

Why do some Protestants believe that Catholics worship Mary?

Let's start answering the question by looking to the Old Testament of the Bible (the parts that both Protestants and Catholics agree upon!) for the definition and practice of worship. In the Old Testament, we frequently read that the priests and people worshipped by offering sacrifices, reverent praise and prayers of homage to God. This combination of behaviors, directed to God alone, defines and captures the essence of religious worship in the Old Testament. For almost fifteen centuries the Catholic Church copied that model of worshipping God during Mass by recalling ancient sacrifice and repeating the sacrificial offering of Jesus' Body and Blood, reverently praising God in song and supplication, and paying homage through prayer and Scripture readings.

During the Protestant Reformation, Luther and his followers expanded the Catholic teaching that Jesus was the ultimate sacrificial offering for mankind's sins by defining it as the final sacrifice for man's sins. Therefore Luther believed Communion was more a symbolic reminder than a necessary instrument of God's grace. As a result, Protestant worship services focused much more on praising God through singing, praying and reading scripture. Luther's teachings also emaciated the Saints' role as intercessors – making petitions to them become more and more rare as Protestant religions evolved.

So, when Protestants see a Catholic in church saying a prayer to Mary, singing Ave Maria and repeating parts of the Scripture's Magnificat (Mary's hymn of praise to the Lord) during the rosary, they see and hear what they believe are the components of a worship service! However, the Catholic Church and its followers have never worshipped Mary, Saints, Relics or anyone or anything but God in Three Persons. The Catholic Church has always maintained a clear and inviolate distinction between the worship of God and the veneration of a Saint such as Mary.

Worship through the components of the Liturgy of the Mass is reserved solely for God. No sacrifices are recalled or offered to Mary; no praise to her as creator; no adoration of her as redeemer. Conversely, Mary and the Saints are venerated and they have special places of honor because of what God did for them and what they did for God. Mary and the Saints were closer to God on earth and are closer to God in Heaven than we are

now. We should be able to ask for their intercession by reciting prayers, reading Scripture or singing hymns – the same ways that we pray for God’s protection of our families and friends here on earth. It is a great oddity that both Protestants and Catholics alike will ask friends and neighbors to pray for them; that both Protestants and Catholics believe in Heaven and Heavenly salvation; but some Protestants and Catholics discontinue asking their earthly deceased friends and neighbors for prayers.

So if you are asked why Catholics worship Mary by your Protestant friends, use the the information above to frame your answer and guide your research in finding even more detail with which to answer the question!