

FBI Discovers 400-Year-Old Stolen Christian Artifact Hidden Thousands of Miles From Home

A centuries-old Christian artifact stolen from an Italian church and missing for years has been recovered by the FBI after investigators traced it to an unexpected destination in New England.

The artifact, a 17th-century reliquary urn from the Church of San Michele Arcangelo di Cangiano in Italy, was formally returned during a repatriation ceremony April 29 after an international investigation involving the FBI and the Italian Ministry of Culture.

According to the FBI's Boston field office, the ornate Baroque urn was one of 17 ecclesiastical artifacts stolen from the church between 2012 and 2022. The gilded vessel, used to hold Catholic relics, disappeared sometime before church officials discovered it missing during an inventory in November 2022.



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Investigators later tracked the roughly 400-year-old artifact to a New England antiques dealer who had unknowingly purchased it after it was sold through another dealer in Italy.

"We do not know how or who stole the urn from the church, but we do know it was sold to a New England-based antiques dealer and shipped to the United States," FBI Boston spokesperson Kristen Setera told Fox News Digital.

The FBI said agents interviewed the dealer and examined the

artifact before confirming it was the missing urn from the Italian church.

“Based on this interview and examination of the urn, the determination was made [that] the urn was the one missing from the church of San Michele Arcangelo,” Setera said.

After learning the artifact had been stolen, the dealer agreed to surrender it voluntarily.

“This information was shared with the antiques dealer, who ultimately agreed to turn over the urn to the FBI for repatriation to Italy,” Setera added.

Federal officials described the recovery as an important victory for the preservation of cultural and religious history. The FBI said the Baroque urn “represents a significant piece of Italian history” and remains protected under agreements involving Vatican City State.

Ted E. Docks, special agent in charge of the FBI’s Boston Division, called the recovery “incredibly exciting.”

“After all, this reliquary urn is a tangible link to intense religious devotion and a connection to the generations who lived and prayed with it,” Docks said in a statement.

“It represents the intersection of faith, history and art – elements that are invaluable to the people of Italy and to humanity as a whole.”

The urn’s return represents more than the recovery of a priceless artifact. It marks the restoration of a sacred piece of Christian heritage that stood for centuries as a witness to prayer and enduring faith.

To view the full FBI report, [click here](#).

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