

## **21 Centuries of Catholic Doctrine: THE COMMUNION OF THE SAINTS**

*As taught in the Church's historical writings, from the time of the Apostles down to today*

**ca. 96 A.D.—Pope Saint Clement, fourth Bishop of Rome, disciple of the Apostles Peter and Paul, *Letter to the Corinthians***

46:1-5 Brothers, we must follow such examples. For it is written: "Follow the saints, because those who follow them will become saints" (unknown source). Again, it says in another place: "In the company of the innocent, you will be innocent; in the company of the elect, you will be elect; and in a crooked man's company you will go wrong" (Ps. 18:26-27). Let us, then, follow the innocent and the upright. They, it is, who are God's elect. ...

56:1-4 So we too must intercede for any who have fallen into sin, that considerateness and humility may be granted to them and that they may submit, not to us, but to God's will. For in that way they will prove fruitful and perfect when God and the saints remember them with mercy. We must accept correction, dear friends. No one should resent it. Warnings we give each other are good and thoroughly beneficial. For they bind us to God's will. This is what the Holy Word says about it: "The Lord has disciplined me severely and has not given me up to death. For the Lord disciplines the one he loves, and punishes every son he accepts" (Ps. 118:18; Prov. 3:12; Heb. 12:6).

—*ca. 100, Death of Saint John, the last of the Apostles*

**ca. 150—Hermas, brother of Pope Saint Pius, *The Shepherd***

3:5:4 [The Shepherd said:] "But those who are weak and slothful in prayer, hesitate to ask anything from the Lord; but the Lord is full of compassion, and gives without fail to all who ask Him. But you, having been strengthened by the holy Angel, and having obtained from Him such intercession, and not being slothful, why do not you ask the Lord for understanding, and receive it from Him?"

**ca. 156—*The Martyrdom of Saint Polycarp***

14:1, 2-3 [Polycarp] looked up to heaven and said: "O Lord God Almighty, ... I bless you because you have considered me worthy of this day and hour, that I might receive a place among the number of the martyrs in the cup of your Christ, to the resurrection to eternal life, both of soul and of body, in the incorruptibility of the Holy Spirit. May I be received among them in your presence today, as a rich and acceptable sacrifice, as you have prepared and revealed beforehand, and have now accomplished, you who are the undecieving and true God. For this reason, indeed for all things, I praise you, I bless you, I glorify you, through the eternal and heavenly High Priest, Jesus Christ, your beloved Son, through whom to you with him and the Holy Spirit be glory both now and for the ages to come. Amen." ...

17:2-3 [W]e will never be able either to abandon the Christ who suffered for the salvation of the whole world of those who are saved, the blameless on behalf of sinners, or to worship anyone else. For this one, who is the Son of God, we worship, but the martyrs we love as disciples and imitators of the Lord, as they deserve, on account of their matchless devotion to their own King and Teacher. May we also become their partners and fellow disciples!

—*Veneration of relics*—

18:1-3 The centurion, therefore, seeing the opposition raised by the Jews, set in the middle and cremated [the body], as is their custom. And so later on we took up his bones, which are more valuable than precious stones and finer than refined gold, and deposited them in a suitable place. There gathering together, as we are able, with joy and gladness, the Lord will permit us to celebrate the birthday of his martyrdom in commemoration of those who have already fought in the contest, and for the

training and preparation of those who will do so in the future.

19:1-2 Such is the story of the blessed Polycarp. Although he was martyred in Smyrna along with eleven others from Philadelphia, he alone is especially remembered by everyone, so that he is spoken of everywhere, even by pagans. He proved to be not only a distinguished teacher, but also an outstanding martyr, whose martyrdom all desire to imitate, since it was in accord with the pattern of the gospel of Christ. By his endurance he defeated the unrighteous magistrate and so received the crown of immortality; now he rejoices with the apostles and all the righteous, and glorifies the almighty God and Father, and blesses our Lord Jesus Christ, the Savior of our souls and Helmsman of our bodies and Shepherd of the catholic church throughout the world.

