

Hebrews 12:1-2

Since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight and the sin that clings so closely, and let us run with perseverance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus the pioneer and perfecter of our faith, who for the sake of the joy that was set before him endured the cross, disregarding its shame, and has taken his seat at the right hand of the throne of God.

The Communion of Saints

CCC 246 After confessing "the holy catholic Church," the Apostles' Creed adds "the communion of saints." In a certain sense this article is a further explanation of the preceding: "What is the Church if not the assembly of all the saints?"⁴⁷⁹ The *communion of saints is the Church*.

CCC 248 The term "communion of saints" therefore has two closely linked meanings: communion in holy things (*sancta*)" and "among holy persons (*sancti*)."

I. COMMUNION IN SPIRITUAL GOODS

CCC 249 In the primitive community of Jerusalem, the disciples "devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of the bread and the prayers."⁴⁸²

Communion in the faith. The faith of the faithful is the faith of the Church, received from the apostles. Faith is a treasure of life which is enriched by being shared.

CCC 250 Communion of the sacraments. "The fruit of all the sacraments belongs to all the faithful. All the sacraments are sacred links uniting the faithful with one another and binding them to Jesus Christ, and above all Baptism, the gate by which we enter into the Church. The communion of saints must be understood as the communion of the sacraments. . . . The name 'communion' can be applied to all of them, for they unite us to God.

CCC 251 Communion of charisms. Within the communion of the Church, the Holy Spirit "distributes special graces among the faithful of every rank" for the building up of the Church.⁴⁸⁴ Now, "to each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good."⁴⁸⁵ (*1 Cor 12:7*)

CCC 252 "They had everything in common."⁴⁸⁶ "Everything the true Christian has is to be regarded as a good possessed in common with everyone else. All Christians should be ready and eager to come to the help of the needy . . . and of their neighbors in want."⁴⁸⁷ A Christian is a steward of the Lord's goods.⁴⁸⁸

CCC 253 Communion in charity. In the sanctorum communio, "None of us lives to himself, and none of us dies to himself."⁴⁸⁹ "If one member suffers, all suffer together; if one member is honored, all rejoice together. Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it."⁴⁹⁰ "Charity does not insist on its own way."⁴⁹¹ In this solidarity with all men, living or dead, which is founded on the communion of saints, the least of our acts done in charity redounds to the profit of all. Every sin harms this communion.

II. THE COMMUNION OF THE CHURCH OF HEAVEN AND EARTH

CCC 254 The three states of the Church. "When the Lord comes in glory, and all his angels with him, death will be no more and all things will be subject to him. But at the present time some of his disciples are pilgrims on earth. (*The Church Militant*) Others have died and are being purified, (*The Church*

Suffering) while still others are in glory, contemplating 'in full light, God himself triune and one, exactly as he is'"(*The Church Triumphant: Heaven*):⁴⁹²

CCC 955 "So it is that the union of the wayfarers (*The Church Militant*) with the brethren who sleep in the peace of Christ (*The Church Suffering/Triumphant*) is in no way interrupted, but on the contrary, according to the constant faith of the Church, this union is reinforced by an exchange of spiritual goods."⁴⁹⁴

- **Church Militant:** The Church upon earth, fighting against the world, flesh and the devil.
- **Church Suffering:** Those being purified in Purgatory.
- **Church Triumphant:** The Saints and the Angels in Heaven.

The first two states are temporary and will pass away at the end of time, while the third is everlasting. Because of our unity in the Spirit, we have communion with all Catholics who are in any one of these three stages.

CCC 956 *The intercession of the saints.* "Being more closely united to Christ, those who dwell in heaven fix the whole Church more firmly in holiness. . . . They do not cease to intercede with the Father for us, as they proffer the merits which they acquired on earth through the one mediator between God and men, Christ Jesus So by their fraternal concern is our weakness greatly helped."⁴⁹⁵

CCC 957 *Communion with the saints.* "It is not merely by the title of example that we cherish the memory of those in heaven; we seek, rather, that by this devotion to the exercise of fraternal charity the union of the whole Church in the Spirit may be strengthened.

CCC 958 *Communion with the dead.* "In full consciousness of this communion of the whole Mystical Body of Jesus Christ, the Church in its pilgrim members, from the very earliest days of the Christian religion, has honored with great respect the memory of the dead; and 'because it is a holy and a wholesome thought to pray for the dead that they may be loosed from their sins' she offers her suffrages for them."⁴⁹⁶ Our prayer for them is capable not only of helping them, but also of making their intercession for us effective.

CCC 959 *In the one family of God.* "For if we continue to love one another and to join in praising the Most Holy Trinity - all of us who are sons of God and form one family in Christ - we will be faithful to the deepest vocation of the Church."⁵⁰¹

CCC 828 By *canonizing some of the faithful*, i.e., by solemnly proclaiming that they practiced heroic virtue and lived in fidelity to God's grace, the Church recognizes the power of the Spirit of holiness within her and sustains the hope of believers by proposing the saints to them as models and intercessors.³⁰³ "The saints have always been the source and origin of renewal in the most difficult moments in the Church's history."³⁰⁴ Indeed, "holiness is the hidden source and infallible measure of her apostolic activity and missionary zeal."

Veneration of the Saints began as showing devotion and respect to Mary, the Apostles, and the martyrs who were viewed as faithful witnesses to faith in Jesus Christ. Later veneration was given to those who led a life of prayer and self-denial in giving witness to Christ, whose virtues were recognized publicly proclaimed in their canonization as saints (828) Such veneration is often extended to the relics or remains of those

recognized as saints; indeed, to many sacred objects and images. Veneration must be clearly distinguished from adoration and worship, which are due alone God alone (1154, 1674, 2132). – Glossary of the CCC

Scripture Verses

I looked, and there was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, robed in white, with palm branches in their hands. They cried out in a loud voice, saying,

“Salvation belongs to our God who is seated on the throne, and to the Lamb!”

