

Diocese of Rome says sale of relics is sacrilegious

VATICAN CITY - The Diocese of Rome has underlined that the sale of relics is sacrilegious, following media reports that bits of garments worn by Pope John Paul II were being sold online.

The Rome diocesan office charged with promoting Pope John Paul's sainthood cause has been distributing prayer cards and relics, tiny pieces of one of the white cassocks worn by the late pope.

The cards and relics are offered free of charge to those requesting them, but the office has sometimes encouraged donations for postage. More recently, its Web site ran a more general invitation to make a "free-will offering for the cause."

That apparently caused enough confusion to spur press reports of the sale of relics. In late September, the diocesan Web site posted interviews with church officials emphasizing that the relics were not for sale and never have been.

"Relics absolutely cannot be bought or sold because they are sacred objects, they have no price. The problem of the sale of relics is widespread on the Internet, and let me say that this is a sacrilege," Monsignor Marco Frisina, who heads the liturgy office in the Diocese of Rome, said in one of the interviews.

A boxed announcement across the site now states: "The holy card is completely free. It is possible for those with the means to make a free-will offering to support the cost of printing and mailing the cards."

Monsignor Frisina also responded to those who wondered whether distributing relics of the late pope implied a premature judgment on his sainthood cause.

Pope John Paul, he said, was venerated and held in great affection by many people while he was living, and "the holy card with a piece of his cassock for now we can use in a private way, as a remembrance of a loved one."

“We need to always be prudent and have much patience, obeying the church and waiting for the church itself to proclaim him a saint,” Monsignor Frisina said.

The Diocese of Rome’s English-language site dedicated to the sainthood cause of Pope John Paul is <https://www.vicariatusurbis.org/Beatificazione/English/HomePage.htm>.