The Communion of Saints

**God has always intended us to live with Him in familial love. The communion of saints is His holy human family. Death does not break this bond of love and sharing.**

**Understanding “communion”**

* From the beginning, God intended for His creatures a communion of love, to share his divine life of love
* We are united in the pursuit of a common goal – call to holiness
* Our unity gives us strength to grow in faith, hope and love.
* If one of us suffers, we all suffer – if one of us gains in righteousness, we all benefit. We are the Body of Christ
* A sign of our unity is our shared participation in the Sacraments, especially in the Eucharist.
* The Holy Spirit leads us to pray and fast for one another.
* The Mystical Body and Communion of Saints are two ways of understanding this union of love with God that He desires.

(St. Terese of Lisieux)

**Understanding “saint”**

* Latin root for the English word is “Sanctus” – which means holy
* What does it mean for something to be holy or sacred?
  + Set apart for a special purpose
  + In our Baptism we have been set apart - belonging to God, with a purpose
* A saint is someone in a state of grace, a person united to God
  + Sanctification is a lifelong mission – we are never to rest in the work of becoming perfected by Grace
    - Grace: the Divine life, friendship with God – free, unmerited gift that helps us in our call to holiness. We must receive and participate with this gift. Universal Call to Holiness.
    - We are saints in the making – what God has created us for
    - Saints in heaven are those who have died in God’s friendship
* Canonized saints are those who have attained, *by responding to God’s Grace*, the perfection of holiness
  + St. Teresa of Calcutta – service to others
  + Padre Pio – piety, bringing others to Reconciliation
  + St. Ignatius of Antioch – gift of self in witness of the faith in martyrdom

**The Communion of saints can be divided into 3 stages:**

* CCC 962 – “We believe in the communion of all the faithful of Christ,

Those who are pilgrims on earth *(Church Militant)*

The dead who are being purified *(Church Suffering)*

And the blessed in heaven *(Church Triumphant)*

Altogether forming one Church; and we believe that in this communion, the merciful love of God and His saints is always attentive to our prayers”

* The Church Militant: still on earth
  + We are in a constant state of struggle as we endeavor to love God and our neighbors and do as much good for souls as we can in a darkened world where evil exists
  + Through prayer, we can assist each other and enlist help from the saints
* The Church Suffering
  + Those souls who die in genuine friendship with the Lord, but in need of purification (purgation – purging) of sinful attachments,
  + They know they will be with God and want to be purified before coming face to face with God
  + They offer their suffering in prayer on behalf of those still on earth
* The Church Triumphant: everlasting beatitude (happiness) with God
  + Already pleasing to God, they have lived lives of holiness and are near to the Throne of Grace. They have immense intercessory power
  + Most are unknown to us, but a few, the canonized saints, are given to us by the Church as models to imitate

**The communion of saints: union of incomparable love and hope**

* The Church of this world is joined to the Church of the next in the single Body of Christ
* We are never alone – but always have the members of Jesus’ mystical Body in mutual love
* This communion of love makes our daily life rich, desirable, fruitful and meritorious
* The Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of God and our Mother is our pre-eminent intercessor; she has never ceased to care for us, her children and has visibly returned at times in apparitions

*In what ways might the communion of saints help in your efforts to be holy?*

*Through imitation and intercession!*

**Intercession:**

* In the Old Testament, Abraham and Moses constantly interceded between God and men
* St. Paul’s letters are filled with prayers for the early Church and requests for their intercessory prayers
* 1 Timothy 2:1 (have class look up): *First of all, then, I urge that entreaties and prayers, petitions and thanksgivings, be made on behalf of all men*
* We are God’s gifts to each other, for the purpose of leading each other to Heaven. We intercede for one another.
* We ask the intercession of the saints in Heaven as they are close to the Throne of God and their prayers are powerful
* 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.” – from Lumen Gentium (Vatican II)*
  + St Dominic (dying, to his brothers): “Do not weep, for I shall be more useful to you after my death and I shall help you then more effectively than during my life.”
  + St. Terese of Lisieux: “I want to spend my heaven doing good on earth.”

**Imitation:**

* Canonized saints are holy men and women, who during their lives cooperated fully with Grace of God and after their bodily death, now in spirit are fully alive in Heaven.
* We venerate Saints, recognizing their heroic virtues. Three theological virtues: Faith, hope and love. 4 cardinal virtues: Fortitude, Justice, Temperance, Prudence)
  + Blessed Carlo Acutis (Faith)
  + Blessed Chiara Badano (Hope)
  + St. Teresa of Calcutta (Love)
  + St. Maximilian Kolbe (Fortitude and Justice)
  + St. Thomas More (Temperance and Prudence) martyr
* Those who suffer death while bearing witness to Christ and the truths of His teachings are venerated as Martyrs (St. Ignatius of Antioch, Apostles (except John, St. Maximilian Kolbe, St. Joan of Arc, St. Thomas More)
* CCC 2473: Martyrdom is the supreme witness given to the truth of the faith: it means bearing witness even unto death. The martyr bears witness to Christ who died and rose, to whom he is united by charity. He bears witness to the truth of the faith and of Christian doctrine. He endures death through an act of fortitude. “Let me become the food of the beasts, through whom it will be given me to reach God.” (Ignatius of Antioch)
* 2 Timothy 4:6-8 *For I am already being poured out like a libation, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have competed well; I have finished the race; I have kept the faith. From now on the crown of righteousness awaits me, which the Lord, the just judge, will award to me on that day, and not only to me, but to all who have longed for his appearance.*

**Process for Canonization**

* Servant of God: As soon as the person is accepted for consideration, he or she is called a Servant of God
* Venerable: After the Vatican Congregation for the Causes of Saints determines that the servant of God lived a life of heroic virtue, he or she is granted the title of Venerable. Heroic virtue does not mean a person was perfect or sinless, but that she worked aggressively to improve herself spiritually and never gave up tring to be better and grow in holiness.
* Blessed: After the Church establishes one miracle, the venerable person’s cause is presented tot eh pope to see whether he deems her worthy of being called Blessed. This step is called beatification. PLEASE NOTE: The miracle is God’s, but granted through the intercession of the Blessed.
* Saint: After a second miracle is verified, and if the Holy Father determines that the evidence is clear and that contrary reports aren’t credible, he may initiate the canonization procedure. When completed, the candidate is publicly recognized as a Saint.

Team members talk about their Patron Saints

US Cities named after Saints