

Notice Regarding Licensing Agreements  
October 2015

The Foundation wishes for you to know that there are products being marketed for sale and display that claim to be “authorized” and/or “licensed” by the Foundation (e.g. statues of religious figures, jewelry, etc). While not completely discrediting these statements, the Foundation would like to clarify its role in the promotion of these items at this time.

Years ago, the Foundation entered into an agreement that granted a license that enabled a company (the “Licensee”) to produce and sell various products with a pre-approved Foundation logo affixed. In exchange for the grant of this license, the Foundation received royalties from the company from all products sold pursuant to this agreement.

The license agreement also provided that the Licensee could grant sublicenses to other companies, which would grant the same right of production and sale of products, provided that the sublicenses had to be approved by the Foundation. The Licensee paid the Foundation a portion of the royalties it received from the sub-licensees as part of the original agreement.

The purpose of this agreement from the Foundation’s perspective was to raise funds for the Vatican Observatory, as is the Foundation’s purpose. The license agreement between the Foundation and the licensee has ended at this time and is in the process of wrapping up altogether. Therefore, there will be no additional sub-licenses sold, and the products with the VOF logo will no longer be produced.

Nearly all products marketed for sale with the Foundation logo were produced by the sublicensees. The Foundation’s role under this arrangement was very limited. Once the Foundation granted approval for a sublicense agreement, its role in the process was essentially over. The sublicensees would contract for the products to be made and were responsible for the marketing of the same. What products were produced and when was at the discretion of the company producing and selling the product. At no point did the Foundation authorize or license any specific artwork or other product with the Foundation logo – it simply approved the sublicense agreement that enabled a sublicensee to affix the Foundation logo to products. The specific products created were not individually approved.

To be clear, the Foundation is not contesting the legitimacy of these products that bear the Foundation logo to the extent they were produced by authorized sublicensees. Rather, what the Foundation is intending to clarify is that it is not the Foundation itself producing these products; it is the Foundation’s hope that people are not confused or misled in any way into thinking this is the case. With this notice, the Foundation wants to make sure that people understand the situation, the Foundation’s role in it, and make decisions accordingly.