

## Praying to the Saints

Someone wrote to me recently, ‘Just as I would ask my family and friends to pray for me, I would ask the Saints to pray on my behalf.’

That sounds reasonable. After all evangelical Christians regularly ask their brethren to intercede for them. Why can't we also ask the saints in the presence of God to pray for us too? We will be wise to check our religious practices, including our prayers, by the standard of God's Word. In the Bible we discover a wealth of information about prayer.

- There are numerous invitations to call upon the Lord God for our needs and petitions.<sup>1</sup>
- There are about six hundred prayers recorded in the Scriptures; all of which, without exception, are directed to the Lord.<sup>2</sup>
- Christians are encouraged to pray for other living Christians; there are many examples of believers making such requests.<sup>3</sup>
- There is no permission or example of prayers to the departed saints or to angels.<sup>4</sup>

Clearly then, the Scriptures teach us that we ought to pray for each other, and that we should always address our prayers to God.

Please do not ignore the powerful testimony of the Scriptures even if you don't uphold the Bible as the only infallible standard of Divine truth. What if you compile a book the size of the Bible on Roman Catholic history, doctrine and prayers, would you expect to find at least a few injunctions and examples of prayers to Mary and the saints? Or if you collect 600 Catholic prayers, is it not likely that some of them will include petitions to the departed saints? Of course you would, but don't you find it strange that there aren't any such references in the entire Bible? The silence is significant.

However you may insist that praying to the saints in heaven is equivalent to asking fellow Christians to pray for you. But there are very significant differences. I invite you to do these simple experiments, in which you play the role of the saint in heaven.

- Have someone ask you to pray for him - on condition that he will not speak to you audibly or communicate in writing. He can only think in his mind and ask his requests silently. See if you can accurately know his heart.
- Invite someone to tell you his prayer requests, this time he can speak out loud, but he cannot not speak in your presence. He has to be somewhere else, in another house, another city or another country. He can't use email, text messages or phone, but he can pray in front of your photograph if he wishes. See if you get his message.
- Invite a group of fifty people to ask you simultaneously to pray for their individual needs. They should speak to you all at once, everyone in his own language. See if you can understand and remember all their requests, or indeed, even one of them.

Keep in mind that the saints in heaven, though glorified, are finite creatures, and as creatures they are limited in their powers. They are aware of the general events taking place on earth, but they do not have the means of communication with us - on an individual basis or much less with a multitude of people all at once. Nor do they have the power to read our heart, as the Bible states, “[God] alone know the hearts of all the sons of men” (1 Kings 8:39).

I would rather pray to the One who is everywhere present, who knows all things, even the deep secrets of my heart, and who has graciously invited me to come to him through his Son Jesus Christ. For Christians, God is our Father, and he will certainly hear the prayers of his children!

Reference:

1. Psalm 50:15; 105:1; Isaiah 55:6; Romans 10:12; Philippians 4:6; Matthew 6:9-15.
2. Daniel 9:4-19; Isaiah 38:2-8; 1 Chronicles 4:10; 2 Kings 19:15-19; 1 Kings 18:36-39; 1 Kings 8:22-30; 2 Samuel 7:18-29; Genesis 18:23-25; Acts 7:59-60; Ephesians 3:14-21; Colossians 1:9-12; Ephesians 1:15-23; Philippians 1:3-11; Jude 1:24-25; John 17; Luke 18:13; Habakkuk 3:2-19; Ezra 9:5-15; etc
3. Colossians 4:3; 1 Thessalonians 5:25; 2 Thessalonians 3:1; Hebrews 13:18; James 5:16; Ephesians 6:18.
4. <http://www.justforcatholics.org/a137.htm>