“These are they who have come out of the great ordeal; they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.” - **Revelation 7:9–10, 14**

“To all God’s beloved...who are called to be saints: grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.” -**Rom. 1:17**

“Be holy, for I am holy.” -**Lev. 11:45**

Categories of Saints -

- **Mary Mother of God, Greatest Saint**
- **Apostles** – The title traditionally given to those specially chosen by Jesus to preach the Gospel and to whom he entrusted responsibility for guiding the Early Church. Peter, Andrew, James, John, Thomas, Bartholomew, Matthew, Simon, Jude, Matthias (replacement for Judas Iscariot) Paul.
- **Martyrs** – One who witnesses to Christ and the truth of the faith even to the point of suffering typically death.
 - Stephen, Lawrence, Cosmas and Damien, Marcellinus and Peter, Wenceslaus, St Justin Martyr
- **Pastors** – A Priest, Bishop, Pope
 - Gregory the Great, St. John Paul II, St. Charles Borromeo, St. John Vianney, St. John Chrysostom, St. Dominic, St. Philip Neri
- **Doctors of the Church** – A person from any era in Church history whose sanctity and writings have had a profound influence on Theological or spiritual thought. A person is declared a Doctor by the pope. Latin *doctor* – teacher.
 - St. Ambrose, St Augustine, St Teresa of Avila, St. John of the Cross, St. Catherine of Siena, Athanasius, St. Francis de Sales, St. Thomas Aquinas, St. Basil the Great
- **Virgins** – An honorific title bestowed on female saints and blessed in both the Eastern Orthodox Church and the Roman Catholic Church.
 - St. Rose of Lima, St Agnes, St Cecilia, St Maria Goretti, St Therese of Lisieux
- **Holy Men and Women**
 - **Married Saints, Abbot, Monks, Nuns, Religious, For Those Who Practiced Works of Mercy, For Educators**
 - **EXP.** St Monica, St Francis of Assisi, St Martha, St. Henry, St Aloysius, St Rita of Cascia, St Elizabeth Ann Seton, St. Isidore, Sts. Louis and Zelig Martin (parents of St Therese of Lisieux) St. Teresa of Calcutta

Common Objections

This doctrine and practice, commonly called “praying to the saints,” is especially unsettling to Protestants, who do not accept it. There are a few standard objections to this doctrine:

Obj. 1) You are attempting to contact the dead, and Deuteronomy 18:10-11 forbids this: “Anyone who practices divination, a medium, a soothsayer, a necromancer...is an abomination to the Lord.”

Reply: The dead in Christ are different from the dead in general. God says in the Book of Revelation: “Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord henceforth” (Rev. 14:13), and Christ affirms that those who die in God’s friendship are not dead, but are in fact alive (“He is not the God of the dead, but of the living” - Mark 12:27). In fact, the dead in Christ are more alive than we are. The Church has never recognized this as divination or necromancy, which is the tapping into occult powers for the purpose of attaining occult knowledge and is different from petitioning the blessed in Heaven.

Obj. 2) The First Commandment says that God alone is to be worshipped. Praying to someone is a type of worship. Therefore, you are actually worshipping the saints when you pray to them and thus violate the First Commandment.

Reply: The First Commandment does indeed forbid worship of other gods, but prayer to the saints is not worshipping other gods. First, we do not “pray” to them in the proper sense, but ask for them to pray for us. Thus, we venerate, honor them and ask for their intercession, but we do not pray to them as an end in themselves. Second, there are various degrees of honor. Latria is the honor of adoration due to God alone; dulia is the relative honor given to the saints, and hyperdulia is the unique veneration given to Mary, Queen of Saints. God alone is worshipped; saints are venerated.

Furthermore, not all prayer is worship. Pray simply means to ask, and even in English, “I pray thee” used to be a phrase that meant “I ask you” and was commonly addressed to other persons. The use of the term “pray” has never been seen as restricted to God alone.

Obj. 3) Those in Heaven cannot see or know what is going on in the earth, and therefore it is superfluous to ask their prayers.

Reply: Scripture says that men are judged immediately after death (Heb. 9:27), and Tradition affirms that the souls of the just go immediately to Heaven where they enjoy the beatific vision and the souls of those in mortal sin go right to Hell and are subject to its torments (the souls of those needing purification, of course, going to Purgatory (Benedictus Deus, 1336). In Heaven, our knowledge is more perfect and complete because it is not hindered by sin and concupiscence.

Therefore, it is inconceivable that our knowledge of what was going on in the world in Heaven would be less than it is currently on earth: “For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part, then I shall understand fully” (1 Cor. 13:12). Furthermore, these souls would want to know what was going on the earth so that they could aid the Church Militant by their prayers.

Obj. 4) Why ask the saints to pray for you when you can go to God directly?

Reply: Going to God directly is a good thing, but we have to understand that when we ask the saints to pray for us, we are still ‘going to God’ because they are praying to God for us. We pray for each other on the earth and do not consider it an infringement upon the need to go to God directly, because we understand that another can go to God for us, that the prayers of two are better than one, that God rewards perseverance in prayer, that it demonstrates charity, and that “the prayers of a righteous man avail much” (James 5:16). Who is more righteous than the saints in Heaven? Therefore, while we do not strictly need to ask the prayers of Mary or the saints, it is in our interest to ask for them.

Objections taken from RCIA guide #27 <http://www.unamsanctamcatholicam.com/home/parish-resources/83-parish-resources/120-rcia-classes.html>