to the Holy Spirit is necessary, not superstitious use of saints' relics.

The *Catechism* explains further about the sinful





contact with the dead.

2115 God can reveal the future to his prophets or to other saints...

2116 All forms of *divination* are to be rejected: recourse to Satan or demons, conjuring up the dead or other practices falsely supposed to “unveil” the future. Consulting horoscopes, astrology, palm reading, interpretation of omens and lots, the phenomena of clairvoyance, and recourse to mediums all conceal a desire for power over time, history, and, in the last analysis, other human beings, as well as a wish to conciliate hidden powers. They contradict the honor, respect, and loving fear that we owe to God alone.

2117 All practices of magic or sorcery, by which one attempts to tame occult powers, so as to place them at one’s service and have a supernatural power over others - even if this were for the sake of restoring their health - are gravely contrary to the virtue of religion. These practices are even more to be condemned when accompanied by the intention of harming someone, or when they have recourse to the intervention of demons. Wearing charms is also reprehensible. *Spiritism* often implies divination or magical practices; the Church for her part warns the faithful against it...

So, sinful contact with the dead is absolutely forbidden as a type of idolatry, but it is a particular kind of contact with the dead, namely, divination. Such contact with the dead, if one does not repent



of it, could lead one to hell. Unfortunately, some Christians believe that all contact with the dead is forbidden by the Bible. That is not true. Divine Revelation (Sacred Scripture and Sacred Tradition authentically interpreted by the Magisterium) recommends contact with the dead, who are actually alive in God, as an ordinary means of attaining to eternal happiness with God Almighty. Let us turn now to the act of veneration.

**Veneration:
meritorious contact with the dead**

The kind of contact between the living and the dead that the Church encourages is veneration. This is meritorious contact with the dead. Veneration is a virtuous act within the communion of the saints. Since God has freely chosen to associate human persons with the work of his grace (see Col. 1:24), we can merit, or claim, for ourselves and for others (a) growth in holiness, called sanctification; (b) an increase of charity; and (c) the attainment of eternal life. “Even temporal goods like health and friendship can be merited in accordance with God’s wisdom” (see *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 2010).

Veneration is the meritorious act opposite of the sin of idolatry. Idols are established by men to replace worship of the one true God with created things. Veneration is established by God to show respect for his friends who always reflect back to God his holiness and beauty shining through them.

For example, the whole Church venerates Mary, the Virgin Mother of Christ, because of the re-





spect that God showed to her,

Hail, favored one! The Lord is with you...Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. Behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall name him Jesus...The holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. Therefore the child to be born will be called holy, the Son of God (Lk. 1:28,30-31,35).

Additionally, she is venerated because she takes none of God's grace as originating from herself but rather reflects all of his gifts back to him.

When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the infant leaped in her womb, and Elizabeth, filled with the holy Spirit, cried out in a loud voice and said, "Most blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb. And how does this happen to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me? For the moment the sound of your greeting reached my ears, the infant in my womb leaped for joy. Blessed are you who believed that what was spoken to you by the Lord would be fulfilled." And Mary said: "My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord; my spirit rejoices in God my savior. For he has looked upon his handmaid's lowliness; behold, from now on all ages will call me blessed..." (Lk. 1:41-48).

In other words, it is not idolatry to venerate the Blessed Virgin Mary because she is no threat to God. She was not created by human beings to re-





place God. She was created by God to point to God because she would be unknown without her Son and our Lord and God, Jesus Christ.

Veneration is a different act from adoration. Adoration is the Latin technical term for the worship of God alone. The Greek technical term for the worship of God alone is *latría* (see Rom. 12:1) whereas the Greek technical term for the respect of the Blessed Virgin Mary and all of the angels and saints is *doulía*.

latría = adoration = worship of God alone
doulía = veneration = honor of the saints

From the most ancient times the Blessed Virgin has been honored with the title of “Mother of God,” to whose protection the faithful fly in all their dangers and needs.... This very special devotion...differs essentially from the adoration which is given to the incarnate Word and equally to the Father and the Holy Spirit, and greatly fosters this adoration (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 971).

