

# Why Pray To The Saints?

## Praying to the Saints in Scriptural Terms.

By a Catholic Witness.

Australian Catholic Truth Society No.1785a (1984)

### Scriptural Terms.

The term "worship" is used in the same way in the Bible that it used to be used in English. It could cover both the adoration given to God alone and the honour that is to be shown to certain human beings. In Hebrew, the term for worship is shakah. It is appropriately used for humans in a large number of passages.

For example, in Genesis 37:7–9 Joseph relates two dreams that God gave him concerning how his family would honour him in coming years. Translated literally the passage states: "Behold, we were binding sheaves in the field, and lo, my sheaf arose and stood upright; and behold, your sheaves gathered round it, and worshiped [shakah] my sheaf." ...Then he dreamed another dream, and told it to his brothers, and said, "Behold, I have dreamed another dream; and behold, the sun, the moon, and eleven stars were worshiping [shakah] me."

In Genesis 49:2-27, Jacob pronounced a prophetic blessing on his sons, and concerning Judah, he stated: "Judah, your brothers shall praise you; your hand shall be on the neck of your enemies; your father's sons shall worship [shakah] you" (49:8).

And in Exodus 18:7, Moses honoured his father-in-law, Jethro: "Moses went out to meet his father-in-law, and worshiped [shakah] him and kissed him; and they asked each other of their welfare, and went into the tent."

Yet none of these passages were discussing the worship of adoration, the kind of worship given to God.

As the terminology of Christian theology developed, the Greek term latria came to be used to refer to the honour that is due to God alone, and the term dulia came to refer to the honour that is due to human beings, especially those who lived and died in God's friendship – in other words, the saints.

Scripture indicates that honour is due to these individuals (Mt 10:41).

A special term was coined to refer to the special honour given to the Virgin Mary, who bore Jesus – God in the flesh – in her womb. This term, hyperdulia, indicates that the honour due to her as Christ's own Mother is beyond the dulia given to other saints. It is greater in degree, but still of the same kind. However, since Mary is a finite creature, the honour she is due is fundamentally different in kind from the latria owed to the infinite Creator.

Another attempt to make clear the difference between the honour due to God and that due to humans has been to use the words adore and adoration to describe the total, consuming reverence due to God and the terms venerate, veneration, and honour to refer to the respect due humans.

Thus, Catholics sometimes say: "We adore God but we honour His saints."

1)

Objection:

Speaking of the idols, God says that "You shall not worship [shakah; proskunesis] them or serve [avad; latria] them" (Ex 20:5). When the translators of the Greek Septuagint rendered avad into Greek, they did so by using a couple of different terms and often both dulia and latria to translate the one term avad. Clearly the Septuagint translators recognized the fact that avad meant both to worship and to serve, to give latria and to give dulia. Therefore, the Catholic distinction is un-Biblical and the worship of saints is idolatry.

Answer:

Dulia, because it can refer to service of God, can be interchanged with latria in reference to God. When we serve God, we honour Him. But when dulia refers to service to man, it is not interchanged with latria. That is because when we serve man we are not giving him latria, since latria, according to the New Testament, is only used for God or false gods.

2)

Objection:

Dulia means servitude, latria, honour. Now no one doubts that it is greater to be enslaved than to honour. Thus if we allow the Catholic distinction to stand {latria to God and dulia to the saints}, then the saints receive what is higher in value than what God receives. To serve someone is certainly more important than to give honour to someone.

Answer: Dulia is a multifaceted word in Greek that can be applied to many different situations. It does not necessarily mean that one is "enslaved" in reference to a master-slave relationship. For example, in Gal 5:13 Paul writes: "For you were called to freedom, brethren; only do not turn your freedom into an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve [doulevete] one another." We note here that the brethren were "called to freedom," that is, they are not slaves to anyone. Rather, because of their freedom they, through being motivated by love, are to serve one another. This service is voluntary and generated by love. We are not giving something of "greater value" to a person than we give to God any more than the love required by the commandment which tells us to "love God and love your neighbour as yourself" (Mk 12:28-31) is giving something of greater value to the neighbour than we give to God.

