

## Communion of Saints

Question: "Where does the Bible say we should pray to dead saints?"

Answer: "Where does the Bible say saints are dead?"

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### 1) Catechism of the Catholic Church

#### The Communion of Saints

**946** 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?"<sup>479</sup> The communion of saints is the Church.

**947** "Since all the faithful form one body, the good of each is communicated to the others. . . . We must therefore believe that there exists a communion of goods in the Church. But the most important member is Christ, since he is the head. . . . Therefore, the riches of Christ are communicated to all the members, through the sacraments." "As this Church is governed by one and the same Spirit, all the goods she has received necessarily become a common fund."

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

*Sancta sanctis!* ("God's holy gifts for God's holy people") is proclaimed by the celebrant in most Eastern liturgies during the elevation of the holy Gifts before the distribution of communion. The faithful (*sancti*) are fed by Christ's holy body and blood (*sancta*) to grow in the communion of the Holy Spirit (*koinonia*) and to communicate it to the world.

THE COMMUNION OF THE CHURCH OF HEAVEN AND EARTH

**954** *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. Others have died and are being purified, while still others are in glory, contemplating 'in full light, God himself triune and one, exactly as he is'":

All of us, however, in varying degrees and in different ways share in the same charity towards God and our neighbors, and we all sing the one hymn of glory to our God. All, indeed, who are of Christ and who have his Spirit form one Church and in Christ cleave together.

**955** "So it is that the union of the wayfarers with the brethren who sleep in the peace of Christ 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."

**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. . . . [T]hey 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."

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.

I want to spend my heaven in doing good on earth.

**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. Exactly as Christian communion among our fellow pilgrims brings us closer to Christ, so our communion with the saints joins us to Christ, from whom as from its fountain and head issues all grace, and the life of the People of God itself":

We worship Christ as God's Son; we love the martyrs as the Lord's disciples and imitators, and rightly so because of their matchless devotion towards their king and master. May we also be their companions and fellow disciples!

**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." Our prayer for them is capable not only of helping them, but also of making their intercession for us effective.

**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."

**960** The Church is a "communion of saints": this expression refers first to the "holy things" (*sancta*), above all the Eucharist, by which "the unity of believers, who form one body in Christ, is both represented and brought about" (*LG* 3).

**961** The term "communion of saints" refers also to the communion of "holy persons" (*sancti*) in Christ who "died for all," so that what each one does or suffers in and for Christ bears fruit for all.

**962** "We believe in the communion of all the faithful of Christ, those who are pilgrims on earth, the dead who are being purified, and the blessed in heaven, all together forming one Church; and we believe that in this communion, the merciful love of God and his saints is always [attentive] to our prayers" (Paul VI, *CPG* § 30)

## [2\) Basic Bible Verses](#)

### Communion of Members of the One Body of Christ

**Romans 8:35-39** - death cannot separate us from Christ. Note: So Catholics are praying to and asking for help from saints that are ALIVE. We pray to Jesus AND the saints. The communion of saints is not an EITHER OR issue, it is a family affair!

**Romans 12:5** - we are one body in Christ, individual parts of one another

**Romans 12:10** - love one another with mutual affection

**1 Corinthians 12:12-27** – If one part is hurt (suffers), all the parts share its pain. And if one part is honored, all the parts share its joy

**Galatians 6:2** - bear one another's burdens

**Galatians 6:10** - let us do good to all, especially to those in the family of faith  
**Ephesians 1:22-23** - he is the head of the Church, which is His Body  
**Ephesians 4:4** - one body, one spirit, called to one hope  
**Ephesians 5:21-32** - Christ is the Head of the Church, savior  
**Colossians 1:18, 24** - he is the head of the body, the Church  
**Colossians 3:15** - you were called in one body

### **Intercessory prayer to the Saints**

**Tobit 12:12** - angel presents Tobit and Sarah's prayer to God **Romans 15:30** - join me by your prayers to God on my behalf  
**Ephesians 4:3** - pray for us  
**Ephesians 6:18-19** - Never get tired of staying awake to pray for all God's holy people, and pray for me to be given an opportunity to open my mouth and fearlessly make known the mystery of the gospel  
**2 Thessalonians 1:11** - we always pray for you  
**2 Thessalonians 3:1** - finally, brothers, pray for us  
**Revelation 5:8** - angel offers prayers of the holy ones to God.

