

The Communion of Saints

Church Militant

- The Communion of Saints refers to the members, both living and dead, of Christ's Mystical Body.
This includes the faithful on earth, the holy souls in purgatory, and the angels and saints in heaven.
- The Church Militant refers to those on earth who are united with Christ. They are militant in their pursuit of eternal life with God in heaven. This is also called the Pilgrim Church (journeying toward heaven). We are united with each other in charity and prayer.

Church Suffering

- The Church Suffering refers to the holy souls who died in the state of grace, and are being purified and prepared in purgatory for heaven. The Church Suffering is also called the Church Penitent.
- The souls in purgatory suffer purification. The greatest suffering is the holy longing for union with God in heaven. We can assist these souls with our prayers and indulgences.

Church Triumphant

- The Church Triumphant includes those united with Christ who already share in the eternal glory of heaven: the angels and saints. They are models of holiness and intercessors on our behalf.
- Canonized saints are those recognized by the Church for their holiness on earth. The Church infallibly declares that the saints are in heaven. We may turn to them for intercessory prayer.

Patrons

- Patron saints are saints we choose to honor. We seek their intercession. They are models of holiness, entrusted with the petitions of those under their patronage.

Catechism Questions

What does “Communion of Saints” mean?

The Communion of Saints means that all the faithful, living and dead, share in all the good that exists and is done in the universal Church (CCC 947).

Do the blessed in heaven and the souls in purgatory form a part of the Communion of Saints?

The blessed in heaven and the souls in purgatory form a part of the Communion of Saints because they are joined to each other and with us through charity, because those in heaven intercede for us, and those in purgatory gain our assistance by our prayers (CCC 955-58).

Who are the saints?

The saints are holy people who are in heaven (CCC 957-58).

Why should we pray to the saints as well as to God?

We should pray to the saints as well as to God because God wills to help us through the prayers of others, including the saints, who are very holy and close to him (CCC 956).

Why are the angels, the saints, and Our Lady powerful intercessors with God?

The angels, saints, and Our Lady are powerful intercessors with God because they are closely united to Christ in heaven (CCC 956, 2674).

CCC = Catechism of the Catholic Church

Handout

Partial and Plenary Indulgences

The Pope or Bishops in union with him can grant indulgences. When Jesus died on the Cross, he paid the price for all our sins. Therefore, when we receive an indulgence, the Church opens for us the Treasury of the Church (the infinite merits of Christ and the saints) to obtain from God the remission of our temporal punishment. There are two types of indulgences:

- A partial indulgence is a remission of some of the temporal punishment due to sin. Partial indulgences can be granted by bishops.
- A plenary indulgence is a remission all of the temporal punishment due to sin. Plenary indulgences can only be granted by the Pope.

When granting an indulgence, the Church will ask us to do some good work, such as going on a pilgrimage to a certain place or praying special prayers. To receive a plenary indulgence, we must receive the Sacraments of Penance and Eucharist, pray for the Holy Father, and be free from all attachment to sin. We should receive indulgences whenever we can and thank God for his mercy and forgiveness. See the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, paragraphs 1471-1479.

Canonization Process

There are three levels to pass through on the road to canonization: Venerable, Blessed, and Saint.

- **Venerable:** During the first stage of the canonization process, the life of the person to be canonized is investigated. All of his writings are gathered and carefully studied, and his friends, family, and acquaintances are interviewed. The local bishop then creates a file of the person's life and writings and submits it to the Vatican, where officials examine the file. If they determine that the candidate's life expressed heroic virtue, he is proclaimed "Venerable" and receives the title, "Servant of God."
- **Blessed:** The only way to become a Blessed is for a miracle to be attributed to the Servant of God's intercession. If a miracle occurs that seems to be from his intercession, a group of theologians and scientists examines the case. They must determine two things: whether it is in fact a miracle (scientifically unexplainable), and whether it can be attributed to his intercession. Once the miracle has been approved, the person may be *beatified*, which means they have been proclaimed "Blessed."
- **Saint:** The final stage requires a second miracle. Upon the acceptance of a second miracle, the Blessed can be "canonized." This means that the Pope has proclaimed him a saint. At this point, his name can be added to the liturgical calendar and he may be venerated by the faithful all over the world.

Handout

Saint Pio of Pietrelcina

Padre Pio joined the Order of the Capuchins at the age of sixteen and was ordained a priest seven years later. His life was full of many mystical graces. There are many accounts of the saint bilocating and of healings attributed to his prayer, and he reportedly was visited by angels and souls from purgatory as well as by the devil who attacked him. In 1918, as Saint Pio was praying before a crucifix, he received the stigmata, the wounds of Christ, on his hands and feet. In humility, he tried to hide the wounds and is commonly pictured wearing gloves, but his stigmata were well known. During Mass, it seemed that his wounds became more painful, but he endured it all out of love for God. He also had the ability to read souls, that is, he would know the sins of the penitent without being told, and had the gift of knowing exactly what to say to penitents, be it encouragement or reproach, to bring them closer to God. People came from all over the world to confess to the saint who spent as many as twelve hours in the confessional each day. Saint Pio died on September 23rd, 1968 at the age of eighty-one.

Prayers of the Church

