



**ARCHDIOCESAN POLICIES AND NORMS
FOR THE VISIT OF SACRED IMAGES AND RELICS**
July 1, 2025 – Memorial of St. Junipero Serra

The veneration of sacred images and relics holds a special place in the devotional life of the faithful. We honor sacred images of the Blessed Virgin Mary and the saints, along with relics of the saints because we honor their fidelity to Jesus Christ. The Archdiocese of Los Angeles recognizes the spiritual benefits of parish visitations of sacred images and relics and seeks to ensure that they are carried out with reverence, dignity, and in accordance with Church law and pastoral guidance.

According to the *Directory on Popular Piety and the Liturgy*, issued by the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments,

The Second Vatican Council recalls that “the Saints have been traditionally honored in the Church, and their authentic relics and images held in veneration.” The term “relics of the Saints” principally signifies the bodies — or notable parts of the bodies — of the saints who, as distinguished members of Christ’s mystical Body and as Temples of the Holy Spirit (cf. 1 Cor 3:16; 6:19; 2 Cor 6:16) in virtue of their heroic sanctity, now dwell in heaven, but who once lived on earth. Objects which belonged to the saints, such as personal objects, clothes, and manuscripts are also considered relics, as are objects which have touched their bodies or tombs, such as oils, cloths, and images.

The various forms of popular veneration of the relics of the Saints, such as kissing, decorations with lights and flowers, bearing them in processions, in no way exclude the possibility of taking the relics of the Saints to the sick and dying, to comfort them or use the intercession of the Saint to ask for healing. Such should be conducted with great dignity and be motivated by faith (no. 237).

While the Church encourages the veneration of sacred images and relics, it is important to remember that it is not the actual object that imparts any supernatural power, such as healing. Sacred images and relics do not have any power in themselves. A sacred image or relic is an instrument for God’s miraculous power. God alone is the sole source of saving grace.

Sacred images and relics of saints allow us to draw close to these holy men and women of the past, and God uses these material objects to impart special graces to the faithful. They are never to be worshiped and are meant to lead us to the ultimate worship of God.

Request for Permission



A parish, religious community, or institution seeking to host a visitation of a sacred image or relic must submit a formal written request to the Office of the Chancellor, along with a copy to the Office for Divine Worship of the Archdiocese of Los Angeles.

The request should include:

- The name and origin of the sacred image or relic.
- The proposed dates of the visit.
- The name of the custodian or responsible organization.
- The event itinerary (Masses, devotions, processions, etc.).

The Archdiocese of Los Angeles reserves the right to vet or approve any organization or individual custodian accompanying the sacred image or relic. If approved, the organization or individual must conform to all norms and regulations established by the *Administrative Handbook: Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Los Angeles*.

Display and Veneration

- Only authenticated relics or recognized sacred images approved by the Church may be publicly venerated.
- A copy of the authenticity certificate (*authentica*) must be submitted for relics.
- All liturgies and devotions associated with the visit must conform to liturgical norms of the Roman Catholic Church, such as the US *Roman Missal*, USCCB liturgical directives, guidelines issued by the Office for Divine Worship of the Archdiocese of Los Angeles, or any others.
- The display and veneration of the sacred image or relic must avoid sensationalism, commercialism, superstition, or undue spectacle.
- A reliquary with the relic or a sacred image must not be placed on the altar or obstruct the view of the faithful during the celebration of the Eucharist.
- Homilies, reflections, or presentations must be conducted by approved clergy or lay presenters who hold a current mandate or permission from the bishop of origin and the Archdiocese of Los Angeles (if a priest or deacon, he must have the permission from the Vicar for Clergy Office of the Archdiocese of Los Angeles).

Financial Oversight

- All financial activity associated with the visitation must prioritize the spiritual nature of the event, maintaining reverence and integrity.
- Commercialism or profiteering is to be strictly avoided.
- Preparation of a detailed budget in advance, including estimated costs for hospitality, liturgical materials, promotional materials, security, set-up, and clean-up.



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- Any stipends, travel costs, meals, or accommodation for the custodian or representatives of the organization accompanying the sacred image or relic must be arranged in advance. Neither the Archdiocese of Los Angeles nor the hosting parish is responsible for any of these expenses. All arrangements are at the sole discretion of individual pastors.

Donations and Offerings

- Freewill offerings may be collected during the visitation but must be clearly communicated as voluntary.
- Clearly marked donation boxes or envelopes are to be provided, avoiding any pressure on the faithful.
- The pastor should assign a small committee (e.g., parish finance council members) to oversee all income and expenses related to the event. At the end of the event, they will count all donations and offerings. At the same time, they should maintain accurate records of all donations, expenses, and reimbursements.
- Once the committee has counted all donations and offerings, the parish will write a check to the appropriate organization or religious institution. Under no circumstance should cash be given to any individual.

Merchandise and Sales (if applicable)

- It is not the policy of the Archbishop or the Archdiocese of Los Angeles to endorse a commercial enterprise or grant the approval thereof. Permission to sell religious art objects is at the sole discretion of individual pastors.
- If religious items such as prayer cards, medals, booklets, or clothing are offered:
 - They should be modestly priced and clearly optional.
 - Sales must be clearly accounted for and designated either to support the visiting organization or parish purposes.

Insurance and Liability

- The host parish must ensure that appropriate insurance coverage is in place for the event, particularly if large crowds are expected or processions are planned.

Fr. Juan Ochoa

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Director
Office for Divine Worship