Are the saints dead? Is this prayer necromancy? (Deuteronomy 18:10)?

**Wisdom 3:1-6** - the souls of the just are in the hand of God  
**Mark 12:26-27** - he is the God of the living, not of the dead  
**Mark 9:4** - Jesus seen conversing with Elijah and Moses  
**Luke 16:19-30** - departed rich man intercedes for brothers  
**Luke 23:43** - To the thief on the Cross: "this day you will be with me in paradise"  
**Hebrews 12:1** - we are surrounded by a cloud of witnesses  
**Revelation 6:9-11** - martyrs under the altar want earthly vindication  
**Revelation 20:4** - saw the souls of those that had been beheaded.

### **Understanding, "One mediator between God and man" (1 Timothy 2:5)**

**Matthew 25:23** - Well done, my good and faithful servant (the servant is not undermining the sole mediation of Christ by what he has done.)  
**Mark 10:18** - only God is good  
**John 21:15-16** - feed my lambs, tend my sheep  
**Ephesians 4:11** - And to some, his 'gift' was that they should be apostles; to some prophets; to some, evangelists; to some, pastors and teachers  
**Hebrews 3:1, 7:24, 9:12** - Jesus is the eternal high priest; one sacrifice Note: Jesus is the eternal high priest. Because Our Lord was a divine person, his ONE sacrifice happened in time AND eternity. Catholic priests enter into that one sacrifice of Jesus every time they celebrate Holy Mass. There is NOT another sacrifice. By HIS choice we participate in his priesthood by bringing the Gospel to those that have not heard it. By doing this we don't undermine his ONE mediation, but participate in it.  
**1 Timothy 2:1-7** - offer prayers and petitions for all men

**1 Peter 2:5** - be a holy priesthood to offer sacrifices through Christ  
**Revelation 1:6, 5:10** - he made us a kingdom of priests for God.

### Veneration of the Saints

**Joshua 5:14** - Joshua fell prostrate in worship before the angel

**Daniel 8:17** - Daniel fell prostrate in terror before Gabriel

**Tobit 12:16** - Tobiah and Tobit fall to the ground before Raphael

**Matthew 18:10** - the angels in heaven are always before the face of God Note: We venerate angels because of their great dignity, which comes from their union with God. Saints are also in united with God. Veneration nor honor IS NOT WORSHIP. Catholics worship GOD/Jesus alone! **Hebrews 13:7** - Remember your leaders, who preached the word of God to you, and as you reflect on the outcome of their lives, take their faith as your model

**1 Thessalonians 1:5-8** - you become an example to all believers Note: this is what Saints are for Catholics and all mankind: examples of holiness

**1 John 3:2** - we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is.

### 3) Quote from Fathers

Who should carry the most weight—Protestant pastors protesting Catholic theology today *or* pastors from the early Church who have the words of the Apostles still ringing in their ears?

From earliest times Christians went to the gravesites of saints and asked them to pray for them. This picture shows graffiti from the Catacombs of St. Sebastian in Rome with inscriptions in Hebrew, Greek and Latin imploring the prayers of Peter and Paul. “Petrus and Paulus, pray for us!” “Peter and Paul, pray for victory.”



### St. Cyril

In 350 A.D., St. Cyril wrote a remarkable and exquisitely detailed description of the Mass, which clearly corresponds with today's Mass. In it we find this beautiful statement on

the family of God which we all belong to, and which even today we pray for in every Mass: "... upon completion of the spiritual Sacrifice, the bloodless worship, over that propitiatory victim, we call upon God for the common peace of the Churches, for the welfare of the world, for kings, for soldiers and allies, for the sick, for the afflicted, and in summary, we all pray and offer this Sacrifice for all who are in need. Then we make mention also of those who have already fallen asleep: first, the patriarchs, prophets, apostles, and martyrs, that through their prayers and supplications God would receive our petition; next, we make mention also of the holy fathers and bishops who have already fallen asleep, and, to put it simply, of all among us who have already fallen asleep; for we believe that it will be of very great benefit to the souls of those for whom the petition is carried up, while this holy and most solemn Sacrifice is laid out." (The Faith of the Early Fathers,' Vol. 1, William A. Jurgens, [Collegeville, Minnesota: Liturgical Press, 1970] p. 363.). The faithful in heaven and on earth are united in the Person of Jesus through the Sacrament of the Eucharist. This is the meaning of the Communion of Saints.