**203—Saint Vibia Perpetua and others, *The Martyrdom of Saints Perpetua and Felicitas***

4:1 [T]he blessed Saturus also has made known this vision of his own, which he has written out with his own hand. "Methought we had suffered [martyrdom], and put off the flesh, and began to be borne toward the east by four angels whose hands touched us not. ... And when we were clear of the world below we saw a great light, and I said to Perpetua, for she was by my side: 'This is what the Lord promised us, we have received His promise.' And while we were carried by those four angels, we came upon a great open space, which was like as it might be a garden, having rose-trees and all kinds of flowers. ... Now there in the garden were certain four angels, more glorious than the others, who when they saw us, gave us honour, and said to the other angels: 'Lo! they are come, lo! they are come,' being full of wonder. And those four angels which bare us trembled and set us down, and we crossed on foot a place strewn with violets, where we found Jucundus and Saturninus and Artaxius, who were burned alive in the same persecution, and Quintus who, being also a martyr, had died in prison, and we asked of them where they [i.e., the rest of the martyrs] were. The other angels said unto us: 'Come first and enter and greet the Lord.'

4:2 "And we came near to a place whose walls were built like as it might be of light, and before the gate of that place were four angels standing, who as we entered clothed us in white robes. And we entered, and heard a sound as of one voice saying: 'Holy, holy, holy,'

without ceasing (cf. Rev. 4:8). And we saw sitting in the same place one like unto a man white-haired, having hair as white as snow, and with the face of a youth; whose feet we saw not (cf. Rev. 1:14). And on the right and on the left four elders; and behind him were many other elders standing (cf. Rev. 4:4 et al.). And, entering, we stood in wonder before the throne; and the four angels lifted us up, and we kissed Him, and He stroked our faces with His hand. And the other elders said to us: 'Let us stand.' And we stood and gave the Kiss of Peace. And the elders said to us: 'Go and play.' And I said to Perpetua: 'You have your wish.' And she said to me: 'Thanks be to God, that as I was merry in the flesh, so am I now still merrier here.'"

**ca. 205—Saint Clement of Alexandria, *Stromateis or Miscellanies***

7:12 So is [the true Christian] always pure for prayer. He also prays in the society of angels, as being already of angelic rank, and he is never out of their holy keeping; and though he pray alone, he has the choir of the saints standing with him.

**235—Origen, disciple of Clement of Alexandria, *On Prayer***

11:1 It is not only the High Priest who prays with those who truly pray, but also the angels who *have joy in heaven upon one sinner that doth penance, more than upon ninety-nine who need not penance* (Luke 15:7), and also the souls of the saints who have passed away. This is clear from the case of Raphael offering a rational sacrifice to God for Tobias and Sara. For the Scripture says that after they had prayed, *the prayers of them both were heard in the sight of the glory of the great Raphael, and he was sent to heal them both* (Tob. 3:16-17). And Raphael himself, in revealing to them his mission to them both, enjoined upon him as an angel by God, says: *When thou didst pray now, thou and thy daughter-in-law Sara, I offered the memory of your prayer before the holy one* (12:12); and a little further on: *I am Raphael, one of the seven angels who bear up the prayers of the saints and enter before the glory of the holy one* (12:15; cf. Rev. 8:3-4). ...

11:2 Now the one great virtue according to the Word of God is love of one's neighbour. We must believe that the saints who have died have this love in a far greater degree towards them that are engaged in the combat of life, than those who are still subject to human

weakness, and are engaged in the combat along with their weaker brethren.

**250—Saint Cyprian, Bishop of Carthage, *Letter to His Clergy***

39 [34]:3 Lawrence and Ignatius, though they fought betimes in worldly camps, were true and spiritual soldiers of God; and while they laid the devil on his back with their confession of Christ, they merited the palms and crowns of the Lord by their illustrious passion. We always offer sacrifices for them, as you will recall, as often as we celebrate the passions of the martyrs by commemorating their anniversary day.

**ca. 250—*Sub tuum praesidium***

—*Earliest extant prayer to the Virgin Mary*—  
Under your mercy we take refuge, O Mother of God. Do not reject our supplications in necessity, but deliver us from danger, [O you] alone pure and alone blessed.

**ca. 300—*Christian Epitaphs***

Pray for thy parents, Matronata Matrona. She lived 1 yr. 52 d. ...

