

Q.32 Why Do Catholics Pray To Mary, The Angels And The Saints?

Protestants often condemn Catholics for asking for the intercession of the Blessed Virgin Mary, the angels and the saints in heaven in their prayers to God. They base their condemnation on the following passages of the Bible:

“No one comes to the Father, but by me.” (John 14:6)

“There is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus.” (1 Tim 2:5)

Well, everyday we entreat people to pray for us and would not hesitate to shout “Amen!” to any prayer that sounds just right in our ears. Even the Bible encourages us to pray for one another:

“Pray for one another ... The prayer of a righteous man has great power in its effects.” (James 5:16)

“You also must help us in prayer, so that many will give thanks on our behalf for the blessing granted us in answer to many prayers.” (2 Cor 1:11)

Ordinary human beings had prayed for other people and God heard their prayers:

“Then Abraham prayed to God and God healed Abimelech and healed his wife and his female slaves so that they bore children.” (Gen 20:17)

“Now then, restore the man’s wife; for he is a prophet, and he will pray for you, and you shall live.” (Gen 20:7)

“Go to my servant Job ... and my servant Job shall pray for you, for I will accept his prayer not to deal with you according to your folly. So Eliphaz the Temanite and Bildad the Shuhite and Zophar the Naamathite went and did what the Lord had told them; and the Lord accepted Job’s prayer.” (Job 42:8-9)

In the New Testament, we hear James urging the faithful to:

“Pray for one another, that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous man has great power in its effects.” (James 5:16)

Paul, even as powerful as one might think, finds it necessary to solicit for the prayers of others:

“Pray also that God might rescue us from wicked and evil people; for not everyone believes the message.” (2 Thess 3:2)

“I appeal to you brethren, by our Lord Jesus Christ and by the love of the Spirit, to strive together with me in your prayers to God ...” (Rom 15:30)

Paul in turn prayed for the faithful:

“We always pray for you, that God may make you worthy of his call, and may fulfill every good resolve and work of faith by his power.” (1 Thess 1:11)

The Church did not cease to pray for Peter when he was imprisoned:

“So Peter was kept in prison; but earnest prayer for him was made to God by the church.” (Acts 12:5)

Clearly, Christ is not the only intercessor between God and man. We can ask our fellow men and women to pray for us, to intercede for us before God. It is biblical and we do it everyday. And John tells us that the prayer of a saint is efficacious:

“The prayer of a righteous man has great power in its effects.” (James 5:16)

Departed souls are NOT unconcerned about wayfarers on Earth. There are instances of departed souls interceding on behalf of people on Earth. After his death, Jeremiah prayed for the people of Israel and for the holy city of Jerusalem:

“Onias spoke, saying, ‘This is a man who loves the brethren and prays much for the people and the holy city, Jeremiah, the prophet of God.’” (2 Macc 15:14)

The souls of martyrs sought for the vindication of their persecutors who were still on earth:

“I saw under the altar the souls of those who had been slain for the word of God and for the witness they had borne: they cried out with a loud voice, ‘O Sovereign Lord, holy and true, how long before thou wilt judge and avenge our blood on those who dwell upon the earth.’” (Rev 6:9-10)

The dead rich man interceded on behalf of his brothers on Earth:

“I beg you, father (Abraham), to send him (Lazarus) to my father’s house, for I have five brothers, so that he may warn them, lest they also come into this place of torment.” (Luke 16:27-28)

Interesting, isn't? Any one who has taken the time to study the parables and illustrations of Jesus would agree that in each parable and illustration, every single word teaches a big

lesson. Jesus reveals the Church's articles of faith in these parables and illustrations. So what was Jesus teaching us in this apparently insignificant parable?

Departed souls who stand in the presence of God, beholding God face to face, intercede for wayfarers on Earth, who are still struggling to be perfect like God and the glorified beings in heaven. It is indeed proper and biblical to pray to the saints and the angels (see below) who stand before God to intercede on our behalf. Jesus Himself gave us the hint by showing us an instance of a departed soul interceding on behalf of his earthly brothers.

Let us mark the angels out for some examination. Angels perform a special role in the life of every Christian. God has assigned a guardian angel to each person, who provides spiritual and physical protection to the individual:

“See that you do not despise one of these little ones; for I tell you that in heaven their (guardian) angels always behold the face of my Father who is in heaven.” (Matt 18:10)

As our spiritual guards who stand in the presence of God, we can appeal to them to intercede for us before God Whom they behold face to face. Jesus provided an example:

“Do you think that I cannot appeal to my Father, and he will at once send me more than twelve legions of angels?” (Matt 26:53)

“He will give his angels charge of you to guide you in all your ways. On their hands they will bear you up, lest you cast your foot against a stone.” (Psalms 91:11-12)

The Old Testament is full of instances of angels bringing messages from God to men. Angels are not only messengers from God to men, they are also messengers from men to God. So they can and do indeed take our prayers and petitions to God just as they bring messages from God to us:

*“Another angel came and stood at the altar with a gold censer, and he was given much incense to mingle with the prayers of all the saints (that is, the righteous people on earth) upon the golden altar before the throne **and the smoke of the incense rose with the prayers of the saints from the hands of the angels before God.**”* (Rev 8:3-4)

Angels have been helpful to men; that was why the dying Tobias could say in thanksgiving:

*“Blessed art thou, O God and blessed is thy name for ever, and **blessed are all thy holy angels.**”* (Tobit 13:14)

Michael and the good angels beat Satan and his cursed legion once (Rev 12:7-9). If we appeal to Michael and the other “holy angels” in time of need, especially to help us ward off the attacks of Satan and the evil spirits, they will beat them again. It is therefore proper and biblical to pray to God through His “holy angels”. If ordinary people on Earth

can pray for people efficaciously, how much more should we not ask the angels and saints who **stand in the presence of God** to pray for us?

Besides praying to the Father through our Lord Jesus Christ, we should also pray through, and implore the angels and the saints in heaven, and especially the Mother of God – the Blessed Virgin Mary to pray for us as they are close to God. God allows it. The Bible says so.