

Communion of Saints

In the Apostles' Creed we pray: "I believe in the communion of saints." There is a lot to think about in this short statement. The word *communion* means a "sharing" and also "communication." Both meanings are part of the Communion of Saints. We share our faith with the saints; we share the sacraments with them. We also share our gifts, prayers, and charity with them.

Can we also communicate with the saints? Before we explore that question, we need to discover who the saints are! Of course you have heard of famous saints like Saint Paul, Saint Joseph, or Saint Ann. People who have lived good lives and have died now live as saints in heaven. But the word "saints" in the Creed does not just mean the saints in heaven. As the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* tells us in paragraph 946: "The communion of saints is the Church." That includes people who have died, but have gone to purgatory—and that includes the people who are still alive. It includes us! We are trying to become saints, and we are already part of the communion of saints.

When we share our faith and communicate with each other, we are part of the Communion of Saints. But how do

we communicate with the saints who have already died? We can ask the saints to pray to God for us. They can hear our prayers and see our needs.

The queen of all saints is Mary, the Mother of God. The Church has many, many prayers and devotions to Mary. What prayers to Mary do you know?

Is it a good thing to pray to Mary and the saints? Some people worry that we are confusing Mary and the saints with God. They say people should only pray to God.

The doctrine of the Communion of Saints teaches us that it is good to share and communicate with all the saints, especially the ones in heaven. We know we pray to Mary and the saints differently than we pray to God. We adore God above all others. We praise and thank God for everything we are and have.

We do not adore Mary and the saints. We do not believe they have the powers that God has. We honor Mary and the saints because of their holy lives. We ask them to pray to God for us and with us. We never pray to them *instead* of God! Our communion with them lets us join them in adoring and praising God.

Did You Know?

The Church has some terms that identify the three different groups of souls who are part of the communion of saints. We call those who are already in heaven the *Church triumphant*. Those who are waiting in purgatory are called the *Church suffering*, and we who are still alive on earth are called the *Church militant*.