

JESUS, THE IMAGE OF THE INVISIBLE GOD

KNOW YOUR FAITH SERIES

A few years ago, an Evangelical Christian and former work colleague of mine asked me if he could visit a Catholic Church. He had heard about the beautiful decorations of our churches, but he had never actually been inside one.

I gladly offered to give him a tour of my parish church.

He asked many questions as we walked through it. At one point he remarked: “God says in the Bible: ‘You shall not carve idols for yourselves in the shape of anything in the sky above or on the earth below... you shall not bow down before them or worship them’ (Exodus 20:4-5). You Catholics are clearly going against this commandment of the Lord, when you put statues of Jesus or the Saints in your homes and churches!

How do you explain this practice of yours?”

I was glad he asked. So many of our separated Christian brethren have misconceptions about Catholic practices.

I went on to explain that Catholics do not worship statues or images of Christ and the Saints, since our adoration or veneration is directed to the person represented by the statues or images.

We put statues in our Churches for the same reason that a person puts pictures of his family on the walls in his house.

But even in the Old Testament we see that statues and images were commissioned by God for religious usage:

In the Book of Exodus, God instructs to build two gold statues of cherubim to be placed on top of the Ark of the Covenant. (Exodus 25:10-22).

In the First Book of Kings we read that in the Sanctuary of the Temple there were two olive wood statues of cherubim and numerous carvings of various animals. (1Kings 6:23; 7:13-51).

Moses had a bronze serpent made and mounted on a pole as instrument of healing (Num. 21:6-9).

In the Old Testament, images of God were forbidden because God had not yet taken on a human form.

In the New Testament, however, we read that God has taken on a human form (image): “He (Jesus) is the image of the invisible God...” (Col.1:15). “For in him (Jesus) dwells the whole fullness of the deity bodily...” (Col.2:9).

An important distinction must be made between an IMAGE and an IDOL. An IMAGE in our Catholic Church is simply a spiritual “visual aid” that is used to increase the spirit of prayerfulness and devotion. An IDOL is an image that is worshipped in place of God by those who don’t believe in the ONE GOD (see the golden calf in Exodus 32:7-8).

From the beginning of Christianity images have been used as visible aids to point us to the invisible spiritual realities, as one can see in the catacombs in the Ancient Rome, where Christians used to gather for worship.

(The source used for this page was “UNABRIDGED CHRISTIANITY “ by Fr. Mario P. Romero)

There is more that we could say on the subject, but I hope this can help you as hopefully helped my Evangelical Christian work colleague.

DO YOU HAVE ANY QUESTIONS ABOUT OUR CATHOLIC FAITH THAT YOU WOULD LIKE TO SEE ADDRESSED?

You may send an email, subject "I HAVE A QUESTION" to: amdggloriam@gmail.com

I will do my best to help you **KNOW YOUR FAITH.**