Although all official prayers in the Church maintain the distinction between *latría* and *doulía*, a good example of prayer in the Roman Catholic Church that maintains this distinction between adoration and veneration is the *Te Deum*, Latin for “You, God.” Many church hymns are based on the *Te Deum*, but at the end of this booklet is the official English translation of the prayer from the *Compendium of the Catechism of the Catholic Church*. I recommend it at the close of any corporate veneration of a saint’s relics because it expresses the truth of who God is and who creatures are.





Boldly, we may say that veneration is an act by God toward those who are special to him. Both *latria* and *dulia* are Greek words for “service.” It was St. Augustine of Hippo (354-430) in his famous book *City of God* (X.2) who made the distinction about these two kinds of service, and that distinction has remained with us ever since. What is instructive is that *dulia* is the act of a *doulos*, a slave. Yet, at the Last Supper, Jesus honors his disciples by refusing to call them slaves any longer. Instead, he calls them friends.

No one has greater love than this, to lay down one’s life for one’s friends. You are my friends if you do what I command you. I no longer call you slaves, because a slave does not know what his master is doing. I have called you friends, because I have told you everything I have heard from my Father (Jn. 15:13-15; see also Lk. 12:4).

When God becomes human through Jesus Christ (see Jn. 1:14), the revelation of who God is and how God wishes us to relate to him and to one another deepens profoundly. For example, in the Old Testament, Moses (Deut. 34:5), Joshua (Josh. 24:29), and David (Ps. 89:21) were called “slaves of God.” Only Abraham was called a friend of God (Is. 41:8; 2 Chr. 20:7; James 2:23). Yet, with the coming of the Son of God in the flesh, everyone who is born again of water and the Holy Spirit becomes not only a friend of God but, also, an adopted child of God who can now cry out with the most intimate name of God, “Father!” (Rom. 8:15; Gal. 4:5-6).

The Communion of the Saints







This intimate relationship with God is not unidirectional; it is not just a relationship between Jesus and me, me and Jesus. Rather, the profound intimacy to which we are invited is the natural extension of God as a *communio personarum* (a Divine Communion of Persons) towards all of the beings created in God's image so that they reflect among themselves also this *communio personarum* (see *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1702). The more well known term to express this familiarity among the friends of God is the communion of the saints.

The communion of the saints is a belief professed in the Apostles' Creed which comes from the early Church of Rome. Although the term does not exactly exist in Sacred Scripture, it is the result of further reflection upon our adoption by God the Father through his Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, in the power of the Holy Spirit. In the very few times where the word "communion," in Greek *koinonia*, appears in the New Testament, we are introduced into the mystery of God and the mystery of the Church, respectively. Concerning the mystery of a Triune God, St. Paul ends his Second Letter to the Corinthians with a blessing that is quite familiar to liturgical Christians throughout the centuries, "The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all" (2 Cor. 13:13). Concerning the mystery of the Church, Luke describes the main characteristics of the disciples of Jesus Christ after the explosive power of Pentecost this way, "And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the communal life, to the breaking of bread and to the prayers" (Acts 2:42).







The term upon which both of these passages hinge is “communion.” So, the communion among the members of the Church is logically the reflection of the communion that exists in God as a Trinity of Persons.

The term “communion of the saints” therefore has two closely linked meanings: communion “in holy things (*sancta*)” and “among holy persons (*sancti*).”

Sancta sanctis! (“God’s holy gifts for God’s holy people”) is proclaimed by the celebrant in most Eastern liturgies during the elevation of the holy Gifts before the distribution of communion. The faithful (*sancti*) are fed by Christ’s holy body and blood (*sancta*) to grow in the communion of the Holy Spirit (*koinonia*) and to communicate it to the world (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 948).



The communion of the saints is the one term that expresses the sharing among the three states of the Church.

- There is the Church on earth. This is the Church of the sacraments, those physical signs of Christ’s real but invisible grace. This is the Church fighting the good fight of faith. Although the *New American Bible* translation says, “Compete well for the faith” (1 Tim. 6:12), the metaphor of fighting for the faith gave rise to the description of the Church on earth as “the Church militant.”
- Then, there is the Church in heaven. This is the Church in glory, contemplating God as he



is (1 Jn. 3:2). They have washed their robes in the blood of the Lamb and sing the hymn of victory (Rev. 7:14). This metaphor of winning the battle gave rise to the description of the Church in heaven as “the Church victorious.”

