

Why Do Catholics Worship Mary?

First of all, Catholics do not worship Mary. We honor her because she is the mother of Jesus. God himself honored Mary, by finding her worthy to be the mother of His only son. God sent the angel Gabriel to Mary to tell her: 'Hail, Mary, full of grace! The Lord is with you. Do not be afraid Mary, for you have found favor with God. Behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall name him Jesus.' Mary said 'Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord. May it be done to me according to your word.'

We honor Mary, because God himself honored her. He chose her out of all the women in the world to bear his son. Mary said yes to God and gave birth to baby Jesus, but she could have said no. We look up to Mary as the greatest saint in our church because she said yes to God. Mary knew that she could have been stoned to death for being an unwed mother while she was engaged to Joseph. She knew how Joseph, her parents and the people in her town would react and she said yes anyway. That is why we look up to her as our church's spiritual hero. God trusted Mary to love his son and take care of him and she did, all the way to the foot of the cross. We do not have a photograph of Mary to remember her by. Most people have photographs of their parents, grandparents and other ancestors, but we do not have any way of visually remembering Mary. That is why we have statues of Mary; they are like photographs of her.

Artists have also painted images of what they believe Mary might look like, to help us visualize Mary as being a real person and not just a figure we read about in the bible. Catholics do not pray to Mary instead of Jesus. Our prayers are always directed to Jesus. But, sometimes we ask Mary to speak to Jesus on our behalf and ask him to consider answering our prayers. Jesus loves his mother very much and we hope that Mary will be able to influence Jesus to hear our prayers, in much the same way that she mentioned to Jesus that 'they have no wine' at the wedding at Cana. Jesus listened to his mother when she asked this and although he had no intention of turning the water into wine for the wedding guests, he did so because his mother asked Him to. We hope that Jesus will grant our requests too, if his mother asks him to.

When we pray the rosary, the entire rosary is a reflection or meditation, about the life of Jesus. The rosary tells stories about the angel visiting Mary, Mary visiting Elizabeth, the

birth of baby Jesus, his presentation in the temple and the time he got lost as a child and his parents were worried sick about him. The rosary tells the stories about Jesus being baptized, changing the water into wine, preaching to the crowds, being transfigured into a vision of light, and his last supper with the disciples. Then the rosary tells us about Jesus' agony in the garden, his beating at the pillars, and the crowning of thorns, when he carried his cross, his crucifixion and later, his resurrection and ascension into heaven.

The Hail Mary prayers that we pray during the rosary are really the scripture verse from the bible that the angel Gabriel greeted Mary with: 'Hail Mary full of grace'. We pray this scripture verse as a form of meditation that frees our mind to reflect on the life of Jesus. On the outside it sounds like we are only praying to Mary, but what is unseen is that we are thinking about the life of Jesus. Each time that we think about the stories about Jesus' life during the rosary, it is like offering a rose to Mary.

This is the only thing that Mary asks of us, that we love her son. Mary never calls attention to herself; she always directs our attention toward Jesus, her son, so that we will come to love Him too.

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