

### Q.13 Why Do Catholics “Worship” Images And Sacramental?

Catholics are often accused of “worshipping” certain people and objects, when in fact, all they do is venerate these people and sacred objects. To put the record straight, Catholics do NOT worship anybody or anything but worship ONLY God. However, they venerate holy pictures of Jesus, the Blessed Virgin Mary, the holy angels, the crowned saints in heaven and other sacred objects or sacramental.

Sure, the Bible warns us strictly with severe consequences:

***“You shall not make for yourself a graven image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is on the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth; you shall not bow down to them or serve them ...”*** (Deut 5:8-9)

However, veneration of objects has its precedents in the Bible. The Bible treated some objects as sacred and any sort of profanation of such objects was punished. The Ark of the Covenant was built of Earth materials, yet it was sacred. God asked Moses to make two winged creatures (cherubs or angels) to be kept in the Ark where He dwelt:

*“And you shall make two cherubs of gold; of hammered work shall you make them, on the two ends of the mercy seat. Make one cherub on the one end; of one piece with the mercy seat shall you make the cherub on its two ends. The cherubs 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 cherub be. There I will meet with you, and from the mercy seat from between the two cherubs that are upon the Ark of the testimony, I will speak with you of all that I will give you in commandment for the people of Israel.”* (Exo 25:18-19,22)

Solomon had engraved images of cherubim, trees and flowers in the sanctuary of the house he built for God:

*“In the inner sanctuary, he made two cherubim of olivewood ... He carved all the walls of the house round about **with carved figures of cherubim and palm trees and open flowers**, in the inner and outer rooms ...”* (1 Kings 6:23-33)

*“On the panels that were set in the frames were **(engraved images of) lions, oxen, and cherubim.**”* (1 Kings 7:29)

The Ark (the dwelling place of God) was built of Earth materials, yet it was sacred and demanded reverence for:

1. The household of Obededom was blessed because of the presence of the Ark (2 Sam 6:10-12).
2. Uzzah stumbled on the Ark and died (2 Sam 6:6-8).
3. David rejoiced greatly with all his strength in honour of the presence of the Ark

(2 Sam 6:12-19).

4. Seventy inhabitants of the city of Bethshemesh died because they dared to look inside the Ark (1 Sam 6:19).
5. The gods of the Philistines adored God in the Ark (1 Sam 5:1-5).

Here are some pertinent questions for those who accuse Catholics of “worshipping” images:

1. When the people of Israel showed reverence for the Ark, were they worshipping the two carved images of the cherubs (angels) inside the wooden ark itself or **God Who dwelt inside?**
2. Who killed the seventy inhabitants of Bethshemesh who dared to look inside the Ark – the two cherubs or God?
3. Who or what were the gods of the Philistines adoring in the Ark – the two cherubs or God?

Elsewhere, we see God using Earth materials after making them sacred to heal people. He asked Moses to make a snake image and He (God) made it sacred; for those who had earlier been bitten by a snake for disobedience but now looked at the image of the snake became healed:

*“And the Lord said to Moses, ‘Make a fiery serpent, and set it on a pole, and anyone who is bitten, when he looks at 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 he lived.” (Num 21:8-9)*

In the New Testament, we read cases where ordinary handkerchiefs and aprons that made contact with the body of Paul became sacred objects that were used to heal the sick and drive away evil spirits:

*“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)*

Peter’s shadow also healed people of their infirmities:

*“Many signs and wonders were done among the people by the hands of the apostles ... so that they even carried out the sick into the streets, and laid them on beds and pallets, **that as Peter came by at least his shadow might fall on some of them** ... The people also gathered from the towns around Jerusalem, bringing the sick and those afflicted with unclean spirits, and they were all healed.” (Acts 5:12-16)*

Moses performed too many miracles with his “sacred” rod after God Himself changed it from a rod to a snake and back to a rod (Exo 4:2-5):

*“You shall take in your hand this rod, with which you shall do the signs (miracles).” (Exo 4:17)*

Elijah’s mantle was also **sacred** and was used to perform a miracle:

*“Then he (Elisha) took the mantle of Elijah that had fallen from him, and struck the water (of the River Jordan), ... the water was parted to one side and to the other; and Elisha went over.” (2 Kings 2:14)*

The garment that Jesus wore was made and sewn with Earth materials, yet it was sacred for power did flow out of it (Matt 9:20-22; Mark 5:27-29; Luke 8:43-44).

There are many cases of incorruptible bodies of saints all over the world. Such sacred bodies merit veneration. Please see the book: *The Incorruptibles*, by Juan Carroll Cruz, TAN Books & Publishers, Inc. Rockford, Illinois 61105. A parallel example can be found in the Bible. A dead man was revived when his body was thrown hurriedly into the grave of Elisha as the people carrying his body sighted a group of advancing marauders:

*“And as a man was being buried, lo, a marauding band was seen and the man was cast into the grave of Elisha; and as the man touched the bones of Elisha, he revived, and stood up upon his feet.” (2 King 13:21)*

Sacred relics like the bones of saints, such as Elisha’s, and sacred objects, such as holy medals and pictures, scapulas, crucifixes, rosaries, etc should be venerated. The Bible sanctions it. Always ensure that a priest blesses your sacramental before you start using it.