- Then there is the Church in purgatory. This is the Church which will end up in heaven, but purification from other creaturely attachments is still needed so as to see God as he is. The purification is described with the metaphor of cleansing fire not consuming fire (see 1 Cor. 3:11-15). This language has given rise to the description of the Church in purgatory as “the Church suffering.”

Since the prohibition against necromancy is so strong in Divine Revelation, the kind of contact between the living and the dead in the communion of the saints must be of a different category. Let’s look briefly at what biblical evidence there is first for this categorical difference.

Although the Books of the Maccabees are not included in the Jewish and Protestant Bibles, they are accepted as Sacred Scripture by the Catholic Church. Furthermore, although Jews today do not read these books as Sacred Scripture, technically speaking, observant Jews today celebrate the victory of the Maccabees in the rededication of the Holy Temple for true worship in the Feast of Hanukkah, the Festival of Lights.

The Books recount the heroic actions of observant Jews during a time of oppression before the advent of Jesus Christ. In the attempt to throw off their oppressors, many battles take place, and they are



recounted in startling detail. One battle pits Judas Maccabeus against Gorgias, governor of Idumea. During the battle some Jews were slain and Judas wants to bury them, but he will not do so until after the observance of the sabbath:

On the following day, since the task had now become urgent, Judas and his companions went to gather up the bodies of the fallen and bury them with their kindred in their ancestral tombs. But under the tunic of each of the dead they found amulets sacred to the idols of Jamnia, which the law forbids the Jews to wear. So it was clear to all that this was why these men had fallen. They all therefore praised the ways of the Lord, the just judge who brings to light the things that are hidden.

Turning to supplication, they prayed that the sinful deed might be fully blotted out. The noble Judas exhorted the people to keep themselves free from sin, for they had seen with their own eyes what had happened because of the sin of those who had fallen. He then took up a collection among all his soldiers, amounting to two thousand silver drachmas, which he sent to Jerusalem to provide for an expiatory sacrifice. In doing this he acted in a very excellent and noble way, inasmuch as he had the resurrection in mind; for if he were not expecting the fallen to rise again, it would have been superfluous and foolish to pray for the dead. But if he did this with a view to the splendid reward that awaits those who had gone to rest in godliness, it was a holy and pious thought.





Thus he made atonement for the dead that they might be absolved from their sin (2 Macc. 12:39-46).

In this passage, the Church situates the belief of purgatory in the Scriptures. Furthermore, all three states of the Church are foreshadowed: the Church on earth engaged in the adoration of God; this adoration of God benefits the Church in purgatory; while the Church in heaven enjoys the splendid reward of dying in godliness.

This profession of faith in the resurrection of the dead is articulated here by Judas Maccabeus. It prevails until the time of Jesus, who gives it a resounding confirmation, especially in his confrontation with the Sadducees.

Concerning the resurrection of the dead, have you not read what was said to you by God, “I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob”? He is not the God of the dead but of the living (Mt. 22:31-32; see also Mk. 12: 26-27; Lk. 20:37-38; Acts 23:8).

Of course the Church perpetuates Jesus’ teaching and continues the profession of faith in the resurrection of the dead in the Apostles’ Creed. What is worth highlighting, though, is that Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob are, somehow, still alive. That they continue to live, while being physically dead, is explained by the profession of faith in a communion of the saints.

That there is direct contact between the living on earth and the physically dead who, nonetheless, continue in immortality is illustrated best in the





event of Christ’s transfiguration on Mt. Tabor. This event is so significant that it is one of the few accounts recalled four times in the New Testament (Mt. 17:1-8; Mk. 9:2-8; Lk. 9:28-36; 2 Pt. 1:17-18). The detail worth highlighting here is that Peter, James, and John both see and here Jesus conversing with Moses and Elijah. Certainly Jesus has not “called up the dead,” has he? No, Jesus has not engaged in necromancy. Rather, as the Son of God, he brings into communion those in the Church on earth with those in the Church in heaven. He is the unique mediator between God and humanity (1 Tim. 2:5), and all of the saints, on earth, in purgatory, and in heaven, communicate to one another through the Son to the Father in the Holy Spirit.

