The Communion of Saints

RCIA
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One Solitary Life
He was born in an obscure village, the child of a peasant. He grew up in another village, where he worked in a carpenter shop until he was thirty. Then, for three years, he was an itinerant preacher.
He never wrote a book. He never held an office. He never had a family or owned a home. He didn’t go to college. He never lived in a big city. He never traveled two hundred miles from the place where he was born. He did none of the things that usually accompany greatness. He had no credentials but himself.
He was only thirty-three when the tide of public opinion turned against him. His friends ran away. One of them denied him. He was turned over to his enemies and went through the mockery of a trial. He was nailed to a cross between two thieves. While he was dying, his executioners gambled for his garments, the only property he had on earth. When he was dead, he was laid in a borrowed grave, through the pity of a friend.
Twenty centuries have come and gone, and today he is the central figure of the human race. I am well within the mark when I say that all the armies that ever marched, all the navies that ever sailed, all the parliaments that ever sat, all the kings that ever reigned—put together—have not affected the life of man on this earth as much as that one, solitary life.
1 Cor 15: 51* Lo! I tell you a mystery. **We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed,** 52 in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last **trumpet** For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we shall be changed. 53 For this perishable nature must put on the imperishable, and this mortal nature must put on immortality. **54 When the perishable puts on the imperishable,** and the mortal puts on immortality, then shall come to pass the saying that is written:"Death is swallowed up in victory."

55* "**O death, where is thy victory? O death, where is thy sting?**" 56 The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. 57 But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. 58 Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that in the Lord your labor is not in vain.
Heroes & Heroine

A hero (Ancient Greek: ἥρως, hērōs), A hero (male) and heroine (female) came to refer to characters who, in the face of danger and adversity or from a position of weakness, display courage and the will for self sacrifice – that is, heroism – for some greater good, originally of martial courage or excellence but extended to more general moral excellence.

Who are Yours??
Saints: Christian Heroes - Putting On Christ

Kenosis: To empty oneself

Phil. 2:6: "Who being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: But emptied [ekenosen] himself, taking the form of a servant, being made in the likeness of men, and in habit found as man."

Theosis: Movement toward intimacy with God

Christ had the right to be free from all bodily pain, and His human will had the power to remove or suspend the action of the causes of pain. But He freely subjected Himself to most of the pains resulting from bodily exertion and adverse external influences, e.g. fatigue, hunger, wounds, etc. As these pains had their sufficient reason in the nature of Christ's body, they were natural to Him.

Theosis: Movement toward intimacy with God

Gal 3: 27 For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ.

2 Peter 1:2 May grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord. 3 His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of him who called us to * his own glory and excellence, 4 by which he has granted to us his precious and very great promises, that through these you may escape from the corruption that is in the world because of passion, and become partakers of the divine nature.
Together the living and the dead are the one people of God, the one Body of Christ, and the one temple of the Holy Spirit. A traditional term used to describe this unity is the Communion of Saints. We profess belief in the Communion of Saints when we pray the Apostles’ Creed. Death does not fracture the communion of all those united in Christ through the Holy Spirit. This session explores the Church’s understanding of the communion of saints and gives special emphasis to the holy people who stand out because their lives have inspired young people to have faith.
Saint Teresa Benedicta of the Cross (Edith Stein)

Saint Teresa Benedicta of the Cross (Edith Stein) Virgin and Martyr Edith Stein, born in 1891 in Breslau, Poland, was the youngest child of a large Jewish family. She was an outstanding student and was well versed in philosophy with a particular interest in phenomenology. She became a renowned philosopher and speaker. Eventually she became interested in the Catholic Faith, and in 1922, she was baptized at the Cathedral Church in Cologne, Germany. Eleven years later Edith entered the Cologne Carmel. Because of the ramifications of politics in Germany, Edith, whose name in religion was Teresa Benedicta of the Cross, was sent to the Carmel at Echt, Holland. When the Nazis conquered Holland, Teresa was arrested, and, with her sister Rose, was sent to the concentration camp at Auschwitz. As a Carmelite she wrote, among other works, Life in a Jewish Family and The Science of the Cross, a study of St. John of the Cross. She led a deliberate life of holiness and self-offering. The Nazis forced her to wear a Star of David. Teresa died in the gas chambers of Auschwitz in 1942 at the age of fifty-one. In 1987, she was beatified in the Cologne cathedral by Pope John Paul II. Out of the unspeakable human suffering caused by the Nazis in western Europe in the 1930's and 1940's, there blossomed the beautiful life of dedication, consecration, prayer, fasting, and penance of Saint Teresa. She was canonized on October 11, 1998.