### More quotations gleaned from [Catholic Answers](#)

#### **Hermas**

"[The Shepherd said:] 'But those who are weak and slothful in prayer, hesitate to ask anything from the Lord; but the Lord is full of compassion, and gives without fail to all who ask him. But you, [Hermas,] having been strengthened by the holy angel [you saw], and having obtained from him such intercession, and not being slothful, why do not you ask of the Lord understanding, and receive it from him?'" (*The Shepherd* 3:5:4 [A.D. 80]).

#### **Clement of Alexandria**

"In this way is he [the true Christian] always pure for prayer. He also prays in the society of angels, as being already of angelic rank, and he is never out of their holy keeping; and though he pray alone, he has the choir of the saints standing with him [in prayer]" (*Miscellanies* 7:12 [A.D. 208]).

#### **Origen**

"But not the high priest [Christ] alone prays for those who pray sincerely, but also the angels . . . as also the souls of the saints who have already fallen asleep" (*Prayer* 11 [A.D. 233]).

#### **Cyprian of Carthage**

"Let us remember one another in concord and unanimity. Let us on both sides [of death] always pray for one another. Let us relieve burdens and afflictions by mutual love, that if one of us, by the swiftness of divine condescension, shall go hence first, our love may continue in the presence of the Lord, and our prayers for our brethren and sisters not cease in the presence of the Father's mercy" (*Letters* 56[60]:5 [A.D. 253]).

#### **Anonymous**

"Atticus, sleep in peace, secure in your safety, and pray anxiously for our sins" (funerary inscription near St. Sabina's in Rome [A.D. 300]).

"Pray for your parents, Matronata Matriona. She lived one year, fifty-two days" (ibid.).

"Mother of God, [listen to] my petitions; do not disregard us in adversity, but rescue us from danger" (*Rylands Papyrus 3* [A.D. 350]).

### **Methodius**

"Hail to you for ever, Virgin Mother of God, our unceasing joy, for to you do I turn again. You are the beginning of our feast; you are its middle and end; the pearl of great price that belongs to the kingdom; the fat of every victim, the living altar of the Bread of Life [Jesus]. Hail, you treasure of the love of God. Hail, you fount of the Son's love for man. . . . You gleamed, sweet gift-bestowing Mother, with the light of the sun; you gleamed with the insupportable fires of a most fervent charity, bringing forth in the end that which was conceived of you . . . making manifest the mystery hidden and unspeakable, the invisible Son of the Father—the Prince of Peace, who in a marvelous manner showed himself as less than all littleness" (*Oration on Simeon and Anna 14* [A.D. 305]).

"Therefore, we pray [ask] you, the most excellent among women, who glories in the confidence of your maternal honors, that you would unceasingly keep us in remembrance. O holy Mother of God, remember us, I say, who make our boast in you, and who in august hymns celebrate the memory, which will ever live, and never fade away" (*ibid.*).

"And you also, O honored and venerable Simeon, you earliest host of our holy religion, and teacher of the resurrection of the faithful, do be our patron and advocate with that Savior God, whom you were deemed worthy to receive into your arms. We, together with you, sing our praises to Christ, who has the power of life and death, saying, 'You are the true Light, proceeding from the true Light; the true God, begotten of the true God'" (*ibid.*).

### **Cyril of Jerusalem**

"Then [during the Eucharistic prayer] we make mention also of those who have already fallen asleep: first, the patriarchs, prophets, apostles, and martyrs, that through their prayers and supplications God would receive our petition . . ." (*Catechetical Lectures 23:9* [A.D. 350]).

### **Hilary of Poitiers**

"To those who wish to stand [in God's grace], neither the guardianship of saints nor the defenses of angels are wanting" (*Commentary on the Psalms 124:5:6* [A.D. 365]).