Imitating Saints



So, we’ve already shown that veneration is the proper act of respect to give a friend of God, living on earth or asleep in the Lord Jesus. The closest friend of God is his mother, the Blessed Virgin Mary, but there is a multitude of friends of God in heaven, either already in glory or on their way to glory (purgatory). These friends are called saints, holy ones. What needs further explanation, though, is the way in which we venerate the saints. We venerate the saints in fundamentally two ways: by imitating their lives and by seeking their help.



To imitate the life of a saint is, by association, to imitate the life of Christ. Just before Jesus called his disciples “friends” at the Last Supper, he gave them a new commandment: “Love one another as I love you” (Jn. 15:12). Jesus expects his disciples whenever and wherever they live to act like he





does. That famous abbreviation is correct: W W J D. “What Would Jesus Do?” The Church is to act as Jesus would act in this particular time and place.

But we are removed by 2000 years from the time that Jesus was on earth and by thousands of miles from the place where Jesus lived. How are to know what he would do in our circumstances? The answer comes to us from the example of the officially recognized saints. They make Jesus alive in a multiplicity of times and places so that we can find someone among them with whom we can relate somehow.



St. Paul understood this crucial principle in discipleship. So, he often wrote to his disciples to follow the Lord Jesus Christ by imitating his own way of following the Lord Jesus Christ. So, for example, he writes, “Be imitators of me, as I am of Christ” (1 Cor. 11:1; see also 1 Cor. 4: 16-17; Phil. 3:17; 4:9; 1 Thes. 1:6-7; 2 Thes. 3:7). All of the saints, down through the ages, echo the same message, not with prideful intent but to provide the close, personal contact with the Lord Jesus Christ that Jesus wants to have with everyone of his disciples.

So, learn as much as you can about the saints, and imitate those who most resemble Christ in your personal circumstances.

Veneration of Images


We also venerate the saints by seeking their help through the veneration of their images and through the veneration of their relics. Let’s discuss the first






way of seeking their help through the veneration of their images. These images include such things as paintings, pictures, stained glass, mosaics, vestments, medals, and statues.

On the surface, the veneration of a saint's image appears to be a kind of idolatry. Admittedly, the Church has struggled from the very beginning with the avoidance of idolatry, on the one hand, while encouraging the veneration of images, on the other. Even though this teaching has been formally resolved in the Catholic and Orthodox Churches, the struggle resurfaces constantly in church art, architecture, and popular piety.



Like necromancy, the prohibition of images in the Old Testament is absolute. Necromancy is a form of idolatry. Idolatry is creating a figure to take the place of God. However, God did not appear in any form on the day that the Lord spoke to Moses on Mt. Horeb (Deut. 4:15-18). So, no material form seemingly represents the invisible God.



Idolatry is forbidden by the Ten Commandments, but the text of Ex. 20:1-17 is not clear enough to determine if the prohibition on idolatry is a separate commandment or part of the First Commandment. Following St. Augustine of Hippo, the Catholic Church includes the injunction against idolatry as part of the First Commandment whereas many other Protestant and Orthodox Christians consider it a separate commandment and make the prohibition on covetness into one commandment. The prohibition on idolatry is so strong, though, that the history of the Israelites could be written as a history of faithfulness or deviation from idolatry.



Nevertheless, already in the Old Testament, God ordained or permitted the making of images that pointed symbolically toward salvation by the incarnate Word: so it was with the bronze serpent (Num. 21:4-9), the ark of the covenant (Ex. 25:10-22), and the cherubim (1 Kgs. 6:23-28) (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 2130).