"Only the person who renounces self-importance, who no longer struggles to defend or assert himself, can be large enough for God's boundless action."
Saint Bernadette Soubirous
1844-1866

Born in Lourdes in the Pyrenees on January 7, 1844. The daughter of a miller and his wife, Francois Soubirous and Louise Casterot. She was the first of six children. The family grew in size it sank deeper into poverty. There was rarely enough to eat, and the frail Bernadette, suffered from attacks of asthma. In 1858.

On February 11 of that year, Bernadette went with her sister and a friend to gather firewood. At a natural grotto near the river she saw a beautiful lady. Clad in a white robe with a blue sash, a white veil covering her head, the lady appeared to Bernadette to be about sixteen or seventeen years old.

In spite of the teasing of her family and the fears of her mother, Bernadette returned to the grotto and saw the lady many times. It was during the ninth apparition that Bernadette dug a hole in the ground with her hands, then drank and washed her face with the muddy water that filled it. These were the clear waters of the miraculous spring of Lourdes flowing from that hole. Later a dying child immersed in the waters was completely cured, and a quarryman who had been blinded by a fragment of stone regained his sight. In 1862, after an exhaustive ecclesiastical investigation, the bishop of Tarbes declared that the faithful were justified in believing that Mary, the immaculate Mother of God, did in reality appear to Bernadette Soubirous.

In July 1866, at the age of twenty-two, she was permitted to enter the novitiate of the Sisters of Notre Dame at Nevers. There she spent the rest of her life, sometimes working as sacristan or infirmarian, but mostly confined to her bed. In addition to continual attacks of asthma and hemorrhages, she endured intense pain from an abscess which formed on her right knee.

At the end her sufferings were so severe that she could not remain in bed and was placed in an armchair where, on the afternoon of Easter, 1879, she whispered her last words, "Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for me, a poor sinner, a poor sinner."
St. Maximilian Mary Kolbe (1894-1941)

“I don’t know what’s going to become of you!” How many parents have said that? Maximilian Mary Kolbe’s reaction was, “I prayed very hard to Our Lady to tell me what would happen to me. She appeared, holding in her hands two crowns, one white, one red. She asked if I would like to have them—one was for purity, the other for martyrdom. I said, ‘I choose both.’ She smiled and disappeared.” After that he was not the same. Ordained at 24, he saw religious indifference as the deadliest poison of the day. His mission was to combat it. He had already founded the Militia of the Immaculata, whose aim was to fight evil with the witness of the good life, prayer, work and suffering. In 1939 the Nazi panzers overran Poland with deadly speed. Niepokalanow was severely bombed. Kolbe and his friars were arrested, then released. In 1941 he was arrested again. The Nazis’ purpose was to liquidate the select ones, the leaders. The end came quickly, in Auschwitz three months later, after terrible beatings and humiliations.

