

# Why Pope Francis' 'Act of Consecration of Russia and Ukraine' Was Misguided

I have many wonderful friends and family members who are Catholics, and they're some of the most faithful believers I've ever met. I always look forward to getting a haircut because the lady who has cut my hair for the last 30 years (albeit, less to cut now) is a devout Christian and happens to be a Catholic. We always have a great time of Christian fellowship (OK, some politics, too).

That said, I want to weigh in on Pope Francis' "Act of Consecration of Russia and Ukraine to the Immaculate Heart of Mary." Some may see it as "meddling," since I'm not a Catholic, but I see only *one church*. We are "many parts, but one body" (1 Cor. 12:20). It's on this premise that I feel I have a right to insert my opinion. And to me, it's not just "an elephant in the room." As a Bible-believing Christian, it's a whole herd of elephants storming through my living room, and I feel compelled to address it.

And look, I'm pretty thick-skinned. The innumerable petty differences in our theologies are no big deal to me. Speaking of elephants, I like the analogy of leading three blindfolded men up to an elephant and asking them to touch it and guess what it is. The first guy grabs its trunk and says, "It's a big hose." The second touches its side and says, "It's a plaster wall." And the third takes hold of its tail and says, "No, you're both wrong. It's a rope." I get that.

But this is not a petty difference we're talking about. In fact, it's the greatest single pillar of the Christian faith: that we human beings can only approach God Almighty through Jesus Christ. This Jesus Christ, who was God, humbled Himself

to become a man to sacrifice Himself for our sins by shedding His own blood. Attempting to approach Almighty God in any other way is grossly misguided.

## **One Mediator**

In a letter to Catholic bishops, Pope Francis wrote, “This Act of Consecration is meant to be a gesture of the universal Church, which in this dramatic moment lifts up to God, through His Mother and ours, the cry of pain of all those who suffer and implore an end to the violence, and to entrust the future of our human family to the Queen of Peace” (emphasis added).

The pope’s prayer itself was fine, and certainly the Russian-Ukraine war is a worthy issue to pray about. But with all due respect to Pope Francis, Mary, the mother of Jesus, is a deceased, natural woman and is no more a mediator between us and God than my deceased mother or anyone else’s deceased mother. It’s clear in 1 Timothy 2:5 that there is “*one mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus*” (emphasis added). *One*, not two. *One*. His name is Jesus.

And “Queen of Peace”? Romans 5:1 declares, “We have peace with God *through our Lord Jesus Christ*” (emphasis added). And by the way, Jesus is “the Prince of Peace” (Isa. 9:6), and last I checked a queen is higher than a prince. Isn’t Queen Elizabeth higher than Prince William? So, why would he call Mary the “Queen of Peace”?

## **The First Hail Mary?**

Why do many venerate and adore Mary when Jesus Himself rejected that idea? While He was teaching in “a certain place,” a woman in the crowd cried out, “God bless your mother—the womb from which you came, and the breasts that nursed you!” (Luke 11:27, NLT). Perhaps the woman was the first Catholic, because her outcry resembled a condensed version of a Hail Mary. Notice in the very next verse (28) that Jesus did not validate the woman’s extreme adoration for

His mother, but on the contrary, He said, *“More than that, blessed are those who hear the word of God and keep it!”* (Luke 11:28, NKJV, emphasis added).

On a separate occasion, in Matthew 12:46-50 (NLT), we read, “As Jesus was speaking to the crowd, his mother and brothers stood outside, asking to speak to him. Someone told Jesus, ‘Your mother and your brothers are standing outside, and they want to speak to you.’ Jesus asked, ‘Who is my mother? Who are my brothers?’ Then he pointed to his disciples and said, ‘Look, these are my mother and brothers. Anyone who does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother and sister and mother!’”

Of course, Jesus honored His mother. He was the only one who has ever kept the Ten Commandments, which tell us to “Honor your father and mother.” Even while dying on the cross, He told John to take care of His mother (John 19:26-27). But it’s clear in these passages that Jesus debunked the concept of putting His mother on a pedestal above other believers.

### **Highly Favored by God**

Moreover, we all recognize that Mary was “highly favored by God” (Luke 1:28), as were many other individuals throughout the Bible. Many are listed in the “Faith Hall of Fame” in Hebrews 11 (in which, incidentally, you will not find Mary). And we all appreciate Mary’s obedience to submit to God’s divine plan, saying to the angel, “Let it be to me according to your word” (Luke 1:38). But many other individuals submitted to God’s plan to usher in the Messiah, including Joseph.

Poor ol’ Joseph doesn’t get near the credit. But John 1:19 says, “Not wanting to make her a public example, [Joseph] was minded to put her away secretly.” And you know he thought she cheated on him (before the angel appeared). Mary might otherwise have been stoned to death, according to the law of

Moses (Deut. 22:23-24). How do you think the excuse, “You see, gentlemen ... I didn’t sin. The Holy Spirit did this to me” would have gone over? Secondly, Joseph believed the angel that spoke to him, “Do not be afraid to take to you Mary your wife, for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit” (verse 20).

## **Appearance of Evil**

I’ve got to tell you, as I watched the pope sitting in front of that statue of Mary—and talking to it—I couldn’t help thinking what bad optics that was, given the fact that throughout the Old Testament, Israel fell into idolatry by reducing God to a statue. But aside from all that, quite frankly, it just seemed kind of weird, like Chuck Noland talking to Wilson, the volleyball in the movie *Cast Away*. News flash: Neither that statue of Mary nor Wilson can do anything about the war in Ukraine. I’ll give the Pope the benefit and assume that the bad optics were a misrepresentation of what was in his heart and mind. However, 1 Thessalonians 5:22 (KJV) admonishes us to “Abstain from all *appearance* of evil” (emphasis added).

Here’s a sincere question: When the same Spirit that raised Christ from the dead dwells in every born-again believer (Rom. 8:11), we’ve all been given the mind of Christ (1 Cor. 2:16) and we’re “members of His body, of His flesh and of His bones,” what exactly would God have given Mary to top all of that? {eoa}

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