



## **St. Christopher** **by Joe Sixpack**

St Christopher is one of the most popular saints in the Church. Millions of Catholics wear a St. Christopher medal or have a medallion of him on or in their car. These medals usually depict St. Christopher as a big giant of a man carrying a small boy on his shoulders while standing in chest-deep water. Everybody knows St. Christopher is the patron saint of travelers, but few know the actual story of the saint.

This giant of a man, whose name was Offero, lived in the land of Canaan in the early centuries of Christianity. Unhappy with his life and desirous of adventure, Offero left his native land saying, "I will journey throughout the whole world in search of the mightiest of kings and become his servant."

After roaming the world a long time, Offero met an old hermit. This hermit guarded a passage across a very dangerous and violent stream, guiding travelers safely across it. This humble hermit instructed Offero about our Lord, the greatest King.

"How can I serve this King?" Offero asked.

The holy old hermit told him to settle down near the stream and carry travelers across on his shoulders. In that way, the hermit explained, he would be serving the great King. Offero joyfully agreed. "I will remain here and serve the King as faithfully as I can!"

One day he heard a soft, friendly voice calling from the opposite bank of the stream, "Offero, take me across!" Offero waded across the chest-deep waters to reach the voice calling out. When he got there he found a little rosy-cheeked boy. Lifting the lad onto his shoulders, Offero descended into the waters. But the swirling waters began to rise higher and higher, while the boy grew heavier and heavier. Struggling against the violently rushing waters and gasping for breath, the gigantic man cried out, "Child, how heavy you are! I feel as though I'm carrying the whole world on my shoulders."

The little boy answered smiling, "*You carry more than the world. You carry Him who created the heaven and earth, and I carry on Myself the weight of the world's sins.*" After saying these words, He dipped His hand into the water and baptized Offero. Since then Offero is called Christopher, which means Christ-bearer.

The story of St. Christopher still has great meaning and application in our lives today, perhaps more today than ever before. We are all like St. Christopher—every baptized soul is a Christ-bearer, or Christopher. We all carry Christ.

In these modern times, we all get caught up in the problems and vicissitudes of life. But Jesus Christ is with us every step of the way throughout our lives. We only have to call out to and *trust* Him when life's challenges begin to weigh us down. The operative word in that last sentence, though, is *trust*. I should perhaps add that we must trust and *obey*.

Jesus said, "Ask, and it will be given you; seek, and you will find; knock and it will be opened to you. For every one who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened." (Matthew 7:7-8) This is Jesus' promise that our life's problems will be taken care of if we will only trust in Him. If you're not experiencing answers to your prayers, you might want to think about that pesky little part I mentioned about obeying.

The promise cited above comes from the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 5-7. Actually, the promise comes near the end of the sermon. There were a lot of things covered before that.

People tend to home-in on the promises Jesus made, but we have a bad habit of forgetting the rest of it. Hey, that's human nature; we get it. But we need to understand that when Jesus told us He'd answer our prayers, He didn't say it would be unconditional. He's not running a guaranteed lottery or celestial slot machine. Like most things in life, there are conditions to this promise.

Before promising to answer prayer, Jesus told us we have an obligation to Him to do a lot of things. He began with the beatitudes, which laid the foundation for the rest of His sermon. Then He went on to tell us to avoid *anger*, avoid *lust and unchaste activities*, forbade *divorce* and an *attempt to remarry*, be *honest* in all we say, renounce revenge—indeed, to *love our enemies*, make certain all our *intentions are pure*, to *freely give* of our money (it's no offering unless it hurts), to pray prayers of *worship*, to fast and *do penance*, to not be *materialistic*, to *trust* in God's love, and to not be *judgmental*. In other words, we have to obey Christ and His Church (His arbiter on earth) in all of His constant teachings. He doesn't change; His teachings don't change. (Hebrews 13:8)

Most Catholics, though, choose to do those things that are easy to do and ignore the rest. For example, you may work hard at your marriage and avoid divorce, but if you're among 90% of Catholics you still contracept. Or maybe you place a couple of bucks in the collection basket, but you *don't give freely* (after all, you want that new car, so you join the 90% of Catholics who only contribute 10% of the Church's support). Or you claim a love for God, but find better things to do on some Sundays and Holy Days than to worship Him at Mass. Bottom line: don't expect Jesus to keep His promises if you won't do what He says is expected of you first. Think about it, because this is What We Believe... Why We Believe It.

Do you want to comment on this? Visit [JoeSixpackAnswers.com](http://JoeSixpackAnswers.com) to do so. I keep all comments and questions confidential. While you're visiting the site, be sure to sign up for my free email course on the left side of the page. And join us each week for the free webinars I host. We cover everything Catholic under the sun—apologetics, catechetics, history, lives of the saints, Scripture, and a whole bevy of other topics. Can't attend the live event? Register anyway and I'll send you a link to a recording so you can watch the webinar at your leisure.