

THE COMMUNION OF SAINTS

- In the Apostles' Creed, we profess our belief in "the communion of saints." This follows our profession of belief in "the holy catholic Church," for the Church is the Body of Christ (see 1 Cor. 12:27). So whether still on their earthly pilgrimage, or having passed through the gate of death and are now in Purgatory or in Heaven, they are united as members of the Body of Christ
- **The Church Militant** is the faithful on earth who continue to run "the race that is set before us" (Heb 12:1). We are in the midst of a battle: "For though we live in the world we are not carrying on a worldly war" (2 Cor. 10:3). This battle for the souls of the faithful is raging constantly. The Powers of Darkness are behind it.
- **The Church Suffering** is those who have died and are being purified in Purgatory (see *handout on Purgatory*).
- **And the Church Triumphant** is the saints who share the glory of God in Heaven. The Church on earth shares a real though invisible communion with the saints in Heaven, and expressions of faith in this communion have marked the prayers of the Church since its beginning.
- The prayers of the Mass emphasises this bond between the different parts of Christ's body, those on earth, those in Purgatory and those in Heaven.
- Our possessions are intended not to build up our own material wealth but to help build up the entire Body of Christ by helping others who are in need, especially the poor. The talents and capabilities we are given are also intended for the good of the Church: There is no wall between the spiritual and the material life of the Body of Christ, between our own private good and the good of all. It is for this reason that the sin of one person wounds all of us.
- It is our duty to pray for others, and to ask others to pray for us. St Paul encouraged prayer on others' behalf. We work and pray together to build up and strengthen the Body of Christ. Jesus commanded us to pray also for those who persecute us. (Mt. 5:44. Our love of neighbour must know no bounds.
- The pilgrim Church on earth looks to the saints in Heaven as models of holiness and prays to them in our needs. They, in turn, seek only our good.
- In addition, we honour those who have died and are in Purgatory, praying and making offerings for them that they might be purified; "it [is] a holy and pious thought" to offer prayers on their behalf and make "atonement for the dead, that they might be delivered from their sin" (2 Mac. 12:45). We can especially do this by offering those indulgences we gain, not for our own benefit but for theirs.