Atticus, sleep in peace, secure in thy safety, and pray anxiously for our sins. ...

I, Petronia, wife of a Levite [i.e. deacon], of modest countenance, here lay down my bones and place them in their resting place. Cease from weeping, my husband and sweet children, and believe that it is not right to mourn one that lives in God.

—313, *The Edict of Milan: legalization of Christianity throughout the Roman Empire*

**ca. 350—Saint Cyril, Bishop of Jerusalem, Doctor of the Church, *Catechetical Lectures***

23 [*Mystagogic* 5]:9-10 [Following the Consecration of the Mass] we make mention of also of those who have already fallen asleep: first, the patriarchs, prophets, Apostles, and martyrs, that through their prayers and supplications God would receive our petition; next, we make mention also of the holy fathers and bishops who have already fallen asleep, and, to put it simply, of all among us who have already asleep; for we believe that it will be of very great benefit to the souls of those for whom the petition is carried up, while this holy and most solemn Sacrifice [i.e., the Holy Eucharist] is laid out.

**ante 373—Saint Ephraim the Syrian, Doctor of the Church, *Songs of Praise***

Awake, my harp, your songs in praise of the Virgin Mary!

**374-377—Saint Epiphanius, Bishop of Constantia (Salamis), *Panárion* or *Panacea Against All Heresies***

75:8 For we make commemoration of the just and the Fathers and Patriarchs and Prophets and Apostles and Evangelists and martyrs and confessors, and of bishops and solitaries, and of the whole list of them, so that we may set the Lord Jesus Christ apart from the ranks of men because of the honor due Him, and give reverence to Him, while keeping in mind that the Lord is not to be equated with any man, even if that man live in a justice that is boundless and limitless.

**391-430—Saint Augustine, Bishop of Hippo, Doctor of the Church, *Sermons***

159:1 There is an ecclesiastical discipline, as the faithful know, when the names of the martyrs are read aloud in that place at the altar of God, where prayer is not offered for them. Prayer, however, is offered for other dead who are remembered. It is wrong to pray for a martyr, to whose prayers we ought ourselves be commended.

**400—Augustine, *Against Faustus the Manichean***

20:21 A Christian people celebrates together in religious solemnity the memorials of the martyrs, both to encourage their being imitated and so that it can share in their merits and be aided by their prayers. But it is done in such a way that our altars are not set up to any one of the martyrs,—although in their memory,—but to God Himself, the God of those martyrs. Who, indeed, of the presiding priests assisting at the altar in the places of the saints ever said “We offer to you, Peter, or Paul, or Cyprian”? What is offered is offered to God, who crowned the martyrs. ... That worship, which the Greeks call *λατρεία* [*latría*] and for which there is in Latin no single term, and which is expressive of the subjection owed to Divinity alone, we neither accord nor teach that it should be accorded to any save to the one God.

**406—Saint Jerome, Doctor of the Church, *Against Vigilantius***

6 You say in your book that while we live we are able to pray for each other, but afterwards when we have died, the prayer of no person for another can be heard; and this is especially clear since the martyrs, though they cry vengeance for their own blood, have never been able to obtain their request. But if the Apostles and martyrs while still in the body can pray for others, at a time when they ought still be solicitous about themselves, how much

more will they do so after their crowns, victories, and triumphs?

**419—Augustine, *The City of God***

—*Veneration of relics*—

1:13 [T]he bodies of the dead are not ... to be despised and left unburied; least of all the bodies of the righteous and faithful, which have been used by the Holy Ghost as His organs and instruments for all good works. For if the dress of the father, or his ring, or anything he wore, be precious to his children, in proportion to the love they bore him, with how much more reason ought we to care for the bodies of those we love, which they wore far more closely and intimately than clothing? For the body is not an extraneous ornament or aid, but a part of man's very nature. ...

10:1 For this is the worship which is due to the Divinity, or, to speak more accurately, to the Deity; and, to express this worship in a single word, as there does not occur to me any Latin term sufficiently exact, I shall avail myself, whenever necessary, of a Greek word.

