

Pilgrimages, Incense, "Holy Water," Rosaries, Relics, Etc.



Catholic Relics For Sale

This is chapter XII of a book written in 1941 entitled, "[Our Priceless Heritage Christian Doctrine In Contrast With Romanism](#)" by Henry M. Woods, D.D, LL.D.

I'm so thankful to our Lord Jesus for delivering me from the darkness of Roman Catholicism! When I was a kid I used to wear a scapular around my neck and pray the rosary. I was told if I was faithful to pray the rosary daily, the Blessed Virgin Mary would intercede for me when I died and I would not go to hell. But after about a month I got tired of praying the rosary daily and only prayed it after I went to the confessional and used it to pray prayers of penance that the priest assigned to me. When I was around 9 or 10 years old, I believe I picked up an evil spirit from a Catholic grotto my mother took me to. I knew it was an evil spirit because when it came to me I felt total loneliness and desolation with no hope of salvation. I went to doctors but they could find nothing wrong with me. The spirit plagued me with a fit that lasted a minute or so a couple of times a year until I got saved when I was 20 years old in 1971. After that the next time it came to me, I resisted it and called on Jesus to deliver me from it. It immediately left and never came back! Hallelujah!

The year 1933 was called a "holy year" by Pius XI, who exhorted the "faithful" everywhere to make pilgrimages to Rome. Are pilgrimages enjoined in the Word of God?

Pilgrimages are *not* enjoined in the Word of God, nor can they, according to Scripture, be considered pious, meritorious acts. They are much in vogue in pagan religions, as Buddhism, Hinduism, Mohammedanism, etc., as a means of making merit, and winning the favor of their gods.

The mistaken basis of pilgrimages

Pilgrimages are founded on the mistaken assumption that they are a mark of *fervent piety*, and help to *win salvation*. It is reported that in the summer of 1933 two zealous pilgrims carried large wooden crosses from northern Italy to Rome; they were much noticed in the public press as *winning merit* and a

reputation for sanctity!

A second mistaken assumption is that certain localities are *peculiarly holy*, where God is *specially accessible*; as if finding God and obtaining His blessing depended on the place, and not on a repentant, believing heart.

The Lord's Word, spoken through Moses nearly 15 centuries before Christ, and repeated in substance by St. Paul, shows the mistaken notion involved in pilgrimage; that certain places are specially favorable for worship and for obtaining access to God, an idea commonly entertained among heathen nations. Referring to salvation he said, "It is not beyond the sea that thou shouldst say, 'who shall go over the sea and bring it unto us? But the Word is very nigh thee, in thy mouth and in thine heart, that is, 'the Word of faith' which we preach." The Apostle used this passage and enforced its meaning, to show that holiness and acceptance with God do not depend on locality, nor on long pilgrimages, but on a believing heart, for God can be found everywhere and is ready to bless, if we seek Him with the whole heart in the way that He commands. Deut. 30: 11-14, Rom. 10:6-10, Jer. 29:13.

Our Saviour in conversation with the woman of Samaria also stressed this momentous truth, that there is no need of pilgrimage, for true worship does not depend on place or outward circumstance, but on the state of the worshipper's heart. "Woman, believe me, the hour cometh, when you shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father. God is a spirit, and they that worship Him must worship Him in Spirit and in truth." John 4:21-24, Isa. 57:15, 66:2.

If pilgrimages are not sanctioned by the Word of God, why do popes presume to urge them?

Because they accord with the natural notions and desires of the sinful human heart which wishes to be doing something to procure salvation; they make a fair show before the world, *widely advertise the papal religion*; and bring *large revenue to the Vatican*. Boniface VIII (died 1303) proclaimed a jubilee with plenary indulgence, to be repeated every hundredth year, and crowds of pilgrims flocked to Rome, bringing the pope enormous sums of money. The historian, Gibbon, mentioned that at the jubilee "two priests stood day and night with rakes in their hands to gather, without counting, the heaps of gold and silver that were poured on the altars." Later popes considered a hundred years too long a time to wait for such a lucrative harvest, so Clement VI (died 1352) reduced the interval to fifty years; Urban VI (died 1389) still further reduced it to thirty-three years, and Paul II (died 1471) finally reduced it to twenty-five years.

Incense, candles, etc.

Is it proper to use incense, candles, etc., in the worship of God?