3)

Objection:

There is absolutely no distinction made between latria and dulia relevant to religious worship. As an example, we note Paul's words in Galatians 4:8: "However at that time, when you did not know God, you were slaves to those which by nature are no gods." {Others have translated the verse: "But when you did not know God, you served, or were slaves to, those which by nature are not gods".} Paul is speaking of the former idolatry of the Galatians. They served [dulia] idols, those which by nature are not gods at all. Are we to assume, then, on the basis of the Roman Catholic definitions, that since they only served these idols that they were then free from the charge of

idolatry, since they didn't give latria as well? Of course not! Their service of these idols was wrong whether the term latria or dulia was used.

Answer:

Again, dulia can refer to both God and man, but latria only refers to God, or a false god, not man.

To conclude this section on Scriptural terms, we see that Scriptures use the word “worship” [shakah] both for God and for men as well as the word “serve” [avad], rendered in Greek by both latria and dulia or by dulia alone. Thus, the historic distinction made by the Catholic Church that latria is worship of God, but dulia (and hyperdulia) refers to men, is correct. And in any case, what matters is the concept and not so much this or that term.

Honouring Saints.

Consider how honour is given. We regularly give it to public officials. In Australia, it is customary to address a judge as "Your Honour." In the marriage ceremony it used to be said that the wife would "love, honour, and obey" her husband. Letters to legislators are addressed to "The Honourable So-and-So." And just about anyone, living or dead, who bears an exalted rank is said to be worthy of honour, and this is particularly true of historical figures, as when children are (or at least used to be) instructed to honour the Founding Fathers of their country.

These practices are entirely Biblical.

We are explicitly commanded at numerous points in the Bible to honour certain people.

One of the most important commands on this subject is the command to honour one's parents: "Honour your father and your mother, that your days may be long in the land which the Lord your God gives you" (Ex. 20:12).

God considered this command so important that he repeated it multiple times in the Bible (for example, Lev. 19:3, Deut. 5:16, Mt 15:4, Luke 18:20, and Eph. 6:2–3).

It was also important to give honour to one's elders in general: "You shall rise up before the hoary head, and honour the face of an old man, and you shall fear your God: I am the Lord" (Lev. 19:32).

It was also important to specially honour religious leaders: "Make sacred garments for your brother Aaron [the high priest], to give him dignity and honour" (Ex. 28:2).

"And he [Jacob] passed over before them, and bowed himself to the ground seven times, until he came near to his brother [Esau] (Gen. 33:3)."

"And Bathsheba bowed, and did obedience unto the king [David]" (1 Kings 1:16). "And the king [Solomon] rose up to meet her [Bathsheba], and bowed himself unto her" (1 Kings 2:19).

No one would accuse these of worshipping others as gods.

The New Testament stresses the importance of honouring others no less than the Old Testament.

The apostle Paul commanded: "Pay all of them their dues, taxes to whom taxes are due, revenue to whom revenue is due, respect to whom respect is due, honour to whom honour is due" (Rom. 13:7).

He also stated this as a principle regarding one's employers: "Slaves, be obedient to those who are your earthly masters, with fear and trembling, in singleness of heart, as to Christ" (Eph. 6:5). "Let

all who are under the yoke of slavery regard their masters as worthy of all honour, so that the name of God and the teaching may not be defamed" (1 Tim. 6:1).

Perhaps the broadest command to honour others is found in 1 Peter: "Honour all men. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honour the emperor" (1 Pet. 2:17).

The New Testament also stresses the importance of honouring religious figures. Paul spoke of the need to give them special honour in 1 Timothy: "Let the priests who rule well be considered worthy of double honour, especially those who labor in preaching and teaching" (1 Tim. 5:17).

Christ Himself promised special blessings to those who honour religious figures: "He who receives a prophet because he is a prophet shall receive a prophet's reward, and he who receives a righteous man [saint] because he is a righteous man shall receive a righteous man's reward" (Mt 10:41).

As far as kissing, St. Paul says four times in Scripture that we're to greet one another with a holy kiss (Romans 16:16, 1 Cor. 16:20, 2 Cor. 13:12 and 1 Thess. 5:26). And the clergy in Ephesus embrace and kiss St. Paul after his final discourse to them in Acts 20:37. This is not worship; this is affection. The Bible commands us to "esteem very highly" those who are "over [us] in the Lord" (1 Thess. 5:12-13).

So, if there can be nothing wrong with honouring the living, who still have an opportunity to ruin their lives through sin, there certainly can be no argument against giving honour to saints whose lives are done and who ended them in sanctity. If people should be honoured in general, God's special friends certainly should be honoured.

Imitation is the Biblical Form of Honour.