A prisoner had escaped. The commandant announced that 10 men would die. As a result several prisoners were chosen at random to be marched away to the starvation bunkers. St Maximilian took the place of man chosen to die who had a wife and children. The commandant, dumbfounded, perhaps with a fleeting thought of history, kicked Sergeant Francis Gajowniczek out of line and ordered Father Kolbe to go with the nine. In the “block of death” they were ordered to strip naked, and their slow starvation began in darkness. By the eve of the Assumption four were left alive. The jailer came to finish Kolbe off as he sat in a corner praying. He lifted his fleshless arm to receive the bite of the hypodermic needle. It was filled with carbolic acid. He was beatified in 1971 and canonized in 1982.
"I prefer the monotony of obscure sacrifice to all ecstasies. To pick up a pin for love can convert a soul." These are the words of Theresa of the Child Jesus, a Carmelite nun called the "Little Flower," who lived a cloistered life of obscurity in the convent of Lisieux, France. Her preference for hidden sacrifice did indeed convert souls. Few saints of God are more popular than this young nun. Her autobiography, *The Story of a Soul*, is read and loved throughout the world. Thérèse Martin entered the convent at the age of 15 and died in 1897 at the age of 24. Life in a Carmelite convent is indeed uneventful and consists mainly of prayer and hard domestic work. But Thérèse possessed that holy insight that redeems the time, however dull that time may be. She saw in quiet suffering redemptive suffering, suffering that was indeed her apostolate. Thérèse said she came to the Carmel convent "to save souls and pray for priests." And shortly before she died, she wrote: "I want to spend my heaven doing good on earth." Thérèse, like so many saints, sought to serve others, to do something outside herself, to forget herself in quiet acts of love. She is one of the great examples of the gospel paradox that we gain our life by losing it, and that the seed that falls to the ground must die in order to live (see John 12).

[On October 19, 1997, Pope John Paul II proclaimed her a Doctor of the Church, the third woman to be so recognized in light of her holiness and the influence of her teaching on spirituality in the Church.]
St. Faustina (1905 – 1938)

Saint Faustina was born Helena Kowalska in a small village in Poland on August 25, 1905. She was the third of ten children. When she was almost twenty, she entered the Congregation of the Sisters of Our Lady of Mercy, whose members devote themselves to the care and education of troubled young women. She received her religious habit and was given the name Sister Maria Faustina, to which she added, "of the Most Blessed Sacrament". In the 1930's, Sister Faustina received from the Lord a message of mercy that she was told to spread throughout the world. She was asked to become the apostle and secretary of God's mercy, a model of how to be merciful to others, and an instrument for reemphasizing God's plan of mercy for the world. It was not a glamorous prospect. Her entire life, in imitation of Christ's, was to be a sacrifice - a life lived for others. In her daily life she was to become a doer of mercy, bringing joy and peace to others, and by writing about God's mercy, she was to encourage others to trust in Him and thus prepare the world for His coming again. Her special devotion to Mary Immaculate and to the sacraments of Eucharist and Reconciliation gave her the strength to bear all her sufferings as an offering to God on behalf of the Church and those in special need, especially great sinners and the dying.

After her death from tuberculosis in 1938, even her closest associates were amazed as they began to discover what great sufferings and deep mystical experiences had been given to this Sister of theirs, who had always been so cheerful and humble. She had taken deeply into her heart, God's gospel command to "be merciful even as your heavenly Father is merciful”.