No; for the Word of God does not prescribe them for the Christian Church, and whatever is not prescribed by God *should not be used*. "Ye shall not add unto the Word which I command you." Heb. 8:5, Deut. 4:2, 12:28, 32. All of these texts teach,—"*Follow exactly the directions that God gave for His worship.*"

Note that the Apostolic Church did not use them; for the aim of that Church was simplicity, the avoidance of all outward show, and concentration of thought on what was spiritual. The Church of Rome borrowed incense and candles from heathen worship, as acknowledged by Gregory I, and later by Cardinal Newman. See final note of Chapter IV, The Church's object of worship. Christian converts of the first four centuries considered incense, etc., as an abomination, because they knew the heathen origin of these things, and their debasing association with idolatry.

But were not incense and lamps used in Old Testament times in the service of the Tabernacle and Temple?

Yes, for God specially commanded their use then; but He nowhere commands their use in the New Testament. Moreover Scripture shows that incense, candles, etc., like circumcision, animal sacrifices, and the whole Old Testament ritual were "*types and shadows*," which were *done away in Christ*. Heb. 8: 5, 8:23, 10:1.

The only references in the New Dispensation to incense, etc., are found in Revelation, where it is used in a figurative sense, referring to the prayers of God's people. "Golden vials full of odors (incense) , which are the *prayers of saints*." Rev. 5:8, 8:3, 4.

Holy Water

"Holy Water," so called, is an empty superstition of the Dark Ages, also *borrowed from paganism*, and introduced about A.D. 1000. Pagan temples had holy water stoups long before the Church of Rome had them. Justin Martyr, who died about A.D. 163, wrote: "The pagans (Gentiles) on entering their temples, sprinkle themselves with water." One looks in vain in Scripture for any word that allows its use. Holy Water, and other inventions, like making the sign of the Cross, etc., do *not help true worship, but really hinder it*, for they distract attention from what is inward and spiritual to outward things, which too often are a "*vain*" show, *only to be seen of men*." The Holy Spirit warns of this in Matthew 6:1-5.

Rosaries

What is the harm of using rosary beads in prayer?

The practice of "telling beads" in prayer was borrowed from Buddhism, and antedates Romanism many centuries. Mohammedans also use rosaries. They were introduced into the Church about the year 1090. The practice not only *has no sanction in Scripture, but is opposed to the whole spirit of the Gospel, which forbids mechanical forms in the worship of God*. Using beads destroys the true spirit of prayer; it is like the praying by rote of the Tibetans, using prayer wheels and hand rattles. Our Lord uttered a solemn warning against such methods when He spoke of "vain repetitions" and "much speaking" like the heathen. Matt. 6: 5-8.

The Roman rosary seems to exalt a human being more than God. It is said to consist of 166 beads; one bead representing the Creed; 15 beads representing

Paternosters, addressed to God the Father; and 150 beads are Ave Marias, addressed to *the Virgin Mary*. The prayers to Mary are thus *ten times* more numerous than those addressed to God—"worshipping and serving the creature more than the Creator!" and no prayers seem to be addressed to our Saviour or to the Holy Spirit.

During the pilgrimage of 1933, it is reported that the pope prescribed a set form of prayers for pilgrims, who in order to receive Indulgences must visit four leading Churches in Rome, each one three times and each time prayers must be repeated in three places; before the altar, six paternosters, six Ave Marias, and six glorias; before the crucifix, repeat the Creed three times, and before Mary's image, seven Ave Marias. As one reads the Scriptures, one cannot but note how different is the praying of saints recorded there! Note how solemn was King Solomon's prayer in I Kings 8:22-53; see Ezra's humble confession of sins in Ezra 9:6-15, and Daniel's heartfelt confession in Daniel 9:4-19, as well as the beautiful outpouring of his heart's longing by St. Paul, in Ephesians 1: 17-23 and 3: 14-21. These are the genuine expression of hearts that long for God, as contrasted with the cold, mechanical repetitions of souls doing penance!

How should true believers pray?

The Word of God teaches that true believers, avoiding repetitions and praying by rote, should "pray in the Holy Spirit," reverently, humbly, with a believing thankful heart, thinking of what they are doing, and of the great King to whose throne they are coming.

"Ye beloved,—*praying in the Holy Ghost*, Keep yourselves in the love of God." Jude 20.

"I will pray with the spirit and with the understanding." I Cor. 14:15, Eph. 6:18.

'Always laboring-fervently (Greek, agonize) in prayers that ye may stand perfect and complete in all the will of God." Col. 4:12.