In the midst of the absolute rejection of images of God by Jews and Moslems, the Church formally declared in the Eighth Century that images of Christ and the Mother of God, along with angels and saints, could be created and venerated. The reasoning is threefold:

- God created humanity in his *icon* (Greek)/*imago* (Latin) as male and female (Gen. 1:26-27). This divine image is already visible, and should be respected as if one is respecting God. So, to create a human image of that which God had already naturally created is no violation of idolatry.
- The Second Person of the Blessed Trinity became a human being in Jesus Christ (Jn. 1:14). Unexpectedly, God became visible, and this Incarnation of the Son of God is the means of our salvation. So, to create a reverent human image of the humanity of God is to aid weak human nature to adore God even better than without the image.
- The friends of God, the saints, are temples of the Holy Spirit by their baptism into Christ. Therefore, they should greet one another with a holy kiss as the Apostles Paul and Peter ex-





hort the Church to do (Rom. 16:16; 1 Cor. 16:20; 2 Cor. 13:12; 1 Thes. 5:26; 1 Pt. 5:14). So, to create reverent human images of the friends of God who were filled with the Holy Spirit is to give honor to their Creator, Redeemer, and Sanctifier.

Even after they die, these icons of God, the saints, continue on in the glory of heaven. Consequently, “the honor rendered to an image passes to its prototype” (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 2132) so that when one honors the image of a saint one is venerating the saint. To repeat, this is veneration, not the adoration that is due to God alone. The saint, of course, takes this veneration and points it toward the adoration that is due to God alone. This redirecting of honor from the recipient to his/her Creator is much like what the recipient of a human award humbly does when thanking all of the people who helped him/her to reach this achievement. Every saint has the humility to know that his/her attainment of heaven is a total gift from a generous God who only desires good for his children.

To use the directive of the Apostles above, a proper gesture of veneration is a kiss. One may also reverently touch the image/icon. We gesture toward an icon/image the same way that we gesture toward another living human being that we love. Why should we touch and kiss those whom we love and respect except to do so honorably? Likewise, the Church on earth touches and kisses the Church in heaven through these humanly created images.

As many Catholics are familiar with the veneration of a cross during the Good Friday Service, that same kind of veneration may be shown to images of Christ and his friends. The veneration of





the cross does not end in the cross as if the cross is Christ. Rather, the physical gesture represents our spiritual desire to give a holy kiss to our Lord Jesus Christ for the great sacrifice that he made on our behalf. Likewise, when we kiss or touch an icon of Mary or the saints, we are not physically kissing the Blessed Virgin or the saint. Instead, that physical kiss or touch is what we interiorly want to give to the Mother of God or one of God's friends, whom we love dearly.

Veneration of Relics

We also venerate the saints by seeking their help through the veneration of their relics. Let's discuss this second way of seeking their help.

Relics are customarily ranked as first, second, and third class. First class relics are fragments of the saint's body, such as bone, hair, blood, or other tissue. Second class relics are articles that touched the saint's body while the saint was alive, such as clothing or articles particularly associated with the saint's holiness like the means of the saint's martyrdom. Third class relics are articles touched to a first class relic, especially religious images and goods intended to extend the favor of the relic to that image or good.

Biblically speaking, there are several instances of relics from prophets and saints that extend the grace or favor of God upon that person to those who somehow touch or venerate the relic.

For example, the Letter to the Hebrews (9:4) relates that in the ark of the covenant were three items:





the tablets written by the finger of God (Ex. 31:18), the gold jar containing manna (Ex. 16:32-34), and the staff of Aaron that bloomed almond blossoms (Num. 17:16-26). While the tablets of the covenant and the manna are directly from God, Aaron's staff was special exactly because he was a descendent of Levi. Aaron's staff is a relic of Aaron's favor from God, and that staff was retained in the ark so as to extend God's favor to future generations.

Another example is the succession of the Prophet Elijah by the Prophet Elisha. This story illustrates well some of the common expectations often associated with saints' relics. For our purposes, focus upon Elijah's mantle in the following passage:

Elijah took his mantle, rolled it up and struck the water: it divided, and the two of them crossed over on dry ground. When they had crossed over, Elijah said to Elisha, "Request whatever I might do for you, before I am taken from you." Elisha answered, "May I receive a double portion of your spirit." He replied, "You have asked something that is not easy. Still, if you see me taken up from you, your wish will be granted; otherwise not."