The message of mercy that Sister Faustina received is now being spread throughout the world; her diary, Divine Mercy in my Soul, has become the handbook for devotion to the Divine Mercy.
John Bosco’s theory of education was a preventive system, rejecting corporal punishment and placing students in surroundings removed from the likelihood of committing sin. He advocated frequent reception of the sacraments of Penance and Holy Communion. John Bosco educated the whole person—body and soul united. He believed that Christ’s love and our faith in that love should pervade everything we do—work, study, play. For John Bosco, being a Christian was a full-time effort, not a once-a-week, Mass-on-Sunday experience. It is searching and finding God and Jesus in everything we do, letting their love lead us. Yet, John realized the importance of job-training and the self-worth and pride that comes with talent and ability so he trained his students in the trade crafts, too. Encouraged during his youth to become a priest so he could work with young boys, John was ordained in 1841. After serving as chaplain in a hospice for working girls, John opened the Oratory of St. Francis de Sales for boys. Several wealthy and powerful patrons contributed money, enabling him to provide two workshops for the boys, shoemaking and tailoring. By 1856, the institution had grown to 150 boys and had added a printing press for publication of religious and catechetical pamphlets. John’s preaching fame spread and by 1850 he had trained his own helpers because of difficulties in retaining young priests. In 1854 he and his followers informally banded together under Francis de Sales. With Pope Pius IX’s encouragement, John gathered 17 men and founded the Salesians in 1859. Their activity concentrated on education and mission work. Later, he organized a group of Salesian Sisters to assist girls. He died in 1888, at the age of seventy-two. His work lives on in the Salesian order he founded.
Gianna was born in Magenta in Italy. She was the tenth of thirteen children in her family. In 1942, Gianna began her study of medicine in Milan. She received a medical diploma in 1949, and opened an office where she specialized in pediatrics. Gianna hoped to join her brother, a missionary priest in Brazil, where she intended to offer her medical expertise in gynecology to poor women. However, her chronic ill health made this impractical. Throughout her life Gianna was very active in helping others and inspiring the faith. Early in life she joined Catholic Action, a lay spiritual movement that helps its members follow Christ by emphasizing prayer, service, and sacrifice. Gianna married Pietro Molla in September 1955. The couple had three children. In 1961, Gianna was once again expecting. During the second month, Gianna developed a fibroma on her uterus. After examination, the doctors gave her three choices: an abortion, which would save her life and allow her to continue to have children; a complete hysterectomy, which would preserve her life, but take the unborn child’s life, and prevent further pregnancy; or removal of only the fibroma, with the potential of further complications. Wanting to preserve her child’s life, she opted for the removal of the fibroma. Gianna was quite clear about her wishes, expressing to her family, "This time it will be a difficult delivery, and they may have to save one or the other -- I want them to save my baby." On April 21, 1962, Gianna went to the hospital, where her fourth child, Gianna Emanuela, was successfully delivered. However, Gianna continued to have severe pain, and died of septic peritonitis 7 days after the birth. Gianna was beatified by Pope John Paul II on April 24, 1994, and officially canonized as a saint on May 16, 2004. Gianna's husband Pietro and their last child, Gianna, were present at the canonization ceremony.

"God's Providence is in all things, it's always present." St Gianna
Gemma Galgani was born on March 12, 1878, in a small Italian town. At a very young age, Gemma developed a love for prayer. She made her First Communion on June 17, 1887. Although quiet and reserved, she always had a smile for everyone. A good student, she had to quit school due to chronic ill health. Throughout her life, Gemma was to be favored with many mystical experiences and special graces. These were often misunderstood by others, causing ridicule. Gemma had an immense love for the poor, and helped them in any way she could. After her father's death, the nineteen year old Gemma became the mother of her seven brothers and sisters. When some were old enough to share this responsibility, she lived briefly with a married aunt. At this time, two young men proposed marriage to her. Gemma however, wanted silence and retirement, and more that ever, she desired to pray and speak only to God. Gemma returned home and almost immediately became very ill with meningitis. Gemma wished to become a nun, but her poor health prevented her from being accepted. She offered this disappointment to God as a sacrifice. On June 8, 1899, Gemma had an interior warning that some unusual grace was to be granted to her. She had pain in her hands, feet and heart and blood was coming from the places where she had pain. These were the marks of the stigmata. Through her prayers, this phenomenon ceased, but the whitish marks remained on her skin until her death. She had many ecstacies and her words spoken during these raptures, were recorded by her confessor and a relative of her adoptive family. In January of 1903, Gemma was diagnosed as having tuberculosis. She died quietly in the company of the parish priest, on April 11 at age twenty-five. He said, "She died with a smile which remained upon her lips, so that I could not convince myself that she was really dead."

