



**RELICS ON PILGRIMAGE**  
**Frequently Asked Questions**

*Where are the relics displayed for veneration in a parish or school?*

Placing relics upon the table of the altar for public veneration is prohibited (Ceremonial of Bishops 866, 921). It is recommended that a stand or table be placed somewhere in the sanctuary, but NOT directly in front of the altar. One location might be beside the Ambo, where the Paschal Candle is placed during the Easter Season. For veneration, a candle(s) could be placed on or nearby the stand with the relic. Safety considerations should be considered: candles are not to be placed on the floor or close by where private veneration takes place to alleviate any risk of clothing catching fire or the candle being knocked over.

*Can Mass be celebrated with the relics displayed?*

In general, the veneration of relics should be kept separate from the Mass. If Mass is scheduled to be celebrated during an extended public veneration, the relics may remain on display in an area distinct from the altar in the sanctuary. The relics may be incensed at the beginning of Mass with a double swing of the thurible (GIRM 277). It would not be correct to conclude the Mass by blessing the people with the relic. After Mass, however, the presider could return from the sacristy after removing his chasuble and direct some devotional prayers toward the saint and bless the faithful with the relic. The people may kneel during the blessing, though it is not required.

*How do you venerate?*

St. Jerome put it best when he said: “We do not worship relics, we do not adore them, 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).

One may make a bow of the head toward relics of saints that are solemnly exposed for veneration, but they should not receive the kind of veneration usually reserved to exposition of the Blessed Sacrament, such as genuflecting, removing any head covering and incensing from a kneeling position.

In private veneration, one may kneel, stand, or sit in prayer. A kneeler could be placed in front of the stand with the reliquary. If the size of the reliquary is large enough, a purificator could be left to the side of the reliquary so that people may wipe the reliquary after they kiss it, similar to what is done during veneration of the Cross on Good Friday in some parishes.