

# *Living Eternally Through Death and Dying IV:*

## The Communion of Saints

BIBLICAL, DOCTRINAL, EXPERIENCIAL, TRUE

A bulletin insert series informing and inspiring the faithful in the truths surrounding death and dying

*The following is the fourth in a series of inserts related to death and dying. The final insert will address: Living trusts, bequeaths, and Memorial Masses celebrated for our loved ones who have gone before us.*

The deep longing for all humanity to be in perfect love and unity with each other and with God is fulfilled by God, through Christ Jesus. This is the Communion of Saints.

I. The bond we all share, the living and the dead, is because of Christ who is God and who took on our human flesh so that all humanity might be brought into perfect love and unity in him. Because of Jesus, one body is formed of all whose flesh He took on Himself.

II. The Communion of Saints creates a spiritual unity in Christ in which “If one member suffers, all suffer together. If one member is honored, all rejoice . . . In this solidarity with all men, living or dead, which is founded on the Communion of Saints, the least of our acts done in charity redounds to the profit of all.” (Catechism of the Catholic Church, par. 953).

“None of us lives for oneself and no one dies for oneself” (Romans 14:7)

III. All Christians, by virtue of their baptism are incorporated into the mystical Body of Christ crucified and glorified (Col. 2:12). “Now, you are Christ’s Body and individually parts of it” (1 Cor. 12:26-27). They are members of the Communion of Saints, a union which exists between the members of the Church on earth with one another, with the suffering souls in purgatory, and with the blessed souls in heaven. Our beloved faithful departed continue their journey into the life of Christ along with those still alive because of Jesus uniting us.

Physical death does not separate us from the Body of Christ. “Neither death nor life ... can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.” (Rom 8:38-39).

IV. The three states of the Church: Earth, Purgatory, Heaven. “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” (Catechism of the Catholic Church, par. 954). These “three states” traditionally are known as: The Church Militant, The Church Suffering, and The Church Triumphant.

State One - Traditionally The Church Militant: the faithful on Earth, the Church fighting the good fight, running the good race. The Church Militant labors to save their own souls and the souls of those around them. Their goal is to help establish the Kingdom of God on Earth.

State Two - Traditionally The Church Suffering: the souls in Purgatory, those who died in communion with God, but with some unremitted sins. These souls in Purgatory are assured of Heaven, but presently are in the process of being purified and perfected. "It is a holy and wholesome thought to pray for the dead that they may be loosed from their sins" (2 Macc 12:45).

State Three - Traditionally The Church Triumphant: the saints glorified in Heaven. These holy saints have triumphed over evil, have been purged of sin, and now are worthy to stand in the presence of God.

- A. The Solemnity of All Saints (Nov. 1) celebrates all the saints, those named by the Church and the countless assembly of the saints whose names are known by God. The faithful worshipers who gather on the earth do so caught up in the profound “Communion” between heaven and Holy Mass held together in Christ.
- B. Intercession: Since the Church has received and holds that the Communion of Saints as a Truth which God sustains, the power of intercessory prayer follows directly. The martyrs and the rest of the saints and, indeed, all who have died in Christ are not separated from those who remain on the earth. Since the saints are in eternal communion with God, their role in salvation is to pray for us.

There is only one mediator between God and man, Jesus. This is certainly true. To ask for a saint's intercession is simply asking for prayers from the Triumphant, just as we might ask a friend to pray for us. Our prayer to the saints for help on our spiritual journey reflects a two-fold understanding: first, our Communion with them, and second, their capacity to encourage us from the throne of Christ.