The most important form of honouring the saints, to which all the other forms are related, is the imitation of them in their relationship with God. Paul wrote extensively about the importance of spiritual imitation (Philip. 4:8-9).

He stated: "I urge you, then, be imitators of me. Therefore I sent to you Timothy, my beloved and faithful child in the Lord, to remind you of my ways in Christ, as I teach them everywhere in every church" (1 Cor. 4:16–17). Later he told the same group: "Be imitators of me, as I am of Christ. I commend you because you remember me in everything and maintain the traditions even as I have delivered them to you" (1 Cor. 11:1–2).

Elsewhere he also stresses the importance of imitating true spiritual leaders: "Remember your leaders, those who spoke to you the word of God; consider the outcome of their life, and imitate their faith" (Heb. 13:7).

One of the most important passages on imitation is found in chapter 11 of the same epistle: the Bible's well-known "hall of fame" chapter, presents numerous examples of the Old Testament saints for our imitation. It concludes with the famous exhortation: "Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with perseverance the race that is set before us" (Heb. 12:1) – the race that the saints have run before us.

One Mediator.

A charge commonly leveled against asking the saints for their intercession is that this violates the sole mediatorship of Christ, which Paul discusses:

"For there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus" (1 Tim. 2:5).

First, Christ is a unique mediator between man and God because he is the only person who is both God and man. He is the only bridge between the two, the only God-man. He is the Lamb of God whose very sacrifice reconciled man back to God satisfying the penalty of eternal damnation sin brings.

Furthermore, Christ is a unique mediator between God and man because he is the Mediator of the New Covenant (Heb. 9:15, 12:24), just as Moses was the mediator (Greek *mesites*) of the Old Covenant (Gal. 3:19–20).

That role as mediator is not compromised in the least by the fact that others intercede for us. Consider what the Scriptures say; let us start with the Old Testament:

"His flesh wastes away to nothing, and his bones, once hidden, now stick out. His soul draws near to the pit, and his life to the messengers of death. Yet if there is an angel on his side as a mediator, one out of a thousand, to tell a man what is right for him, to be gracious to him and say: 'Spare him from going down to the pit; I have found a ransom for him', then his flesh is renewed like a child's; it is restored as in the days of his youth" (Job 33:21-26). Job prays to God and finds favour with Him; he sees God's face and shouts for joy, he is restored by God to his righteous state. Here we have an example of an angel acting as a mediator for a man who is about to die from sickness and sin and yet by the angel's mediation the man is restored to his health and his righteous state. By virtue of the angel's persuading intercessory prayer to God to have mercy on the man, the man was spared death.

Contrast this to Jeremiah: "Then the Lord said to me: 'Even if Moses and Samuel were to stand before me, my heart would not go out to this people. Send them away from my presence! Let them go!'" (Jeremiah 15:1). Here we have God being very angry at Israel because of idolatry and God says that even if Moses and Samuel were to make intercession before his very throne he would not grant their request. Now this example is in the negative but it clearly shows that departed saints go before the very throne of God and make intercessory prayer for those of us on earth.

Looking at the Second Book of Maccabees we find an even more explicit example of intercession by departed and glorified Saints: 2 Maccabees 15:12-16 tells of a vision Judas Maccabeus has, in which he sees both Onias (a former high priest who had died) and Jeremiah the prophet (who had died over 500 years earlier) interceding, or mediating, for Israel. This passage of Scripture clearly shows us that departed Saints make intercession for those of us on earth who live their life in faith.

The New Testament is not less explicit:

The saints, now perfected in righteousness in heaven (see Heb. 12:23), have been put in charge "of many things!" (Mt 25:21).

Their intercession clearly does not interfere with Christ's unique mediatorship because in the four verses immediately preceding 1 Timothy 2:5, Paul says that Christians should intercede: "First of all, then, I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for all men, for kings and all who are in high positions, that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life, godly and respectful in every way. This is good, and pleasing to God our Saviour, who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth" (1 Tim. 2:1–4).

Jesus said that those who die in Christ are transformed and will be like the Angels in heaven (Mt 22:30) and that implies that glorified and perfected heavenly Saints will, like Angels, be ministering spirits to the people of God on earth struggling in this life (Heb. 1:14).

