



Robert W. Wood

THE TAX LAWYER

TAXES | 10/11/2013

Vatican Flubs Coin With Jesus And Tax Collector

“Jesus Lesus Christ,” I cried when I saw this. Many who occasionally take the Lord’s name in vain may find comfort in this misspelling. Now we can say it with a little less guilt, especially since everyone messes up now and then. We are all fallible and *even the Vatican* messes up. And not just in print but in permanent metal, striking *Lesus* instead of *Jesus*.

As reported here, [Vatican pulls papal medal which misspelt name of Jesus](#), the Vatican issued a coin-size medal. Such trinkets provide a steady stream of revenue for the church. Unfortunately for collectors who watch late night TV, you can’t get this one. The Vatican quickly pulled the embarrassingly flubbed metal Souvenir from the market.

Why was “Jesus” on the medal actually “Lesus”? Maybe it wasn’t obvious since the phrase is in Latin: “Vidit ergo *Lesus* publicanum ey quia miserando antque eligendo vidit, ait illi sequire me.” Don’t recognize that quotable phrase?



(Photo credit: Wikipedia)

It means: “Jesus, therefore, saw the tax collector, and because he saw, by having mercy and by choosing, He said to him, Follow me.” But when the Vatican struck the medal it goofed up the Latin phrase, admitted a Vatican spokesman. The Italian Minting Institute made about 6,000 “Lesus” medals and retrieved all but three or four, according to media reports.

The few that squeaked by could be pretty valuable mistakes. But associating Jesus with the tax makes sense. After all, being a tax collector may not be the **oldest** profession, but it’s close. Long before [Dirty Jobs](#), we understood that some jobs are ickier than others.

Collecting taxes is one of them. In the Bible, tax collectors are generally portrayed as greedy. Some of this is to be expected. Even before the recent spate of IRS scandals, what if you show up at a party and say you work for the IRS—or some other tax agency?

Such a confession seems more likely to clear the room than make you instantly popular. It’s probably gotten worse recently, even if you aren’t one of the IRS employees still in the limelight. See [Long after spotlight has faded, IRS official Holly Paz faces attacks](#). Some taxpayers have a kind of shoot the messenger mentality.

Especially now, some people take out their frustration with the tax system or with the size of their tax bill on a low-level IRS employee. Some tax agency employees, particularly those dealing with nitty-gritty collection issues, use professional names instead of their real names. That way they don’t have to be so easily identified in their off hours.

It makes you wonder just how much taxes and religion should go together. I’ll bet Lesus would know.

You can reach me at Wood@WoodLLP.com. This discussion is not intended as legal advice, and cannot be relied upon for any purpose without the services of a qualified professional.