



Statues and Relics?

This week I'd like to speak about some objections made against the Church for Her use of statues and relics in devotions. First let's talk about statues.

The objection is made against the Catholic Church that we worship idols and make graven images. Let's clear up the misunderstanding on that.

Let's first look at Exodus 25:18-19 which says, "And you shall make two cherubim of gold; of hammered work shall you make them, on the two ends of the mercy seat.

Make one cherub on one end, and one cherub on the other end; of one piece with the mercy seat shall you make the cherubim on its two ends."

God commands the making of two angelic images which are to be placed on the Ark of the Covenant. The Ark contained the holiest items known to the Hebrew people. Images and statues are not forbidden by God. It is the **worship** of graven images or statues that God forbids. Catholics do not worship statues, images and paintings. Rather, images of Jesus, Mary and the saints are used for reflection upon those we love and honor, just as a family picture may remind us of a departed loved one.

God even commands the making of images...even images to be placed in the Holy Temple! In the first book of Kings 7:29 it says, "and on the panels that were set in the frames were lions, oxen, and cherubim. Upon the frames, both above and below the lions and oxen, there were wreaths of beveled work."

If images and statues were inherently evil, why would God insist they be crafted and placed in His Holy Temple? It is the worship of images or idols that God forbids. As Catholics we use statues and paintings to show honor and to remind us of those we love. Praying before a statue of Jesus does not imply we are worshipping the statue any more than someone kneeling and praying with a Bible in their hand is worshipping the Bible.

Finally, during a plague of serpents sent to punish the Israelites during the Exodus, God told Moses to "make [a statue of] of fiery serpent, and set it on a pole; and every one who is bitten, when he sees it, shall live.' One had to *look* at the bronze statue of the serpent to be healed, which shows that statues could be used ritually, not merely as religious decorations. Catholics also use statues for teaching tool and they were useful in the early Church for the instruction of the illiterate. **To Be cont'd.**