The mediation role of Saints is between man and Christ to keep us strong in Christ during the trials and tribulations we will have on earth. Let us look at the book of Hebrews which perfectly reflects and confirms all this: "But you have come to... the city of the living God... and to innumerable angels... and to the assembly of the first-born who are enrolled in heaven, and to a judge who is God ...and to the spirits of just men made perfect... and to Jesus" (Heb. 12:22-24). Notice St. Paul says: "But you have come to... and to ...and to... and to..." In the same way that we come to God and Jesus, we also come to the angels, our brothers and sisters on this earth in the Church, and to the spirits of just men made perfect. Those are the saints in heaven. We come to them all by way of prayer.

This is how God has designed his Kingdom so that not only are we dependent on God but also on each other and especially those glorified saints who have departed the earth to receive their eternal inheritance and rewards.

Why not directly to Jesus?

Some may grant that the previous objections to asking the saints for their intercession do not work and may even grant that the practice is permissible in theory, yet they may question it on other grounds, asking why one would want to ask the saints to pray for one. "Why not pray directly to Jesus?" they ask.

The answer is: "Of course one should pray directly to Jesus!" But that does not mean it is not also a good thing to ask others to pray for one as well. Ultimately, the "go-directly-to-Jesus" objection boomerangs back on the one who makes it: why should we ask any Christian, in heaven or on earth, to pray for us when we can ask Jesus directly? If the mere fact that we can go straight to Jesus proved that we should ask no Christian in heaven to pray for us then it would also prove that we should ask no Christian on earth to pray for us. Praying for each other is simply part of what Christians do. As we saw, in 1 Timothy 2:1–4, Paul strongly encouraged Christians to intercede for many different things, and that passage is by no means unique in his writings.

Elsewhere Paul directly asks others to pray for him (Rom. 15:30–32, Eph. 6:18–20, Col. 4:3, 1 Thess. 5:25, 2 Thess. 3:1), and he assured them that he was praying for them as well (2 Thess. 1:11). Most fundamentally, Jesus Himself required us to pray for others, and not only for those who asked us to do so (Mt 5:44).

Since the practice of asking others to pray for us is so highly recommended in Scripture, it cannot be regarded as superfluous on the grounds that one can go directly to Jesus.

The New Testament would not recommend it if there were not benefits coming from it. One such benefit is that the faith and devotion of the saints can support our own weaknesses and supply what is lacking in our own faith and devotion. Jesus regularly supplied for one person based on another person's faith (e.g., Mt 8:13, 15:28, 17:15–18, Mark 9:17–29, Luke 8:49–55). And it goes without saying that those in heaven, being free of the body and the distractions of this life, have even greater confidence and devotion to God than anyone on earth.

The Bible directs us to invoke those in heaven and ask them to pray with us. Thus, in Psalm 103 we pray: "Bless the Lord, O you his angels, you mighty ones who do his word, hearkening to the voice

of his word! Bless the Lord, all his hosts, his ministers that do his will!" (Ps. 103:20–21). And in the opening verses of Psalm 148, we pray: "Praise the Lord! Praise the Lord from the heavens, praise Him in the heights! Praise Him, all his angels, praise Him, all his host!" Not only do those in heaven pray with us, they also pray for us.

In the book of Revelation, John sees that "the twenty-four elders [the leaders of the people of God in heaven] fell down before the Lamb, each holding a harp, and with golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints" (Rev. 5:8).

Thus, the saints in heaven offer to God the prayers of the saints on earth. Angels do the same thing: "An angel came and stood at the altar [in heaven] with a golden censer; and he was given much incense to mingle with the prayers of all the saints upon the golden altar before the throne; and the smoke of the incense rose with the prayers of the saints from the hand of the angel before God" (Rev. 8:3–4).

Also, God answers in particular the prayers of the righteous. James declares: "The prayer of a righteous man has great power in its effects. Elias [Elijah] was a man of like nature with ourselves and he prayed fervently that it might not rain, and for three years and six months it did not rain on the earth. Then he prayed again and the heaven gave rain, and the earth brought forth its fruit" (James 5:16–18).

Yet those Christians in heaven are more righteous, since they have been made perfect to stand in God's presence (Heb. 12:22–23), than anyone on earth, meaning their prayers would be even more efficacious.

Having others praying for us thus is a good thing, not something to be despised or set aside.

Of course, we should pray directly to Christ with every pressing need we have (see John 14:13–14). That's something the Catholic Church strongly encourages. In fact, the prayers of the Mass, the central act of Catholic worship, are directed to God and Jesus, not the saints. But this does not mean that we should not also ask our fellow Christians, including those in heaven, to pray with us and for us.

