

CLIFF NOTES

by Fr. Clifford Smith

The Communion of the Saints

Only God is **worshipped**, while the saints and Mary receive **veneration** or **honor** ... like the way we respect and honor parents and grandparents, heroes, and heads of state.

The **Communion of Saints** is right out of the Apostles' Creed ... it affirms that the Church is the assembly of the saints/holy ones/the faithful.

The faithful form a single body, the Body of Christ with Christ as head ... the riches of Christ are communicated to all those members who form the Body. The Communion of Saints refers to the bond of **unity among all believers, both living and dead**, who are or have been committed followers of Jesus Christ. In the eyes of God, in eternity, **the distinction between His People who are "living" or who are "dead" is not at all important.**

The saints are presented to us as **role models** whose lives are worthy **to be imitated**. Council of Vatican II says: *"For when we look at the lives of those who have faithfully followed Christ, we are inspired with a new reason for seeking the city which is to. At the same time we are shown a most safe path by which ... we will be able to arrive at perfect union with Christ, that is holiness."*

Three States of Existence

The Church has always distinguished three states of existence in union with God ...

... the **pilgrim Church on earth**,

... the **Church undergoing purification** [often referred to as *"suffering"* or Purgatory,]

... and the **Church in Heaven** [referred to as the *"Church in Glory"*.]

Intercession of the Saints

That part of the Body of Christ dwelling in heaven fix the whole Church more firmly in holiness. They never cease to intercede with the Father for us. So we are called to intercede for the *church undergoing purification*.

Prayer appears to be the normal way for believers to support one another. Probably all of us have asked another to pray for us when we had a need. Catholic Christians believe that as we can ask **another person** to pray for us, we can also ask prayers from the saints already united to the Lord in heaven. If the prayers of certain Christians here on earth seem to possess special power because of their great faith witness or holiness, how much more powerful and effective might not the **prayers of those of the communion of saints in heaven** who are fully united to God.

Images and Relics of the Saints

Catholic Christians operate from an Incarnational Principle: they sometimes make use of statues, images, medals, relics, and other objects to call to mind their relationship with the communion of saints of the past. These "religious objects" are used to simply recall to mind the example of a particular saint and to remind us of their nearness to God and their power to intercede for us on earth.