



Question: "Is prayer to saints / Mary biblical?"

Answer: The official position of the Roman Catholic Church is that Catholics do not pray *to* saints in heaven or to Mary; rather, Catholics are taught they can ask saints or Mary to pray *for* them. According to the Roman Catholic Church, asking saints in heaven for their prayers is no different from asking someone here on earth to pray for us.

Despite official Catholic claims, it's hard to see how the words of the Memorare, a famous Catholic prayer, are not a direct petition to Mary:

"Remember, most loving Virgin Mary,
never was it heard
that anyone who turned to you for help
was left unaided. . . .
I run to your protection
for you are my mother."

The same can be said for the words of another traditional Catholic prayer, "Hail, Holy Queen":

"Hail, holy Queen, Mother of mercy,
hail, our life, our sweetness, and our hope.
To you we cry, the children of Eve;
to you we send up our sighs,
mourning and weeping in this land of exile.
Turn, then, most gracious advocate,
your eyes of mercy toward us;
lead us home at last."

(from *A Book of Prayers*, 1982, International Committee on English in the Liturgy, Inc.)

In practice, many Catholics diverge from official Roman Catholic teaching on prayer. Many Catholics do, in fact, pray directly to saints and/or Mary, as seen in the above prayers. Even in cases in which Mary or a saint is simply being asked to pray, the practice has no biblical basis.

The Bible nowhere instructs believers in Christ to pray to anyone other than God. The Bible nowhere encourages, or even mentions, believers asking individuals in heaven for their prayers. Why, then, do many Catholics pray to Mary and/or saints such as Gertrude, Rita, Sylvester, Vincent, Agnes, etc.? Why do they petition the dead to request their prayers? Catholics view Mary and the saints as "intercessors" before God. They believe that a saint, who is glorified in heaven, has more "direct access" to God than we sinners do from our earthly vantage point. In Catholic thinking, if a saint delivers a prayer to God, it is more effective than our praying to God directly. This concept is blatantly unbiblical. Hebrews 4:16 tells us that we, believers here on earth, have direct access to God and can "approach the throne of grace with confidence."

No saint can take Jesus' place: "There is one God and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus" (1 Timothy 2:5). There is no one else who can mediate with God for us. Since

Jesus is the *only* mediator, Mary and the saints cannot be mediators. Further, the Bible tells us that Jesus Christ Himself is interceding for us before the Father: "He is able to save completely those who come to God through Him, because He always lives to intercede for them" (Hebrews 7:25). With Jesus Himself interceding for us, why would we need Mary or the saints to intercede for us? Whom would God listen to more readily than His only begotten Son? Romans 8:26–27 says the Holy Spirit is also interceding for us. With the second and third Persons of the Trinity already interceding for us before the Father, why would we need to have Mary or the saints interceding for us?

Catholics argue that praying to Mary and the saints is no different than asking someone here on earth to pray for us. Let us examine that claim: (1) Asking other believers (on earth) to pray for us is certainly biblical (2 Corinthians 1:11; Ephesians 1:16; Philippians 1:19; 2 Timothy 1:3). The apostle Paul asks other Christians to pray for him in Ephesians 6:19. (2) The Bible nowhere mentions anyone asking for someone in heaven to pray for him. The Bible nowhere describes anyone in heaven praying for anyone on earth. (3) The Bible gives absolutely no indication that Mary or the saints can hear our prayers. Mary and the saints are not omniscient. Even glorified in heaven, they are still finite beings with limitations. How could they possibly hear the prayers of millions of people? (4) Whenever the Bible mentions praying to or speaking with the dead, it is in the context of sorcery, witchcraft, necromancy, and divination—activities the Bible strongly condemns (Leviticus 20:27; Deuteronomy 18:10–13). In the one instance when a dead "saint" is addressed by a living person, the saint, Samuel, is not exactly happy to be disturbed (1 Samuel 28:7–19). Praying to Mary or the saints is completely different from asking a friend here on earth to pray for us. Asking people on earth to pray for us has a strong biblical basis; asking the heavenly saints or Mary to pray has no biblical basis whatsoever.

It is wrong to think that God will hear and answer the prayers of St. Jude, for example, over yours. Scripture teaches that prayer offered to God in faith, according to God's will, from a redeemed heart will be heard. As an example, "Elijah was a human being, even as we are. He prayed earnestly that it would not rain, and it did not rain on the land for three and a half years. Again he prayed, and the heavens gave rain, and the earth produced its crops" (James 5:17–18).

There is absolutely no scriptural basis to pray to anyone other than God alone. There is no need to, either. Jesus, our Intercessor, has it covered. No one in heaven can mediate on our behalf except for Jesus Christ. Only God can hear and answer our prayers. The temple veil was torn in two (Hebrews 10:19–20); the child of God on earth has just as much access to God's throne of grace, in Jesus' name, than anyone in heaven (Hebrews 4:16).

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