As part of their eternal reward in heaven Saints are perfected and glorified and are given nations to judge and rule over (Wisdom 3:1) just like the Prophet Jeremiah was given power to rule over and intercede for Israel in Second Maccabees. (See its Chapter 15, especially verses 14–15.)

The Communion of Saints.

The Church is Christ's body (Rom. 12; Eph. 2:34). Its members are individually parts of one another (Rom. 12:4–5), as branches of the vine (John 15:1–5). The question is, does this intimate union with Christ and with one another cease when we die? Of course not.

Through Baptism, we pass "from death to life; death no longer has dominion over us."

There is no real distinction between the believer in human life and after human life. Saints, living or dead, are indistinguishable before God. As Scripture makes very clear, death does not separate us from the love of Christ (cf. Romans 8:38–39) and from His body, which is the Church (Eph. 1:23; Col. 1:24). They are, and we are, members of Christ's body (Gal. 3:28). But there is only one body of Christ (Rom. 12:5; Eph. 4:4; Col. 3:15), not one on earth and one in heaven.

We are so radically one with Christ that He can say in Acts 9:4: "Saul, Saul, why do you persecute Me?" and in Matthew 25:40: "Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brethren, you did it to Me."

Now turn to 1 Corinthians 12:12-27. This is the text that refers to Christians as "the body of Christ." We are so intimately one with one another that in verse 21, the text reads: "The eye cannot say to the hand: 'I have no need of you', nor again the head to the feet: 'I have no need of you'."

We may be bodily separated, but this does not keep us from honouring and loving our brothers and sisters and fathers and mothers who have gone before us:

"Love one another with mutual affection" (Rom. 12:10);

"Encourage, build up one another" (1 Thess. 5:11);

"Bear one another's burdens" (Gal 6:12); and finally:

"Let us do good to all, especially those in the family of faith" (Gal 6:10).

This intimate union with Christ and with one another does not cease when we die. In fact, it becomes more radical. Indeed, the saints in heaven are even closer to us than when they were here on earth, because it is Christ Who makes us one. They are free from all sin, which hinders our prayers (cf. Mt 17:20, 1 John 3:22, Psalm 66:18), and they are experiencing a union with God (and therefore with us) beyond anything we can fathom. "[They are] like Him for [they] see Him as He is" (1 John 3:2). As "partakers of the divine nature," (2 Peter 1:4) in the fullest sense, they have gifts and powers beyond what "eye has seen [or] ear heard" (1 Cor. 2:9).

If we could ask them to pray for us when they were here on earth, of course we can — and should — ask them to pray for us now.

Now turn to Hebrews chapter 12. As St. Paul says, in order to encourage the persecuted Church of Jerusalem (see Hebrews 10:32-34): "...since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles, and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us" (Hebrews 12:1).

God has given us a great heavenly host to help us on our earthly journey. To call on them for help and prayer is not only showing our love for our brothers and sisters in Christ but their love for us! And that reflects an even greater glory, love, and worship to God who rewards those ahead of us to enable us to be rewarded ourselves as we draw from the heavenly host the help needed to finish the race laid out before us and endure to the end (Mt 24:9-14).

In closing our consideration of the communion of saints and answering the "go-directly-to-Jesus" objection, let us examine the Apostle Paul's Epistle to the Corinthians: "Love never fails. But where there are prophecies, they will cease; where there are tongues, they will be stilled; where there is knowledge, it will pass away. For we know in part and we prophesy in part, but when perfection comes, the imperfect disappears. When I was a child, I talked like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I put childish ways behind me. Now we see but a poor reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known" (1 Corinthians 13:8-12).

Clearly, we can see this verse refers to our perfection in heaven; there is perfect love, which is shown in the mercy of prayer and aid from the glorified and perfected Saints. God has not left us as



orphans and when our family members die in Christ they are still with us praying for us and eager to receive our prayer request to take to the very throne of God. Love never stops, even on the other side of eternity we cannot be separated from God or our departed loved ones, for those who have gone on in glory shall forever remain connected to the Vine, which is Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith.

### Can They Hear Us?

Anti-Catholic Loraine Boettner says: "How can a human being such as Mary hear the prayers of millions of Roman Catholics, in many different countries, praying in many different languages, all at the same time? Let any priest or layman try to converse with only three people at the same time and see how impossible that is for a human being...Many such petitions are expressed, not orally, but only mentally, silently. How can Mary and the saints, without being like God, be present everywhere and know the secrets of all hearts?" (Roman Catholicism, 142-143).