"Can You see that as soon as the day breaks I think of You? As evening comes, I am near You. I am near You at every moment. I love You, Jesus!"
Born on 20 May 1907 in Austria, to his unmarried mother, Rosalia Huber, and to Franz Bachmeier, who was killed during World War I. Franz was unruly in his younger years; he was, in fact, the first in his village to own a motorcycle. After his marriage to Franziska in 1936, Franz grew in his faith but was not extreme in his piety. In the mid to late 1930s, while much of Austria was beginning to follow the tide of Nazism, Franz became ever more rooted in his Catholic faith and placed his complete trust in God. He began thinking deeply about obedience to legitimate authority and obedience to God, about mortal life and eternal life and about Jesus' suffering and Passion. In 1938 he was the only local citizen to vote against the annexation of Austria by Germany, because his conscience prevailed over the path of least resistance. He was called up for military service and sworn in on 17 June 1940. He became convinced that participation in the war was a serious sin and decided that any future call-up had to be met with his refusal to fight. Jägerstätter was at peace with himself despite the alarm he experienced witnessing the masses' capitulation to Hitler. Mesmerized by the National Socialist propaganda machine, many people knelt when Hitler made his entrance into Vienna. Catholic Churches were forced to fly the swastika flag and subjected to other abusive laws. In February 1943 Franz was called up again for military service. He presented himself at the induction centre on 1 March 1943 and announced his refusal to fight, offering to carry out non-violent services: this was denied him. He was held in custody tried on 6 July 1943 and he was condemned to death for sedition. On 9 August, before being executed, Franz wrote: “Neither prison nor chains nor sentence of death can rob a man of the Faith and his free will. God gives so much strength that it is possible to bear any suffering.... People worry about the obligations of conscience as they concern my wife and children. But I cannot believe that, just because one has a wife and children, a man is free to offend God”. He who would not bow his head to Hitler, bowed his head to God, and the guillotine took care of the rest.
One of six children born to Jose and Dolores Escriva. As a young man, Josemaria saw the bare footprints left in the snow by a monk; the sight moved him, and kindled a desire for religious vocation. He studied for the priesthood in Zaragoza. His father died in 1924, and Josemaria had to simultaneously support the family while studying. He was ordained in 1925. Assigned for a while to a rural parish. Following a profound spiritual retreat, he founded Opus Dei in Madrid on 2 October 1928, which opened a new way for the faithful to sanctify themselves in the midst of the world through their work and fulfillment of their personal, family and social duties. The next few years were spent, teaching to support his mother and siblings, ministering to the poor and sick, and working to build the foundation of Opus Dei. Religious persecution in the Spanish Civil War forced him into hiding, and he ministered covertly to his parishioners. He escaped across the Pyrenees to Burgos. Opus Dei received the approval of the Holy See on 16 June 1950. Josemaria travelled frequently throughout Europe and Latin America to work for the growth of Opus Dei. By the time of his death, Opus Dei had spread to five continents with over 60,000 members of 80 nationalities, and today has over 80,000 members, most laymen.

A man or a society that does not react to suffering and injustice and makes no effort to alleviate them is still distant from the love of Christ's heart.

Your ordinary contact with God takes place where your fellow men, your yearnings, your work and your affections are. There you have your daily encounter with Christ.
St. Pio of Pietrelcina (Padre Pio) b.1887 d.1968

Francesco, named in honor of St. Francis of Assisi, was born to Giuseppa and Grazio Forgione, peasant farmers, in the small Italian village of Pietrelcina on May 25, 1887. From his childhood, it was evident that he was a special child of God. **Francesco was very devout even as a child, and at an early age felt drawn to the priesthood.** He became a Capuchin novice at the age of sixteen and received the habit in 1902. Francesco was ordained to the priesthood in 1910 after seven years of study and became known as Padre Pio. **On September 20, 1918, Padre Pio was kneeling in front of a large crucifix when he received the visible marks of the crucifixion, making him the first stigmatized priest in the history of Church.** Upon his death in 1968, the wounds were no longer visible. In fact, there was no scaring and the skin was completely renewed. He had predicted 50 years prior that upon his death the wounds would heal. The wounds of the stigmata were not the only mystical phenomenon experienced by Padre Pio. **Padre Pio had the ability to read the hearts of the penitents who flocked to him for confession which he heard for ten or twelve hours per day.** Padre Pio used the confessional to bring both sinners and devout souls closer to God; **he would know just the right word of counsel or encouragement that was needed.** Even before his death, people spoke to Padre Pio about his possible canonization. He died on September 23, 1968 at the age of eighty-one. **His funeral was attended by about 100,000 people.** On June 16, 2002, over 500,000 Padre Pio devotees gathered in Rome to witness Pope John Paul II proclaim Padre Pio, Saint Pio of Pietrelcina.