What other acts of penance do pilgrims often perform?

Pilgrims often ascend the "sacred stairway" (*scala santa*) at St. John Lateran, on their knees, repeating prayers on each step. It was here that Martin Luther, burdened with a deep sense of sin, vainly sought peace, until the light of the Holy Spirit shone into his heart, showing him the folly of penances, pilgrimages and other "dead works," and leading him to trust in the all-sufficient Redeemer alone for salvation. The glorious truth revealed to the prophet Habakkuk and expounded by St. Paul, brought peace and joy to his heart, and made a new man of him,—"'THE JUST SHALL LIVE BY FAITH!" Hab. 2:4, Rom. 1:17.

Relics

What is meant by Relics?

Relics are supposed to be parts of the body, or of the clothing, or of some

object associated with the *person of a saint or the Virgin Mary*, or even of our *Lord Himself*. It is a most regrettable and harmful superstition that members of the Roman Communion venerate these, and often attribute miraculous power to them. Some of these relics exhibited as genuine at the Vatican and in other Churches are: pieces of the Saviour's Cross, two thorns from the crown of thorns our Lord wore; part of His cradle at Bethlehem, and His swaddling clothes; part of the penitent thief's cross; one of the thirty pieces of silver paid to Judas to betray Christ; the tail of Balaam's ass; a feather from the angel Gabriel's wing; and many heads, five arms, and several dozen fingers, said to be those of John the Baptist; Veronica's handkerchief, etc., etc.

Are these relics genuine?

Probably very few, if any. Most of them cannot be genuine, for the many pieces of wood exhibited as parts of Christ's cross, are enough to make many crosses. And how could John the Baptist have as many heads, arms and fingers as those attributed to him? Many cases of fraud in relics are proved by the conflicting testimony of "infallible" popes. Take for instance the case of St. Bartholomew's Body.

The Roman Breviary and Martyrology allege that this apostle's body was removed from Benevento to Rome by the Emperor Otto, who reigned A.D. 983 to 1000. The *Bulls of pope Alexander III and Sirtus V declare this was a fact*. But the Church of Benevento asserts that Bartholomew's body is *still there* in the Church, and produces as proof the Bulls of Leo IX, Stephen IX, Benedict XII, Clement VI, Boniface IX and Urban V! Thus two "infallible" popes with the Breviary and Martyrology declare one thing, and six "infallible" popes declare just the opposite! Whom must one believe? Note also that *17 other Churches claim parts of Bartholomew's body!*

The Handkerchief of St. Veronica

The Handkerchief of St. Veronica, with which she is alleged to have wiped the Lord's face in His agony, and on which his likeness was said to be imprinted, is claimed by 7 different places, viz.: Rome, Turin, Milan, Cadouin, Besancon, Compiègne and Aiz-la-chapelle! Four papal briefs guarantee the genuineness of the handkerchief shown at Turin, and 14 briefs the one at Cadouin! Which are "the faithful" to believe? How can intelligent, honest men avoid disbelieving all such relics and the papal guarantees of them?

Amulets and charms

Similar to relics is the superstitious use of the mechanical appliances called amulets or charms among members of the papal church, which in no respect differ from those worn by *members of African savage tribes to ward off danger or disease*. Take for example,

The Carmelite Scapular

which is alleged to have been miraculously bestowed by the Virgin Mary on St. Simon Stock. This scapular is said to confer on the wearer a share in the

merit of all good works done throughout the whole Church and by all fraternities existing up to the time of pope Sixtus IV (1471-1484). It also confers on the wearer, unless rebellious, absolute immunity from hell! It is alleged also that Mary promised pope John XXII (1316-1334) that she would go every Saturday to Purgatory and release any Scapularists who might be there and take them to heaven! This amulet is vouched for by John XXII in the Bulla Sabatina, A.D. 1322, and was confirmed by five other popes, Alexander V, Clement VII, Pius V, Gregory XIII and Paul V! (Clement VII was the pope whom St. Catharine of Siena called Antichrist!) . Dallmann, page 73.

The Cord of St. Francis

This charm, in addition to other benefits, is supposed to confer 6 times a year, a general absolution, "*restoring completely baptismal innocence!*"

Is it not incredible that people who profess to be Christian and to believe the teachings of Holy Scripture, should tolerate such childish and palpably false superstitions?

The incident mentioned in II Kings 13:21 of a corpse which was cast into Elisha's sepulcher and revived, is sometimes cited as ground for belief in relics. Is this at all applicable?