As they walked on still conversing, a fiery chariot and fiery horses came between the two of them, and Elijah went up to heaven in a whirlwind, and Elisha saw it happen. He cried out, "My father! my father! Israel's chariot and steeds!" Then he saw him no longer. He gripped his own garment, tore it into two pieces, and picked up the mantle which had fallen from Elijah. Then he went back and stood at the bank of the Jordan. Wielding





the mantle which had fallen from Elijah, he struck the water and said, “The LORD, the God of Elijah—where is he now?” He struck the water: it divided, and he crossed over (2 Kgs. 2:8-14).

Very clearly, the mantle of Elijah is associated with his own favor from God. We learn this because when Elisha asks for a double portion of Elijah’s spirit the request is granted since Elisha performs the same miracle as Elijah by means of the mantle. The mantle is a relic in the original sense of the word. Relic comes from the Latin word *reliquiae*, meaning, “remains,” “something left behind.” The mantle remains behind to carry forward Elijah’s favor upon Elisha.

Alternatively, one might read the story of Elijah’s succession by Elisha as a foreshadowing of Christ’s sacraments. Such an interpretation would not be far from the mark. The difference is this: Jesus Christ is God, and the prophets and saints act only by the favor of God. When Christ acts through water (Jn. 4:14), wine (Jn. 2:9), touching (Lk. 8:54), spit (Jn. 9:6), bread (Jn. 6:51), his clothing (Lk. 8:44-46), words (Jn. 11:43), and breath (Jn. 20:22), this physical matter really conveys God’s grace. By the bestowal of the Holy Spirit, Christ conveys his grace through these signs, called sacraments, in the Church. For example, since the Sacrament of the Eucharist in a special way conveys Christ’s grace under the appearances of bread and wine, the Church gives adoration to the Lord in the Eucharist, not just veneration, during the Sacred Liturgy as well as outside of it (see *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1378).

Just as there is a chasm of difference between the





adoration that is given to God alone and the veneration that may be rendered to the angels and saints so there is a chasm of difference between the sacraments established by Christ and the sacramentals recognized by the Church to dispose human persons to receive the chief effects of the sacraments (see *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1667). Yet, a resemblance exists between the seven sacraments and the many sacramentals in the same way that a resemblance exists between the Creator and his creatures. Among the various forms of sacramentals are various forms of popular piety, including the veneration of relics (see *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1674). Popular piety is a way for the religious sense of the Christian people to extend the liturgical life of the Church into everyday expression. The New Testament recounts a couple of instances of popular piety that appear much like the veneration of relics.

For example, the first part of the Acts of the Apostles recalls especially extraordinary miracles attributed to St. Peter. So as not to confuse himself with the Lord Jesus, Peter clarifies in the first miracle of healing a crippled man that he commands him, “in the name of Jesus Christ the Nazorean, [rise and] walk.” Then Peter took him by the right hand and raised him up (Acts 3:6-7). Such amazing actions continued to take place through St. Peter that, later on, St. Luke writes,

Many signs and wonders were done among the people at the hands of the apostles... Thus they even carried the sick out into the streets and laid them on cots and mats so that when Peter came by, at least his shadow might fall on one or another of them. A large number





of people from the towns in the vicinity of Jerusalem also gathered, bringing the sick and those disturbed by unclean spirits, and they were all cured (Acts 5:12, 15-16).

The parallel here between St. Peter and the Lord Jesus appears obvious, yet St. Peter still needs a shadow to work miracles while the Lord Jesus could simply be in one place and work a miracle in another at his command (Lk. 7:10).

Another example comes much closer to the contemporary understanding of the veneration of a saint's relics. It concerns St. Paul. While St. Peter dominates the first half of the Acts of the Apostles, St. Paul dominates the second half. In the middle of that second half, St. Luke writes,

So extraordinary were the mighty deeds God accomplished at the hands of Paul that when face cloths or aprons that touched his skin were applied to the sick, their diseases left them and the evil spirits came out of them (Acts 19:11-12).

Based on the customary way of classifying relics mentioned above, these face cloths and aprons would be second class relics, which are rather phenomenal as far as human beings are concerned, but they are categorically different from the bread and wine which Christ makes into his body and blood (Mt. 26:26-28).

