**Relic**, in religion, strictly, the mortal remains of a saint; in the broad sense, the term also includes any object that has been in contact with the saint. Among the major religions, Christianity, almost exclusively in Roman Catholicism, and Buddhism have emphasized the veneration of relics. *Encyclopedia Britannica*

In the fourth century the great biblical scholar, Jerome, declared, “We do not worship, we do not adore, for fear that we should bow down to the creature rather than to the creator, but we venerate the relics of the martyrs in order the better to adore him whose martyrs they are” (Ad Riparium, i, P.L., XXII, 907). *Catholic.com*

**Classes of Relics: First Class** *scripturecatholic.com*

First class relics are the earthly mortal remains of saints, and are classified as being sacred relics. These remains could be any part of the body, be it bone, flesh (either skin or organs), and even hair. As remains are considered to be precious and sacred relics, the Church has prohibited the sale of any first class relics. Custodians of first class relics are usually members of Faith Communities, or historical organizations such as Museums, rarely if ever, are first class relics entrusted to individuals.

**Second Class**

A second class relic differs from the first class, in that they are the possessions or tools that were owned or used by a saint during their lifetime. Items such as articles of clothing, vestments, jewelry, scepters, bibles, and hand tools, could all be considered to be second class relics, so long as they were used by a saint. In the case of a martyr, the instruments of their demise may also be considered a second class relic. The tools used in the process of torturing or executing the saint, though morbid to some, can be just as powerful as a ring worn by a saint. This can extend to the wood used to make the cross to which they may have been crucified on, the rope they may have been hung with, or even the ashes from when they were burned at the stack, such as Joan of Arc.

**Third Class**

Third class relics are the only form of relic that the Church permits for sale. A third class relic is any item, new or old, that has made contact with the remains of a saint, or pressed against their tomb or reliquary; in other words a first class relic. This could include burial cloths that were used during their funeral process, the soil from which they were buried in, the remains of their casket, or newer items such as cloths, pendants, or mantillas, that have been blessed by God when placed against the first class relic.Third class relics are worn, carried, or kept in the home, for protection, divine guidance, and assistance from their patron saint.

**Fourth Class???**

The debate over fourth class relics, comes from the inclusion of pieces of the saint’s tombstone, if there was one, and items that have been pressed against or rubbed on second class relics. Some Catholics flat out disregard these relics as being true relics, others consider them to be third class. We have not been able to find a definitive answer on where the Church stands on these items, so we would advise you to follow your own faith and belief for these particular relics.