

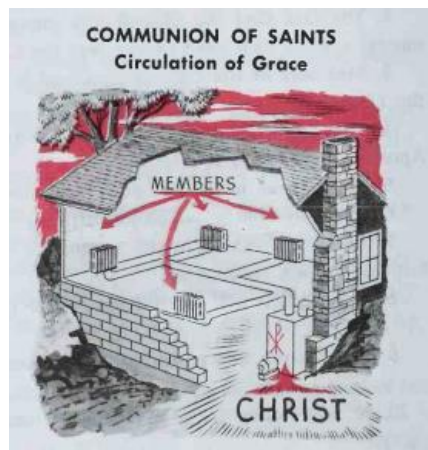
Lesson 13 – The Communion of Saints and Forgiveness of Sins

“I believe in ... the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins...”

What is meant by “the communion of saints” in the Apostles’ creed? The union of the faithful on earth, the blessed in heaven, and the souls in purgatory, with Christ as their Head.

It is an active union – a sharing of spiritual goods among members of the Mystical Body.

It is something like the circulation of blood in the body or the circulation of steam in the heating system of a house. Grace and the virtues belong to each one of us personally, just as the steam belongs to each individual radiator. But, in a certain manner, we can share them with others and influence others by them without losing them ourselves. The heat of each radiator helps all the other radiators.



In the communion of saints each one of us either helps or hinders the circulation of spiritual life among the members of the Mystical Body by the strength or weakness of our love of God.

The word “saints” in the expression “communion of saints” means “holy ones”. We are all made holy by our baptism, although only the saints in heaven have reached perfect holiness.

Through the communion of saints, what can the blessed in heaven do for the souls in purgatory and the faithful on earth? They can pray for them.

Should the faithful on earth, through the communion of saints, honor the blessed in heaven and pray to them? Yes, we should honor the blessed in heaven and pray to them, because they are worthy of honor and as friends of God will help the faithful on earth.

Can the faithful on earth, through the communion of saints, relieve the sufferings of the souls in purgatory? Yes, by prayer, fasting and other good works, by indulgences and by having Masses offered for them.

Can the faithful on earth help on another? Yes by practicing supernatural charity, and, especially, by performing the corporal and spiritual works of mercy.



Supernatural charity means, in the first place, LOVING GOD. The more our hearts are on fire with God’s love, the more easily we can kindle that same fire in the hearts of others, even those we may never see. A beautiful symbol of this in liturgy is the lighting of one another’s candles in the Easter Vigil Service. The most important way we can help others is by CHARITY which means LOVING GOD OURSELVES.

Love of God moves us to show love to others by the spiritual and corporal works of mercy, chief of which is to pray for others. But to our prayers should be added something else, namely suffering for others. The Blessed Virgin Mary at Fatima asked the children to pray and make sacrifices for sinners. The salvation of many souls depends on the prayers and penances of the members of the Mystical Body.

Briefly, the three chief ways by which we can help others are CHARITY, or love of God, PRAYER, and PENANCE.



What is meant in the Apostles' Creed by "the forgiveness of sins"? God has given to the Church, through Jesus Christ, the power to forgive sins, no matter how great or how many there are, if sinners truly repent.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Who are "saints" in the communion of saints?
2. If grace and the virtues are in our own soul, how can we share them with others?
3. How can we be hindrances to the communion of saints?
4. Can we pray for the saints in heaven? Why not?
5. If a baptized baby dies, should the mother pray for the baby, or the baby for the mother? Why?
6. Can the souls in purgatory help one another?
7. John says his father practices charity by giving to the poor so he will get an income tax deduction. Is that charity? Why not?
8. Can we love God if we do not love our neighbor?
9. Why are our sufferings so valuable?
10. What are the chief ways we can help others on earth in the communion of saints?

TRUE OR FALSE

1. Whether we are good or bad does not matter to others.
2. Only those in heaven share in the communion of saints.
3. Everything we do, whether good or bad, influences others.
4. We in turn are influenced in a good or bad way by others.
5. The souls of purgatory want our prayers and sacrifices.
6. God does not care whether or not we honor saints.
7. The best way to help others is to pray for them.
8. The biggest favor we can do for others is to love God more.
9. The chief work of mercy is to pray for others.
10. Penances that we perform help us, but not others.

FILL IN THE BLANKS

1. The communion of saints is a circulation of _____ among the members of the Mystical Body.
2. The source of the spiritual life which flows through the members of the Mystical Body is _____.
3. The saints in heaven help us by _____.

4. The saints in heaven and those on earth can help _____.
5. The members of the Mystical Body who do not need help of any kind are _____.
6. Supernatural charity means _____.
7. Charity moves us to love _____ also.
8. Our Lady of Fatima asked the three children to _____ and _____ for sinners.
9. The salvation of many souls depends on our _____ and _____.
10. To be effective, prayer must always be joined to _____.

READ FROM THE BIBLE:

The Communion of Saints — Acts 4, 32-37; 1 Cor. 12, 12-27; Col. 1; 1 John 3, 16-18.
The Forgiveness of Sins — Is. 55; John 20, 19-23.

CLOSING PRAYER –

PRAYER:

To ask the intercession of the saints —

May Holy Mary and all the saints intercede for us with the Lord, that we may deserve to be helped and saved by Him who lives and reigns forever and ever. Amen. *(Roman Breviary: Office of Prime)*

For the souls in purgatory —

Eternal rest grant unto them, O Lord, and let perpetual light shine upon them. May they rest in peace. Amen.

For others on earth —

O Jesus, through the Immaculate Heart of Mary, I offer Thee all my prayers, works, and sufferings of this day, in union with the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass throughout the world, for the wants of Holy Church, and for the conversion of sinners.