"Pray, hope, and don't worry. Worry is useless. God is merciful and will hear your prayer."
Mother Teresa was born Agnes Gonxha Bojaxhiu in Skopje, Macedonia, on August 26, 1910. At the age of twelve, she felt strongly the call of God. **She knew she had to be a missionary to spread the love of Christ.** At the age of eighteen she left her parental home in Skopje and joined the Sisters of Loreto, an Irish community of nuns with missions in India. From 1931 to 1948 Mother Teresa taught at St. Mary's High School in Calcutta, but the suffering and poverty she glimpsed outside the convent walls made such a deep impression on her that in 1948 she received permission from her superiors to leave the convent school and devote herself to working among the poorest of the poor in the slums of Calcutta. Although she had no funds, she depended on Divine Providence, and started an open-air school for slum children. On October 7, 1950, Mother Teresa received permission from the Holy See to start her own order, "The Missionaries of Charity", whose primary task was to love and care for those persons nobody was prepared to look after. Today the order comprises Active and Contemplative branches of Sisters and Brothers in many countries. In 1963 both the Contemplative branch of the Sisters and the Active branch of the Brothers was founded. In 1979 the Contemplative branch of the Brothers was added, and in 1984 the Priest branch was established. The Society of Missionaries has spread all over the world, including the former Soviet Union and Eastern European countries. **They provide effective help to the poorest of the poor in a number of countries in Asia, Africa, and Latin America, and they undertake relief work in the wake of natural catastrophes such as floods, epidemics, and famine, and for refugees. The order also has houses in North America, Europe and Australia, where they take care of the shut-ins, alcoholics, homeless, and AIDS sufferers.** Mother Teresa's work has been recognized and acclaimed throughout the world.

"Many people mistake our work for our vocation. Our vocation is the love of Jesus."
• How does the Church understanding of the Communion of Saints communicate hope?

• Who are Saints?

• Name three attributes of a Saint .. in priority.

• A friend says that Catholics are not Christian because they talk to the dead and they pray to saints instead of Jesus. How do you respond? ... in love.

• Describe a time when someone has been Christ for you?

• Who is your favorite saint?
Key Terms
The Communion of Saints

Saint: Someone who has been transformed by the grace of Christ and who resides in full union with God in heaven.

Communion of Saints: The spiritual union of all those who believe in Christ and have been redeemed (on earth and in heaven)

Grace: The free and undeserved gift of God’s loving and active presence in the universe and in our lives.

Kenosis: To empty oneself
Theosis: Movement toward intimacy with God

Ephesians 2:8-9
Philippians 2:6-9
Revelation 7: 9 After this I looked, and behold, a great multitude which no man could number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, with palm branches in their hands, 10 and crying out with a loud voice, "Salvation belongs to our God who sits upon the throne, and to the Lamb!" 11 And all the angels stood round the throne and round the elders and the four living creatures, and they fell on their faces before the throne and worshiped God, 12 saying, "Amen! Blessing and glory and wisdom and thanksgiving and honor and power and might be to our God for ever and ever! Amen."
13 Then one of the elders addressed me, saying, "Who are these, clothed in white robes, and whence have they come?" 14* I said to him, "Sir, you know." And he said to me, "These are they who have come out of the great tribulation; they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.

Mirror Thought This Week
Vision of Heaven

How can I put on Christ for someone in need today?
One Solitary Life

... YOURS!

... YOURS!