

## Ten After Ten Session 47: 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?” 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.

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.

949 In the primitive community of Jerusalem, the disciples “devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of the bread and the prayers.”

Communion in the faith. The faith of the faithful is the faith of the Church, received from the apostles. Faith is a treasure of life which is enriched by being shared.

950 Communion of the sacraments. The fruit of all the sacraments belongs to all the faithful. All the sacraments are sacred links uniting the faithful with one another and binding them to Jesus Christ. The communion of saints must be understood as the communion of the sacraments....this name is better suited to the Eucharist than to any other, because it is primarily the Eucharist that brings this communion about.

951 Communion of charisms. Within the communion of the Church, the Holy Spirit “distributes special graces among the faithful of every rank” for the building up of the Church.

952 “They had everything in common.” Everything the true Christian has is to be regarded as a good possessed in common with everyone else. All Christians should be ready and eager to come to the help of the needy... and of their neighbors in want. A Christian is a steward of the Lord’s goods.

953 Communion in charity. Charity does not insist on its own way. 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. Every sin harms this communion.

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.

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 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.

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

959 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.