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ho·ly  (hō lē)

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adj. **ho·li·er**, **ho·li·est**

1. Belonging to, derived from, or associated with a divine power; sacred.
2. Regarded with veneration or specified for a religious purpose: *a holy book; a holy place.*
3. Living or undertaken with highly moral or spiritual purpose; saintly: *a holy person; a holy way of life.*
4. Regarded as deserving special respect or reverence: *The pursuit of peace is our holiest quest.*
5. *Informal* Used as an intensive: *raised holy hell over the mischief their children did.*

[Middle English *holi*, from Old English *hālig*; see **kailo-** [in the Appendix of Indo-European roots](#).]

ho li·ly *adv.*

ho li·ness *n.*

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Indo-European & Semitic Roots Appendices

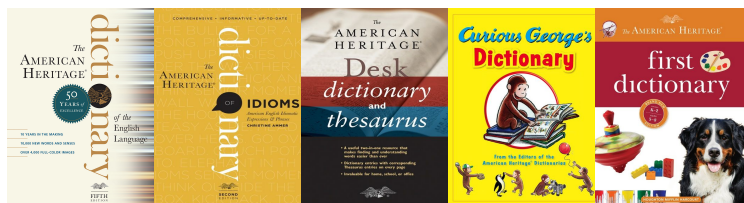
Thousands of entries in the dictionary include etymologies that trace their origins back to reconstructed proto-languages. You can obtain more information about these forms in our online appendices:

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The Indo-European appendix covers nearly half of the Indo-European roots that have left their mark on English words. A more complete treatment of Indo-European roots and the English words derived from them is available in our [Dictionary of Indo-European Roots](#).

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