

Praying to Saints and Honouring Relics etc

“PRAY FOR US”

PRAYING FOR OTHERS is often mentioned in the Bible. Thus St Paul's appeal to St Timothy:

First of all, then, I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for all men...

1 Tim 2:1

Such texts include those in which the sacred writer asks others to pray for him. Or he might quote someone else who asks him or others for such prayers. Some examples are set out below. Readers may be able to supply omissions and corrections.

The Bible shows us it is honourable to ask our fellow pilgrims on earth for prayers. The friends of God talk to God about each other, and they ask each other to talk to God about them. It makes sense to make similar requests to our friends in Heaven, i.e. to the saints, whether officially declared saints or not.

ONE MEDIATOR, MANY FRIENDS

Thus, after the quote above from 1 Tim 2:1, St Paul continues, saying:

...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 it is acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour, who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth. For there is one God, and **there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus**, who gave himself as a ransom for all, the testimony to which was borne at the proper time.

1 Tim 2:2-6

MORE GLORY, NOT LESS

All prayer is heard by the Heavenly Father through the One Mediator - "No one comes to the Father but by Me;" (John 14:6).

By asking others to pray for him, St Paul is seeking a more extensive mediation from Christ, and greater honour and glory for God. Whether the "saints" (i.e. holy ones) are on earth or in Heaven, it is simply asking for them also to pray through the One Mediator.

CONFUSION IN WORDS

'Worship' is often used in its most exclusive sense of adoration. This adoration is the homage give to God alone. The RSV Bible, in a traditional British usage, uses 'worship', never 'adoration':

Begone, Satan! for it is written, 'You shall worship the Lord your God and him only shall you serve'.

Matthew 4:14

Paying respect to God's holy ones (on earth and in Heaven) is more properly called veneration, yet sometimes rather too loosely called 'worship'. The veneration of saints is an extra way of paying the proper tribute through the Mediator to God.

OLD TESTAMENT TEXTS

Gen 20:7 — Now then restore the man's wife; for he is a prophet, and **he will pray for you**, and you shall live. But if you do not restore her, know that you shall surely die, you, and all that are yours."

1 Sam 12:19 - And all the people said to Samuel, "**Pray for your servants** to the Lord your God, that we may not die; for we have added to all our sins this evil, to ask for ourselves a king."

1 Ki 13:6 - And the king said to the man of God, "Entreat now the favour of the Lord your God, and **pray for me**, that my hand may be restored to me." And the man of God entreated the Lord; and the king's hand was restored to him, and became as it was before.

Job 42:8 - "Now therefore take seven bulls and seven rams, and go to my servant Job, and offer up for yourselves a burnt offering; and **my servant Job shall pray for you**, for I will accept his prayer not to deal with you according to your folly; for you have not spoken of me what is right, as my servant Job has."

Jer 7:16 - "As for you, **do not pray for this people**, or lift up cry or prayer for them, and do not intercede with me, for I do not hear you. (cf. Jer 11:14; 14:11)

Jer 37:3 - King Zedekiah sent Jehucal the son of Shelemiah, and Zephaniah the priest, the son of Maaseiah, to Jeremiah the prophet, saying, "**Pray for us** to the Lord our God."

Jer 42:20 - that you have gone astray at the cost of your lives. For you sent me to the Lord your God, saying, '**Pray for us** to the Lord our God, and whatever the Lord our God says declare to us and we will do it.'

Jud 8:21 - So **pray for us**, since you are a devout woman, and the Lord will send us rain,...

Bar 1:13: And **pray for us** to the Lord our God for we have sinned...

NEW TESTAMENT TEXTS

Acts 8:24 - And Simon [Magi] answered, "**Pray for me** to the Lord, that nothing of what you have said may come upon me."

Col 4:3 - and **pray for us** also, that God may open to us a door for the word, to declare the mystery of Christ, on account of which I am in prison...

1 Th 5:25 - Brethren, **pray for us**.

2 Th 3:1- Finally, brethren, **pray for us**, that the word of the Lord may speed on and triumph, as it did among you...

Heb 13:18 - **Pray for us**, for we are sure that we have a clear conscience, desiring to act honorably in all things.

James 5:16 — Therefore confess your sins to one another, and **pray for one another**, that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous man has great power in its effects.

1 John 5:16 — If any one sees his brother committing what is not a mortal sin, **he will ask, and God will give him life** for those whose sin is not mortal. There is sin which is mortal; **I do not say that one is to pray for that**.

