

Do Catholics Practice Idolatry?

Idolatry is defined as the rendering to a mere creature the worship that belongs to God alone. The Catholic Church, as the only Church founded personally by God the Son Himself, authoritatively forbids idolatry. Do we have Statues in our Churches and homes? Yes, we do, for the same reasons that many devout protestants carry photos of their loved ones, or erect statues in honor of great national leaders, war heroes, or other persons whom they admire, as a reminder of their virtues, and as an inspiration to imitate them. There is nothing wrong with this, and no good Catholic would suspect a protestant of idolatry just because he sees him standing in admiration before such a monument, or pledging allegiance to the flag of his native land.

But, don't Catholics pray to statues? Absolutely not! Statues are inanimate objects without feelings or power of any kind. We do pray *in front of* statues of Our Lord Jesus in His glory, or upon the Cross of our salvation, but our prayers are to *Him* of Whom the statues remind us, and our supreme worship is to Him alone! **But doesn't God forbid the making of "graven images"?** For purposes of idolatrous worship, yes! But God actually *commanded* Moses, on several occasions, to make them: a brazen serpent in Numbers 21, and cherubim of gold in Exodus 25 and 37. Read these texts and ask: Did God command idolatry here? Obviously not!

But don't you Catholics also honor, and pray to, Mary and the Saints? Isn't that idolatry? Not at all! In doing these things, we follow the example of Our Lord Jesus Himself. No Christian can deny that Our Lord Jesus obeyed perfectly the Commandments of His Father, which include "Honor thy father and thy mother". Therefore, we know that Our Lord honored His mother more perfectly than any other son ever honored his mother. Thus, by honoring her, we are answering the question, "**W.W.J.D.? (What Would Jesus Do?)**" And when we say to her, "Blessed art thou among women", we echo the words of Gabriel, the Angel of the Lord; and of Elizabeth, the mother of John the Baptist, and we fulfill the prophetic words of Mary, "from henceforth, all generations shall call me blessed" (Luke 1). And when we ask her to pray for us, we take our inspiration from the bride and groom of Cana, who were helped by a miracle of our Lord through the *intercession* (as in, "They have no wine.") of His Mother, whom He loves to obey, even when His "time has not yet come". As for the Saints, Our Lord Himself honored and praised them, as when He honored His cousin St. John the Baptist by declaring that, among the prophets, "there hath not risen among them that are born of women a greater..." (Matt.11:11). When we pray to the Saints, it is simply to ask *them* to pray for *us*, as when St. Stephen prayed for those who were stoning him-- an *intercessory prayer* of sufficient value to obtain the grace of conversion of one who was among them, Saul of Tarsus (see Acts 7 through 9). When the Saints leave this world, they, like Stephen, "see the heavens opened" to receive them, where they dwell with their Savior for eternity, and *by His power* can hear the prayers of the Faithful, and they, still men and women, present their intercession to the One intercessor *between* God and man-- **to HIM WHO IS both God and Man.**

If the devotion that some of us Catholics render to the Saints seems to certain people excessive, we would ask them, rather than rashly judge and condemn *us* for "idolatry", to consider the possibility that it is only *in comparison* to the degree of worship that *they* render to God, that it *seems* excessive. And, *if* that be the case, that they might *consider* whether the fault *might* be with *them*. Thank you for reading, and God bless you.