No, it has *no application whatever* to relics. No hint of the use or veneration of relics is found in God's Word. It is deplorable to see the Church of Rome substituting empty superstitions for Gospel doctrine, and thus leading unbelievers to belittle and ridicule the Christian faith. The use of relics is one of the many additions to the Gospel which popes have presumed to make in direct violation of God's command, "Thou shalt not add thereto." Deut. 12:32.

Is there anything in Holy Scripture to justify the use of relics?

No, there is nothing in Holy Scripture to justify the use of relics or veneration of them, or belief in any miraculous power in them. They are a survival of the ignorance and superstition of the Dark Ages, which ought to be discarded by intelligent, sincere people; and they lead ignorant people to commit idolatry, by bowing down to them, kissing them, and paying worship to them. John Huss, "the man of truth," fearlessly denounced the priests who organized false miracles, and sold relics, dispensations, and indulgences; and the charlatans who proclaimed pilgrimages to revere apocryphal relics." Huss said, "Religion should return to the Gospel; the priests to humility and verity. He who humbles himself profits more in his soul than he who should go upon a pilgrimage from one end of the world to the other, shedding his blood along the way. He who is humble, pleases God. Pilgrimages are not a divine institution, but rather a foolish invention of men!" Mussolini's *John Huss, the Man of Truth*.

How does the Roman Church try to justify the use of relics?

The Church of Rome asserts that relics are intended to "excite good thoughts and increase devotion." But instead of doing this, they generally excite

irreverent curiosity in careless sightseers, and discredit true religion by exhibiting as genuine what men know to be counterfeit. Why not rather use the means God has given "to excite good thought and increase devotion," viz.: by reverent study of God's Word and by prayer? The right way to honor a good man who has passed away, is not to venerate a piece of bone, but to emulate his virtues and serve God in sincerity and truth.

The Worship of Relics

Members of the Roman Communion often deny that they worship relics; they say they only "venerate" them. But leading Roman Church theologians, like the Jesuit Dens, declare that the *supreme worship of latreia* should be paid to the relics of our Lord's Passion, as nails of the Cross, the crown of thorns, the seamless coat, etc., and the second grade of worship, *éovneia*, Should be paid to relics of saints. Dens' Theology, V, page 45.

What folly thus to deceive the people by imaginary verbal hairsplitting! Christ said plainly, excluding all worship of human beings and material things: "Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and Him only shalt thou serve!" Matt. 3:10.

The Church of Rome has many things to get rid of, as the "Proposed Reformation of the Benedictine Abbey," near Cologne, testify: Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament, repetitious rosaries, miraculous shrines and medals, imaginative meditations, morbid self-analyses, regimenting of consciences, devotional confessions,— all these were unknown in the early Christian Church, and are useless not to say highly harmful today! The chaff should not be husbanded and the wheat cast aside! *The Converted Catholic*, page 67.

What attitude should sincere believers take concerning relics?

Sincere Christians should *wholly reject them as without warrant* in Scripture and as unworthy of true religion. Relics like other unjustifiable additions to the Gospel, *turn men's thoughts away from God and saving truth*, and fix them on external things, which are "unprofitable and vain." Titus 3:9. They are a form of will-worship which St. Paul says, "make a fair show in the flesh." They are among the "dead works" from the practice of which "the blood of Christ *should purge our consciences.*" Heb. 9:14.

It is easy to perceive that as true religion of the heart declines, men vainly try to fill the aching void by additions which, while having the appearance of piety, and pleasing the thoughtless masses of the people, are *wholly displeasing to God because contrary to His revealed will.*

All churches should heed the warning of a thoughtful writer, concerning the deadening effect of ritualism, of which the Church of Rome furnishes a melancholy example. Forms and ceremonies may impress the eye and ear, but they deaden the soul to spiritual truth. The habitual use of elaborate rites is like an opiate; they soothe the senses, but harden the conscience, leading the worshipers to forget the truth, which the rite was originally meant to convey, and be satisfied with mere outward mechanical performance. "When men come to think that rites possess in themselves material and magical virtues,

the purpose they were intended to serve is gone. Instead of impressing truth and aiding devotion, they hide God from us, and make men practical atheists." Again, "when ceremonies become an end instead of a means, they prevent direct communion of the soul with God. It is faith which saves the soul, not the mechanical practice of religious ceremonies. The world has been besotted with ceremonies!" T. de Stitny, quoted by B. Mussolini.