Rev 5:8 - ... each holding a harp, and with golden bowls full of incense, which are **the prayers of the saints**... (cf. Rev 8:3,4)

CALLING CREATURES TO PRAISE GOD

There are appeals in psalms and canticles addressed to God's creatures calling on them to bless God on our behalf, since we feel inadequate to praise Him enough.

Bless the Lord, all works of the Lord, sing praise to him and highly exalt him for ever... you angels of the Lord... sun and moon... stars of heaven, sing praise to him and highly exalt him for ever...

Daniel 3:35 , 37,40,41(Deuterocanonical), cf. Psalm 69[68]:34; 148:1-4

How appropriate to call not only on the angels, but on other creatures as well — hence us with the saints.

HONOURING RELICS

SOME CATHOLICS are embarrassed by the honour given to relics of saints and think it a rather messy business. No doubt honouring relics appeals more to some than to others. Nevertheless, a Catholic is bound to believe that:

the religious sense of the Christian people has always found expression in various forms of piety surrounding the Church's sacramental life, such as the veneration of relics...

Catechism of the Catholic Church §1674

Akin to this are the scriptures which testify thus:

Our Lord

Mat 9:21-22 - And behold, a woman who had suffered from a hemorrhage... 'If I only touch His garment, I shall be well' [And she was!]

Mat 14:36 - Men ... besought Him that the sick might only **touch the fringe of his garment**; and as many as touched it were made well.

St Peter

Acts 5:15 - ...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.

St Paul

Acts 19:11-12 - 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.

Elijah and Elisha

2 Ki 2:14 — Then he took the **mantle of Elijah** that had fallen from him, and struck the water, saying, 'Where is the Lord, the God of Elijah?' And when he had struck the water, the water was parted to the one side and to the other; and Elisha went over. (cf. Moses' rod, Exodus 4:2ff.)

Elisha

2 Ki 13:21 — 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 soon as the man **touching the bones of Elisha** he revived, and stood on his feet,

INDULGENCES

Church discipline on indulgences expresses her teaching that even venial sin is not a trivial matter. Thus:

The Church holds that it were better for sun and moon to drop from heaven, for the earth to fail and for all the many millions who are on it to die of starvation in extremest agony, as far as temporal affliction goes, than that one soul, I will not say should be lost, but should commit one single venial sin.

Cardinal Newman, *Anglican Difficulties*, p, 199

Further, indulgences permit us to take an active part in our own salvation and the salvation of others. And yes, we can avoid Purgatory and go straight to Heaven. It is a great act of charity to the faithful departed to comfort them by our prayers and pious actions for them by gaining indulgences... as also are Mass offerings

MASS OFFERINGS

MASS OFFERINGS OR STIPENDS are monies given to a priest who undertakes to offer Mass for the intentions requested by the donor.

They are something like a personalised Offertory Procession, a putting of oneself into the Sacrifice while making a particular request.

Certain of the fruits of the august Sacrifice of the Mass are at the disposal of the priest celebrant. He may direct these towards the intention of another person who has requested it of him. If they participate more fully by making an offering of money, it is regulated by *The Code of Canon Law*:

Canon 945 § 1: In accordance with the approved custom of the Church, any priest who celebrates or concelebrates a Mass may accept an offering to apply the Mass for a specific intention,

Canon 946: The faithful who make an offering so that Mass can be celebrated for their intention, contribute to the good of the Church, and by that offering they share in the Church's concern for the support of its ministers and its activities.

Canon 947: Even the semblance of trafficking or trading is to be entirely excluded from Mass offerings.

BIBLE PRECEDENTS

King David would not accept materials for the sacrifice he was offering free of charge;

I will not offer to the Lord my God a sacrifice, which cost me nothing.

2 Samuel 24:24.

Similarly in St Paul:

Do we not have the right to our food and drink... For it is written in the law of Moses, 'You shall not muzzle the ox when it is treading out the corn...' ...If we have sown spiritual goods among you, is it too much if we reap your material benefits?

...Do you not know that those who are employed in the temple service get their food from the temple, and **those who serve at the altar share in the sacrificial offerings?** In the same way, the Lord commanded that those who proclaim the gospel should get their living by the gospel.

1 Corinthians 9:4,9, 11,13-14

In practice, the faithful write their intention on the outside of an envelope (or inside, in a letter, if not handing it personally to the priest) and enclose their offering. Always state if persons mentioned are sick, in trouble or dead, lest the priest mistakenly list all of them among the faithful departed in the notice sheet.

In 2002, our Bishops suggested that the Mass offering be \$ 10. Due to deaths and funerals, priests might have to postpone the intentions they planned. However, priests retired from parish work can often accept offerings for a stipulated day.