



About Relics

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[From religionfacts.com](http://religionfacts.com) and wikipedia.org:

A relic is an object, especially a piece of the body or a personal item of someone of religious significance, carefully preserved with an air of veneration as a tangible memorial. Relics are an important aspect of many personal belief systems – Christianity, Buddhism, Hinduism, etc.

The word relic comes from the Latin *reliquiae* (remains). A reliquary is a shrine that houses one or more relics.

In Christianity, relics are the material remains of a deceased saint or martyr, and objects closely associated with those remains. Relics can be entire skeletons, but more usually they consist of a part of such as a bone, hair or tooth. Pieces of clothing worn by the deceased saint or even an object that has come in contact with a relic is also considered a relic.

Relics have played an important role in Christian ritual since the earliest centuries of the church and were a major part of popular religion in the Middle Ages. Until 1969, relics were placed under the altar stones of all Roman Catholic churches.

Some of the earliest sources cited to support the efficacy of relics are:

* Elisha died and was buried. Now Moabite raiders used to enter the country every spring. Once while some Israelites were burying a man, suddenly they saw a band of raiders; so they threw the man's body into Elisha's tomb. When the body touched Elisha's bones, the man came to life and stood up on his feet. (2 Kings 13:20-21 NIV)

* Just then a woman who had been subject to bleeding for 12 years came up behind him (Jesus) and touched the edge of his cloak. She said to herself “If I only touch his cloak, I will be healed.” Jesus turned and saw her, “Take heart, daughter,” he said, “Your faith has healed you.” And the woman was healed from that moment. (Matthew 9:20-22 NIV)

* God did extraordinary miracles through Paul, so that even handkerchiefs and aprons that had touched him were taken to the sick, and their illnesses were cured and the evil spirits left them. (Acts 19:11-12 NIV)

For Catholics, these passages confirm their belief that God chooses to work miracles through the bodies of His servants and/or the material items associated with saints.

Throughout its history and still today, the Catholic Church has affirmed the usefulness and appropriateness venerating relics of the saints. Important Catholic proclamations on relics include the following: As Augustine says (De Civ. Dei I, 13): “If a father’s coat or ring, or anything else of that kind, is so much more cherished by his children, as love for one’s parents is greater, in no way are the bodies themselves to be despised, which are much more intimately and closely united to us than any garment; for they belong to man’s very nature.”

St. Thomas Aquinas (Summa Theologica): “Wherefore in memory of them, we ought to honor any relics of theirs in a fitting manner; principally their bodies, which were temples, and organs of the Holy Ghost dwelling and operating in them, and destined to be likened to the body of Christ by the glory of the Resurrection. Hence God Himself fittingly honors such relics by working miracles at the presence.”

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