If being in heaven were like being in the next room, then of course these objections would be valid. A mortal, unglorified person in the next room would indeed suffer the restrictions imposed by the way space and time work in our universe. But the saints are not in the next room, and they are not subject to the time/space limitations of this life.

Further, the Bible indicates that the glorified human intellect enjoyed by the saints in heaven has a phenomenal ability to process information, dwarfing anything we are capable of in this life. This is shown by the fact that, on Judgment Day, we will review every act of our lives. But since Judgment Day is not going to take eighty years to review the events of an eighty year life (if it takes any time at all), our intellects will be able to process enormous amounts of information and experience, once freed from the confines of this mortal life. And not only will we be aware of the events of our own lives, but of the lives of those around us on Judgment Day as well, for Christ stated that all our acts will be publicly revealed (Luke 12:2-3).

This does not imply that the saints in heaven therefore must be omniscient, as God is, for it is only through God's willing it that they can communicate with others in heaven or with us.

And Boettner's argument about petitions arriving in different languages is even further off the mark. Does anyone really think that in heaven the saints are restricted to the King's English? After all, it is God Himself who gives the gift of tongues and the interpretation of tongues. Surely, those saints in Revelation understand the prayers they are shown to be offering to God.

The fact that Elias [Elijah] could come back from heaven and appear with Jesus on the Mount of Transfiguration shows that by the power of God saints have capabilities that far surpass our limitations on earth.

The problem here is one of what might be called a primitive or even childish and certainly un-Biblical view of heaven.

This is the way Scripture regards the knowledge of the deceased saints: "When the Lamb broke the fifth seal, I saw underneath the altar the souls of those who had been slain because of the word of God, and because of the testimony which they had maintained; and they cried out with a loud voice, saying, 'How long, O Lord, holy and true, will You refrain from judging and avenging our blood on those who dwell on the earth?' And there was given to each of them a white robe; and they were told that they should rest for a little while longer, until the number of their fellow servants and their brethren who were to be killed even as they had been, would be completed also" (Rev 6:9-11).

We notice here that the deceased saints, in their "soul" existence, both pray to God and are aware that the earth exists; that it still houses the evil people who killed them; and that their "fellow servants and brethren" are still on earth and would likewise be killed.

It cannot be denied that the saints have current knowledge of what transpires on earth.

This can also be seen in Revelation 5:8, where John depicts the saints in heaven offering our prayers to God under the form of "golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints."

But if the saints in heaven are offering our prayers to God, then they must be aware of our prayers. They are aware of our petitions and present them to God by interceding for us.

Some might try to argue that in this passage the prayers being offered were not addressed to the saints in heaven, but directly to God. Yet this argument would only strengthen the fact that those in heaven can hear our prayers, for then the saints would be aware of our prayers even when they are not directed to them!

Moreover, remember what St. Paul says: "We know in part and we prophesy in part, but when perfection comes, the imperfect disappears... Now we see but a poor reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known" (1 Cor 13:8-12).

St. Thomas Aquinas teaches that the knowledge and concerns of earth are "revealed" to the deceased souls, either by their vision of God, or by "any other means" (Summa Theologica, I, Question 72, Article 1, ad 5). He is referring to the fact that by God's power the saints are made aware. Hence, each request made to a saint to pray for a specific petition on earth is made known to them by God Himself. Saints enjoy this privilege of direct communication with God because they are with him in heaven, just as they enjoy many other privileges in heaven that we do not enjoy on earth.

Statue Worship?

Protestants say that Catholics worship statues.

Not only is this untrue, it is even untrue that Catholics honour statues. After all, a statue is nothing but a carved block of marble or a chunk of plaster, and no one gives honour to marble yet unquarried or to plaster still in the mixing bowl.

They object that Origen, Athenagoras, Lactantius, Tertullian and Arnobius condemned the pagans for bowing before images as an act of worship.

In fact, these Fathers are all speaking only about worship to God or a false god, not to non-gods. And St. Irenaeus, who condemns the Gnostics for honouring these images the same way the Gentiles honour their pagan images is not saying that images themselves are evil. From the context of *Against Heresies* (chapters 20-26), he is saying that it is a contradiction for groups such as the Gnostics, who deny almost every doctrine of Christ and Christianity, to be carrying an image of Christ. Why carry an image of Christ if you deny everything that He taught?