In review, relics extend the grace of God upon that saint into our present time and place out of God's superabundant goodness toward his children in the Church on earth. Relics should be venerated





by the gestures of a reverent touch or kiss. They help us to call to mind especially the life of that saint and how we can imitate that person just as that person imitated Christ in his/her circumstances.

Abuses of Relics

Unfortunately, some persons abuse the relics of saints.

The first abuse is superstition. We mentioned this before. It is a magical use of the adoration of God. The intention of this abuse is not divination *per se*. Rather, it is called improvidence, a lack of responsibility for one's behavior and the need for ongoing conversion (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 2115). Simply possessing the relic or touching it is expected to accomplish the end of attaining the favor of eternal life without the attendant change of heart and trust in God's plan.

For example, the relics of the Blesseds Louis and Zélie Martin are unique. They are only the second couple to be beatified exactly as examples of saintly married life. The other couple is Blesseds Luigi and Maria Quattrochi. They were co-patrons of the October 2014 Extraordinary Synod of Bishops on the Family in the Context of Evangelization at the Vatican. Living married couples in particular should seek the intercession of these *beati* for graces upon their own marriages and families. Living married couples should venerate their images and venerate their relics and direct prayers toward them so that the favor which God bestows upon them now as part of the Church in heaven may be





forwarded to the Church on earth now.

However, it would be superstitious to act as if an image or a relic of either of these couples *beati* could save a troubled marriage or make children act in a righteous way without ourselves cooperating with God's grace and working with one another to improve a troubled marriage or without leading children in a godly manner according to the Lord's commandments. Sometimes, the line between veneration and superstition is foggy. Yet, the key to understanding the difference is the identifiable acts to cooperate with God's grace that all disciples of Jesus Christ should place. It is not superstition if we remain open to the work of the Holy Spirit in bringing about our further conversion.

The second abuse is the selling of relics. It is a type of simony. This word comes from an episode related in the Acts of the Apostles. A magician by the name of Simon the Great became a disciple of Christ, but he wanted to have the same power as the Apostles to bestow the Holy Spirit through the laying on of hands. He was even willing to pay money to the Apostles for this power. St. Peter rebuked him for thinking in this consumeristic way about the gift of God, and we are left with Simon desiring to think differently about his discipleship (Acts 8:9-25). Simony could be practiced in different ways, but the Church views the selling of relics as a type of immoral act toward God's grace (see *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 2121).

The selling of relics is separate from the selling of the containers of relics. Reliquaries are designed to contain relics. Since reliquaries might be made of precious metals and might include precious stones





or jewels, they can be sold. However, the relics themselves may not be sold. The Congregation for the Causes of Saints is charged with the regulation of relics and with verifying their authenticity.

Sadly, many alleged relics are circulating with little or no documentation of their authenticity. For centuries, this has been a problem for the Church. Today, many of these have been made available through internet commerce, and the faithful are left with little guidance on their proper veneration. The Church does not forbid the buying of relics, possibly to allow Church officials to rescue authentic relics from abuses (see *Code of Canon Law*, c. 1190). However, such action only seems to stir the appetite of malicious vendors, seeking to have financial gain at the expense of offending God and leading the faithful astray.



The third abuse is the profaning of relics. This is a type of sacrilege. “Sacrilege consists in profaning or treating unworthily the sacraments and other liturgical actions, as well as persons, things, or places consecrated to God” (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 2120). A particularly shocking gesture of sacrilege is placed by Judas as he betrays Jesus with a kiss (Mt. 26:48; Mk. 14:44; Lk. 22:47-48). As we said earlier, a reverent kiss is an appropriate gesture to show veneration of a saint’s image or relic. A holy kiss was recommended by the Apostles Paul and Peter for how members of the Church should greet one another. The magnitude of Judas’ sacrilege is compounded when Jesus addresses him as “friend” (Mt. 26:50), a term which we also saw earlier as applying to the saints.







