

# Like a prayer music video analysis

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Madonna first arrived in the national popular culture in 1984 with her song "Borderline". She moved very quickly in the ensuing years to make several records (many of which have gone multi-platinum) and to take several world tours with sold-out concerts, and has caused quite a bit of controversy in what she has done in the public eye. Examples include posing nude for Penthouse magazine (and announcing afterwards that she was not ashamed for doing it), marrying (and subsequently divorcing) actor and media-avoider Sean Penn, creating a fashion trend (which was primarily popular with teenage girls), and making truly atrocious movies which the critics hated and the people refused to see (the only two exceptions are Dick Tracy and Truth or Dare, her controversial yet fascinating self-documentary about her tour of the same name). It seems that Madonna seems to enjoy attention, good or bad, and it seems like she feeds on her own controversy. Her songs, and the music videos which accompany them, are no exception to this. However, the things she does and the images she projects requests contemporary society to reflect on itself, and to possibly re-create itself in innovative and inventive styles. Perhaps she always breaks with convention because she sees things in a different light than the rest of society. This essay shall focus on the video which accompanies the title track from her 1989 album, "Like A Prayer," which certainly had its share of controversy.

Probably the most startling image in the music video was that of several burning crosses on a lawn or a hill. These crosses were in the background, while Madonna was facing the camera and singing. When I saw the music video for the first time, this particular section of the video made me sit up

and intently watch my television screen. The first things I thought about were, " She's a very outspoken woman for doing this! Boy, she's got a lot of nerve! I believe she was raised Catholic, and she's making a mockery of the Catholic Church by doing so! The Pope would be offended, to say the least!" The radical approach to dispose of any religion (or a person's religious or pious fervor) is at least shocking. The cross is the symbol of Christianity and all it stands for. Seeing the cross engulfed in fire -- which symbolizes (and is) a destructive force -- would be very disturbing for anyone to see, Christian or not. I sat up and took notice, and I'm not even Christian -- I am Jewish. Furthermore, the fact that Madonna is singing in front of the crosses (and consequently, not doing anything to stop the crosses burning) implies that she condones cross-burning. This thought asks three questions. Does she also condone the Ku Klux Klan, which also burns crosses? Does she like the idea of religion and/or atheism in any way at all? Does Madonna believe in God? These are all very deep and probing questions, which can only be answered truthfully by Madonna herself.

Another small piece of the music video showed Madonna kissing a black man. While I personally feel that love is blind and has no boundaries, a vast majority of America cocked an eyebrow to this scene. In recent years, a television situation comedy and a major motion picture have both built on interracial relationships as the core of the storyline. " True Colors" was on the Fox Network, built around a black man married to a white woman. Spike Lee's movie " Jungle Fever" also had a black man and a white woman. Lee's reason why he did a story of a black man and a white woman (and not a

white man and a black woman) was that the white woman has been stereotyped to be the essence of all beauty, and that the black man has been stereotyped to be a stud. (It is true that films and television shows have been made which focused on relationships between white men and black women; an example is the film " Soul Man.") Does Madonna have any feelings for men of other races? Should America care? Knowing Madonna's sexual liberalism (she " confessed" to having partial feelings for women in an interview), has she and/or will she seek out alternative methods to satisfy her sexuality and her sexual curiosity?

Both Madonna and the controversy she causes are interesting to watch. The public keeps a sharp eye on what she does because she is an outspoken individual who knows how to market herself to the worldwide media. She always strays from the norm, and she always gives her brash opinions on particular establishments, and acts on those opinions afterwards. Many people have many opinions about her, and many people speak their mind about her. This is what she likes -- to listen to people talking about her. She loves the attention and uses it to her advantage. My opinion of Madonna is that what she doesn't have in pure talent (and I think that she's a little lacking in the talent department), she makes up for with creativity, controversy, intelligence (she attended the University of Michigan -- called by some to be the best public school in the nation) and sexuality (she is an extremely beautiful woman -- I saw her Penthouse layout) to literally guarantee an audience. It is for this ingenuity that I respect her.