The fact that someone kneels before a statue to pray does not mean that he is praying to the statue, just as the fact that someone kneels with a Bible in his hands to pray does not mean that he is worshipping the Bible. Statues or paintings or other artistic devices are used to recall to the mind the

person or thing depicted. Just as it is easier to remember one's mother by looking at her photograph, so it is easier to recall the lives of the saints by looking at representations of them.

The use of statues and icons for liturgical purposes (as opposed to idols) also had a place in the Old Testament. In Exodus 25:18–20, God commanded: "And you shall make two cherubim of gold; of hammered work shall you make them, on the two ends of the mercy seat. Make one cherub on the one end, and one cherub on the other end; of one piece with the mercy seat shall you make the cherubim on its two ends. The cherubim shall spread out their wings above, overshadowing the mercy seat with their wings, their faces one to another; toward the mercy seat shall the faces of the cherubim be." Such representations of things non-divine were used, and at the command of God. In fact, when the cherubim were set up and the temple completed, God came into the temple in the form of a cloud (2 Chronicles 5:13-14). Thus, we have another representation of God made by God himself. The cloud was something to see. If God did not intend them to have any visual aid due to prohibitions of the First and Second Commandments, then He wouldn't have come in a cloud, for He would have been making the people sin. Again, there is a vast difference between making an artificial image of God and worshipping it, as opposed to representations of God as aids to spiritual truths, aids that even God Himself commands to be made.

In Numbers 21:8–9, "God told Moses: 'Make a fiery serpent, and set it on a pole; and every one who is bitten, when he sees it, shall live.' So Moses made a bronze serpent, and set it on a pole; and if a serpent bit any man, he would look at the bronze serpent and live." This shows the actual ceremonial use of a statue (looking to it) in order to receive a blessing from God (healing from snakebite). In John 3:14, Jesus tells us that He Himself is what the bronze serpent represented, so it was a symbolic representation of Jesus. There was no problem with this statue – God had commanded it to be made – so long as people did not worship it. Yes, God commanded the destruction of the bronze serpent, but only after it had come to be worshipped; it had been preserved for about 800 years before this. Once again, the problem was not with the statue, but with the worship of it. This clearly shows the difference between the proper religious use of statues and idolatry.

Psalms 19:1 tells us: "The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament shows his handywork." All of creation is a reflection of God's glory.

Romans 1:20 says: "For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse."

Jesus Himself is "the image [eikon] of the invisible God" (Col. 1:15). Before the Incarnation, God could not be represented by an image. He was incomprehensible and invisible. But now, He has become incarnate, and as such, He has opened up an entirely new economy of images, not only of God, but also of man as partakers of the divine nature through our union with Him (see 2 Peter 1:2-4, 1 John 3:2).

The Second Council of Nicea in A.D. 787 officially condemned worshipping anyone or anything other than God. That formal declaration was in response to the heresy of iconoclasm, which erroneously condemned the use of icons, but we Catholics have always worshipped God, and God alone. But we also believe in honouring God's holy angels and saints. And we believe in honouring statues and icons, inasmuch as they are representations of our Lord, His holy angels and His saints.

Necromancy?

Sometimes Fundamentalists object to asking our fellow Christians in heaven to pray for us by declaring that God has forbidden contact with the dead in passages such as Deuteronomy 18:10-11.

Anyone who argues that praying to a Saint is praying to a dead person doesn't understand what Jesus has taught us:

"Have you not read what God said to you: 'I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob'? He is not the God of the dead but of the living" (Mt 22: 30-32). (St. Luke's Gospel 20:38 adds, "for to Him all are alive" or "for all live unto Him".)

Now if God is the God of the living and not the God of the dead when Jesus spoke of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob then how can Catholics be praying to dead people? Even though Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob each experienced a physical death, Jesus said they are indeed alive ("for to Him all [in heaven] are alive")!

Let us further examine the words of Jesus on the matter: "Jesus said to her: 'I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies; and whoever lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?' " (John 11:25-26) Do Fundamentalist and Reformers believe this? Apparently not, since they want to make the argument that we Catholics pray to dead people!

In Jeremiah 31:15-16, we see Rachel interceding for her children (Israel). Jeremiah was written during the time of the Babylonian exile hundreds of years after Rachel's death, yet the text says her "voice [was] heard," and her prayers were answered.

