

WHAT IS VENERATION? IS MARY OUR MOTHER? SHOULD MARY BE VENERATED?

The Catholic Blog - Helping people find answers to the most common questions about Catholicism with answers from the Catechism of the Catholic Church and the Bible.

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*Our word usage matters...what do we mean by the words we use?
Are they accurate descriptions of our actions?*

NOTE: The same word “venerate” is used to describe the Bible, images, Mary, saints, & angels.

Merriam-Webster’s Definitions:

Veneration - “respect or awe inspired by the dignity, wisdom, dedication, or talent of a person”

Worship - “excessive admiration of or devotion to a person”

Adoration - “strong feelings of love or admiration”

Sacred - “worthy of religious veneration, holy, dedicated or set apart for the service or worship of a deity”

Prayer - “an address (such as a petition) to God or a god in word or thought”

Genuflect - “to touch the knee to the floor or ground especially in worship”

“Is Mary our mother? Should Mary be venerated?” - Important Passages of *The Catechism of the Catholic Church* to Consider:

- “the Church venerates in Mary the purest realization of faith” (CCC 149)
- “the Church has always venerated the Scriptures as she venerates the Lord’s Body” (CCC 103)
- “Through the icon of Christ and his works of salvation, it is he whom we adore.” (CCC 1192)
- “Through sacred images of of the holy Mother of God, of the angels and the saints, we venerate the persons represented” (CCC 1192)
- “Jesus is Mary’s only son, but her spiritual motherhood extends to all men” (CCC 501)

“Is Mary our mother? Should Mary be venerated?” - Important Scriptures to Consider:

- Matthew 11:11 “Truly, I say to you, among those born of women there has arisen no one greater than John the Baptist. Yet the one who is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he.” (ESV)
- Ps 18:3 “I call upon the LORD, who is worthy to be praised, & I am saved from my enemies.” (ESV)
- Psalm 71:16 “With the mighty deeds of the Lord GOD I will come; I will remind them of your righteousness, yours alone.” (ESV)
- Psalm 72:18 “Blessed be the LORD, the God of Israel, who alone does wondrous things.” (ESV)
- Isaiah 26:13 “O LORD our God...your name alone we bring to remembrance.” (ESV)
- Philippians 4:8 “Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things.” (ESV)

“Is Mary our mother? Should Mary be venerated?” - Important Questions to Consider:

- **According to the dictionary definitions, how different are the words “veneration”, “worship”, “adoration”, and “sacred”?**
- Where is the line crossed from “veneration” to “worship” or “adoration”?
- What are the differences and similarities in Catholic practices of veneration to Mary and worship to God? What protections are in place so people do not have more affection for Mary than Jesus?
- Considering what Jesus said about John the Baptist in Matthew 11:11, why is he not given more honor than Mary in the Bible? **Why is Mary not referenced as “our Mother” in the Bible?**
- Does Psalm 71:16, 72:8 or Isaiah 26:13 focus on angels or saints? Why not
- Does the Bible use the word “veneration”? What does Philippians 4:8 say to do about things that are “worthy of praise”? Do Catholic practices go beyond “thinking about these things”?
- **Does the Bible command the use of images, prayers, the Eucharist, or sacrifices in order to give honor to Mary, the saints, or angels?**

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