*Λατρεία* [*Latria*], whenever it occurs in Scripture, is rendered by the word service. But that service which is due to men, and in reference to which the apostle writes that servants must be subject to their own masters (Eph. 6:5), is usually designated by another word in Greek, [*δουλεία* [*dulia*], the veneration due to the Saints] whereas the service which is paid to God alone by worship, is always, or almost always, called *λατρεία* in the usage of those who wrote from the divine oracles. This cannot so well be called simply "cultus," for in that case it would not seem to be due exclusively to God; for the same word is applied to the respect we pay either to the memory or the living presence of men. ...

20:9 "And the souls," says John, "of those who were slain for the testimony of Jesus and for the word of God" (Rev. 6:9)—understanding what he afterwards says, "reigned with Christ a thousand years" (Rev. 20:4)—that is, the souls of the martyrs not yet restored to their bodies. For the souls of the pious dead are not separated from the Church, which even now is the kingdom of Christ; otherwise there would be no remembrance made of them at the altar of God in the partaking of the body of Christ [i.e., the Eucharist], nor would it do any good in danger to run to His baptism, that we might not pass from this life without it; nor to [the sacrament of] reconciliation, if by penitence or a bad conscience any one may be severed from

His body. For why are these things practised, if not because the faithful, even though dead, are His members? Therefore, while these thousand years run on, their souls reign with Him, though not as yet in conjunction with their bodies. And therefore in another part of this same book we read, "Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from henceforth: and now, saith the spirit, that they may rest from their labours; for their works do follow them" (Rev. 14:13). The Church, then, begins its reign with Christ now in the living and in the dead. For, as the apostle says, "Christ died that He might be Lord both of the living and of the dead" (Rom. 14:9). But he mentioned the souls of the martyrs only, because they who have contended even to death for the truth, themselves principally reign after death; but, taking the part for the whole, we understand the words of all others who belong to the Church, which is the kingdom of Christ.

**ca. 425—Saint Cyril, Bishop of Alexandria, Doctor of the Church, *Commentary on the Psalms***

On Ps. 113B [115]:16 Even if we make images of pious men it is not so that we might adore them as gods but that when we see them we might be prompted to imitate them; and if we make images of Christ, it is so that our minds might wing aloft in yearning for Him.

**450—Pope Saint Leo the Great, 45<sup>th</sup> Bishop of Rome, Doctor of the Church, *Sermon***

85 Let us rejoice, then, dearly beloved, with spiritual joy, and make our boast over the happy end of this illustrious man in the Lord [the martyr Saint Lawrence] ... By his prayer and intercession we trust at all times to be assisted.

**ca. 590—Saint Gregory of Tours, *Glory of the Martyrs***

—*Veneration of relics*—

83 Many years later I received these relics [of the saints] from my mother; and when we were going from Burgundy to Clermont, a huge storm appeared in my path. The storm frequently flashed with lightning in the sky and rumbled with loud crashes of thunder. Then I took the holy relics from my pocket and raised my hand before the cloud. The cloud immediately divided into two parts and passed by on the right and the left; it threatened neither me nor anyone else. Then, as a presumptuous young man is expected to behave, I began to be inflated by the arrogance of vain glory. I silently thought that this

concession had been made especially for me, rather than because of the merits of the saints. I boasted to my travelling companions and insisted that I had deserved that which God had bestowed upon my naïveté. Immediately my horse suddenly slipped beneath me and threw me to the ground. I was so seriously bruised during this accident that I could hardly get up. I understood that this accident had happened because of my pride; and it was sufficient to note that afterwards the urge of vain glory did not bother me. For if it happened that I was worthy to observe some manifestations of the power of saints, I have proclaimed that they were due to the gift of God through the faith of the saints.