Jesus Himself spoke with both Moses and Elias [Elijah] even though Moses was dead and buried for over a thousand years and Elias was taken up into heaven nearly a thousand years before Jesus was born. Jesus is our very example of Christian living. Therefore, if He spoke with departed Saints and the Bible commands us to walk as Jesus did (1 John 2:3-6) there is no reason why we can't speak with Saints who have overcome the world and have been perfected and glorified.

Praying to and with departed Saints and petitioning for their prayers is not necromancy. When a Christian petitions in prayer for prayer and aid from a glorified heavenly saint, he/she is communing with the saints which are still part of the body of Christ; this is no different than had they asked family and friends still here on earth to pray for them. The truly dead are forever separated from God but glorified Saints are not only not separated from God but they are not separated from the body of Christ either!

That is why both Jesus and the children of God can receive comfort and aid from glorified and departed saints, because they are not dead but alive just like the Bible says.

Veneration of the Relics of the Saints.

Former Catholic priest and now rabid anti-Catholic author Bartholomew Brewer claims that "there is nothing in the Bible that supports the veneration of relics, even if they are genuine."

Again, not so.

One of the most moving accounts of the veneration of relics is that of the very body of Christ itself. Rather than leaving his body on the cross, to be taken down and disposed of by the Romans (as was the customary practice), Joseph of Arimathea courageously interceded with Pilate for Christ's body (Mk 15:43, John 19:38). He donated his own, newly hewn tomb as Christ's resting place (Mt

27:60). Nicodemus came and donated over a hundred pounds of spices to wrap inside Jesus' grave clothes (John 19:39), that amount of spices being used only for the most honoured dead. And after he was buried, the women went to reverently visit the tomb (Mt 28:1) and to further anoint Christ's body with spices even though it had already been sealed inside the tomb (Mk 16:1, Luke 24:1). These acts of reverence were more than just the usual courtesy shown to the remains of the dead; they were special respect shown to the body of a most holy man - in this case, the holiest man who has ever lived, for He was God Incarnate.

Keep in mind what the Church says about relics. It doesn't say there is some magical power in them. There is nothing in the relic itself, whether a bone of the apostle Peter or water from Lourdes, that has any curative ability. The Church just says that relics may be the occasion of God's miracles. [Footnote: Weren't the bodies of the saints "the temples of the Holy Ghost"? (1 Cor. 3:16-17; 6:19-20). And in this, the Church follows Scripture. The use of the bones of Eliseus [Elisha] brought a dead man to life: "So Eliseus died, and they buried him. Now bands of Moabites used to invade the land in the spring of the year. And as a man was being buried, lo, a marauding band was seen and the man was cast into the grave of Eliseus; and as soon as the man touched the bones of Eliseus, he revived, and stood on his feet" (2 Kings 13:20-21). This is an unequivocal biblical example of a miracle being performed by God through contact with the relics of a saint!

Similar are the cases of the woman cured of a hemorrhage by touching the hem of Christ's cloak (Mt 9:20-22) and the sick who were healed when Peter's shadow passed over them (Acts 5:14-16). "And God did extraordinary miracles by the hands of Paul, so that handkerchiefs or aprons were carried away from his body to the sick, and diseases left them and the evil spirits came out of them" (Acts 19:11-12). If these aren't biblical examples of the use of relics, what are?

Moreover, the veneration of relics is seen explicitly as early as the account of Polycarp's martyrdom written by the Smyrnaeans in A.D. 156. In it, the Christians describe the events following his burning at the stake: "We took up his bones, which are more valuable than precious stones and finer than refined gold, and laid them in a suitable place, where the Lord will permit us to gather ourselves together, as we are able, in gladness and joy and to celebrate the birthday of his martyrdom."

In speaking of the veneration of relics in the early Church, the anti-Catholic historian Adolph Harnack writes, "...[N]o Church Doctor of repute restricted it. All of them rather, even the Cappadocians, countenanced it. The numerous miracles which were wrought by bones and relics seemed to confirm their worship. The Church therefore would not give up the practice, although a violent attack was made upon it by a few cultured heathens and besides by the Manichaeans" (Harnack, *History of Dogma*, treatise IV, 313).

In the fourth century the great biblical scholar St. Jerome declared: "We do not worship, we do not adore, 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*, number 1, P.L., [Patrology by the Latin Fathers] volume XXII, page 907).

Let us therefore pray devoutly to the saints and venerate their images and relics!

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