### **Ephraim the Syrian**

"You victorious martyrs who endured torments gladly for the sake of the God and Savior, you who have boldness of speech toward the Lord himself, you saints, intercede for us who are timid and sinful men, full of sloth, that the grace of Christ may come upon us, and enlighten the hearts of all of us so that we may love him" (*Commentary on Mark* [A.D. 370]).

"Remember me, you heirs of God, you brethren of Christ; supplicate the Savior earnestly for me, that I may be freed through Christ from him that fights against me day by day" (*The Fear at the End of Life* [A.D. 370]).

### **The Liturgy of St. Basil**

"By the command of your only-begotten Son we communicate with the memory of your saints . . . by whose prayers and supplications have mercy upon us all, and deliver us for the sake of your holy name" (*Liturgy of St. Basil* [A.D. 373]).

### **Pectorius**

"Aschandius, my father, dearly beloved of my heart, with my sweet mother and my brethren, remember your Pectorius in the peace of the Fish [Christ]" (*Epitaph of Pectorius* [A.D. 375]).

### **Gregory of Nazianz**

"May you [Cyprian] look down from above propitiously upon us, and guide our word and life; and shepherd this sacred flock . . . gladden the Holy Trinity, before which you stand" (*Orations* 17[24] [A.D. 380]).

"Yes, I am well assured that [my father's] intercession is of more avail now than was his instruction in former days, since he is closer to God, now that he has shaken off his bodily fetters, and freed his mind from the clay that obscured it, and holds conversation naked with the nakedness of the prime and purest mind . . ." (*ibid.*, 18:4).

### **Gregory of Nyssa**

"[Ephraim], you who are standing at the divine altar [in heaven] . . . bear us all in remembrance, petitioning for us the remission of sins, and the fruition of an everlasting kingdom" (*Sermon on Ephraim the Syrian* [A.D. 380]).

### **John Chrysostom**

"He that wears the purple [i.e., a royal man] . . . stands begging of the saints to be his patrons with God, and he that wears a diadem begs the tentmaker [Paul] and the fisherman [Peter] as patrons, even though they be dead" (*Homilies on Second Corinthians* 26 [A.D. 392]).

"When you perceive that God is chastening you, fly not to his enemies . . . but to his friends, the martyrs, the saints, and those who were pleasing to him, and who have great power [in God]" (*Orations* 8:6 [A.D. 396]).

### **Ambrose of Milan**

"May Peter, who wept so efficaciously for himself, weep for us and turn towards us Christ's benign countenance" (*The Six Days Work* 5:25:90 [A.D. 393]).

### **Jerome**

"You say in your book that while we live we are able to pray for each other, but afterwards when we have died, the prayer of no person for another can be heard. . . . But if the apostles and martyrs while still in the body can pray for others, at a time when they ought still be solicitous about themselves, how much more will they do so after their crowns, victories, and triumphs?" (*Against Vigilantius* 6 [A.D. 406]).

### **Augustine**

"A Christian people celebrates together in religious solemnity the memorials of the martyrs, both to encourage their being imitated and so that it can share in their merits and be aided by their

prayers" (*Against Faustus the Manichean* [A.D. 400]).

"There is an ecclesiastical discipline, as the faithful know, when the names of the martyrs are read aloud in that place at the altar of God, where prayer is not offered for them. Prayer, however, is offered for the dead who are remembered. For it is wrong to pray for a martyr, to whose prayers we ought ourselves be commended" (*Sermons* 159:1 [A.D. 411]).

"At the Lord's table we do not commemorate martyrs in the same way that we do others who rest in peace so as to pray for them, but rather that they may pray for us that we may follow in their footsteps" (*Homilies on John* 84 [A.D. 416]).

"Neither are the souls of the pious dead separated from the Church which even now is the kingdom of Christ. Otherwise there would be no remembrance of them at the altar of God in the communication of the Body of Christ" (*The City of God* 20:9:2 [A.D. 419]).

#### **4) Additional Resources**

There are many more quotations from the Fathers. To read more, click [here](#).

Patrick Madrid's book [Any Friend of God is a Friend of Mine](#) deals with the Communion of Saints very well.

Read my article "[Mary, Saints & Worship: Do Catholics Worship Mary?](#)"

Article in the Catholic Encyclopedia [Communion of Saints](#)