Conclusion

What might appear at first to be simply a respectful honoring of those who have “run the race” and “won the crown,” the veneration of relics actually is a catechesis in the practice of imitating the saints. This booklet has not exhausted the role of the *beati* and the *sancti*, but it has provided some essential details about both the everyday and the technical meanings of the term, about the sinful contact with the dead versus the meritorious contact with the dead, about the difference between adoration of God and the veneration of the saints and about the proper respect of their images and relics. In the end, the hope is that disciples of Jesus Christ in the Church on earth will now reach out to those disciples of Jesus Christ in the Church in heaven for all of the blessings that God wishes to shower upon his children everywhere. For in God, love remains.






The *Te Deum*


You are God: we praise you;
You are God: we acclaim you;
You are the eternal Father:
All creation worships you.

To you all angels, all the powers of heaven,
Cherubim and Seraphim, sing in endless praise:
Holy, holy, holy, Lord, God of power and might,
Heaven and earth are full of your glory.

The glorious company of apostles praise you.
The noble fellowship of prophets praise you.
The white-robed army of martyrs praise you.
Throughout the world the holy Church acclaim
you:



Father, of majesty unbounded,
Your true and only Son, worthy of all worship,
And the Holy Spirit, advocate and guide.



You, Christ, are the king of glory,
The eternal Son of the Father.
When you became man to set us free
You did not spurn the Virgin's womb.
You overcame the sting of death,
And opened the kingdom of heaven to all believ-
ers.

You are seated at God's right hand in glory.
We believe that you will come, and be our judge.
Come then, Lord, and help your people,
Bought with the price of your own blood,
And bring us with your saints
To glory everlasting.



Save your people, Lord, and bless your inheritance.

Govern and uphold them now and always.

Day by day we bless you.
We praise your name forever.

Keep us today, Lord, from all sin.
Have mercy on us, Lord, have mercy.
Lord, show us your love and mercy;

For we put our trust in you.
In you, Lord, is our hope:
And we shall never hope in vain.





Mark E. Ginter, Ph.D., is married to Diane and the father of seven children and one grandchild so far. He is Head Coordinating Servant (President) of St. Joseph's Holy Family, Inc., in southern Indiana. His doctorate is in moral theology and psychology from Marquette University (1997). His masters is in theology and Christian ministry from Franciscan University of Steubenville (1990). His bachelors is in psychology from the University of St. Thomas, St. Paul, MN (1983). His teaching career spans more than 30 years from high school through major seminary. As the author of the first academic article on the new evangelization in English in 2002, his books include:

First Saturday Devotions: A handbook of prayers in English and Latin to honor the request of Our Lady of Fatima (2010)

The Conversion of the Baptized: A Handbook for Penitents Celebrating the Sacrament of Penance and Reconciliation (2012)

Surprised by the Spirit: A vision to renew Catholic family life by Handmaids and Servants of the Gardener (2013)

Praying the Marian Rosary in Readers' Theater: A new expression of a true, good, and beautiful way to meet God (2014)

Missionary Disciples: A handbook for the New Evangelization based on Evangeliu Gaudium (2014)

Additionally, he has edited new translations of *Pope St. John Paul II, Redemptoris Mater* ("Mother of the Redeemer") (2011)

Pope St. John Paul II, The Jubilee Year Good Friday Way of the Cross (2011).

As a popular speaker, evangelist, and missionary, he has traveled all over the U.S.



When I see a saint's relic, what am I supposed to do? I know how to salute a flag, and I always treat pictures of my family with respect, but how am I supposed to act when I see a fragment of bone, or a lock of hair, or a vial of blood that belongs to a saint?

Here is the handbook to answer those questions. There is widespread confusion among Catholics about the veneration of relics from blessed and saints. This catechesis gives you the chance to instruct your own family members and young disciples about the proper reverence that should be shown to relics that come from God's friends. Then, they will be able to hand on the faith.

Love Remains also includes:

- Steps in the Process of the Canonization of Saints.
- The explanation of the difference between Divination, the sinful contact with the dead by the living, and Veneration, the meritorious contact with the dead by the living.
- The categorical difference between adoration of God alone and the veneration of saints.
- A biblically-based explanation of the veneration of saints' relics.
- Abuses of relics to avoid.
- Prayer of adoration *Te Deum*.

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