**594—Pope Saint Gregory the Great, 64<sup>th</sup> Bishop of Rome, *Letter to the Empress Constantina Augusta***

—*Veneration of relics*—

4:30 The Serenity of Your Piety, so well-known for religious zeal and love of holiness, has charged me with your commands to send you the head of Saint Paul, or some other part of his body, for the church which is being built in honor of the same Saint Paul in the Palace. ... Let my Most Tranquil Lady know that it is not the custom of the Romans, when they give relics of the saints, to presume to touch any part of the body. But only a cloth is put into a box and placed near the most sacred bodies of the saints. When it is taken up again it is deposited with due reverence in the Church that is to be dedicated, and effects so powerful are thereby produced, that it is as if their bodies had actually been taken there. It happened in the time of Pope [Saint] Leo [the Great, reign. 440-461] of blessed memory, as has been handed down by our forefathers, that, certain Greeks being in doubt about such relics, the aforesaid Pontiff made a cut with a scissors in this same cloth, and from the very incision blood flowed forth. In the Roman and in all Western parts it is utterly intolerable and sacrilegious to touch the bodies of the saints. And if anyone presume to do so, it is certain that this rashness will in no way remain unpunished. ... But since so religious a desire of my most Serene Lady must not be wholly unsatisfied, I will hasten to send you some part of the chains which the Apostle Saint Peter himself bore on his neck and hands, and from which many miracles are attested among the people; if, at any rate, I can succeed in removing something from them with a file.

—636, *Death of Saint Isidore of Seville, end of the patristic period in the West*

**ca. 645—Saint John Climacus, *The Ladder of Divine Ascent***

Are the guardian angels standing by us, or are they still at a great distance? For until they come to us, our efforts are in vain and futile. Our prayer has neither the power of access nor the wings of purity to reach the Lord, unless our angels draw near to us and take it and bring it to the Lord.

—ca. 749, *Death of Saint John Damascene, end of the patristic period in the East*

**787—Second Council of Nicaea, seventh ecumenical council, *Acts***

I ask for the intercessions of our spotless Lady the Holy Mother of God, and those of the holy and heavenly powers, and those of all the Saints.

—*Veneration of relics*—

And receiving their holy and honourable reliques with all honour, I [Basil, Bishop of Ancyra] salute and venerate these with honour, hoping to have a share in their holiness. Likewise also the venerable images of the incarnation of our Lord Jesus Christ, in the humanity he assumed for our salvation; and of our spotless Lady, the Holy Mother of God; and of the angels like unto God; and of the holy Apostles, Prophets, Martyrs, and of all the Saints—the sacred images of all of these, I salute and venerate.

**ca. 836—Rudolf of Fulda, *The Life of Saint Leoba***

At the end of the fast on the third day she went with all the nuns into the church, singing litanies and invoking the Lord and His saints ...

Thecla, her kinswoman, spoke to her first saying: "Beloved, all the hopes of these people lie in you: you are their only support. Arise, then, and pray to the Mother of God, your mistress, for us, that by her intercession we may be delivered from this fearful storm." At these words Leoba rose up from prayer ... made the sign of the cross ... stretched out her hands towards heaven and three times invoked the mercy of Christ, praying that through the intercession of Holy Mary, the Virgin, He would quickly come to the help of His people. Suddenly God came to their aid. ...

—*Veneration of relics*—

Abbot Eigil, with permission of Bishop Heistulf, transferred her bones and placed them in the west porch near the shrine of St. Ignatius the

martyr, where, encased in a tomb, they rest glorious with miracles. For many who have approached her tomb full of faith have many times received divine favours.

**910—William the Pious, Duke of Aquitaine, *The Foundation Charter of the Order of Cluny***

Therefore be it known to all who live in the unity of faith and who await the mercy of Christ, and to those who shall succeed them and who shall continue to exist until the end of the world, that for the love of God and of our Saviour Jesus Christ, I hand over from my own rule to the holy apostles, Peter, namely, and Paul, the possessions over which I hold sway, the town of Cluny, namely, ... and the church in honour of St. Mary the mother of God and of St. Peter the Prince of the apostles ... Finally, since all of us Christians are held together by one bond of love and faith, let this donation be for all,—for the orthodoxy, namely, of past, present or future times. ...

—1054, *Start of the Eastern Schism*

**1074—Pope Saint Gregory VII, 157<sup>th</sup> Bishop of Rome, *Letter to Matilda, Countess of Tuscany***

What can I say of her whom earth and heaven cease not to praise, though never as her merits deserve? May you believe beyond all doubt that, as she is higher and better and more holy than all human mothers, so she is more gracious and tender toward every sinner who turns to her. Cease, therefore, every sinful desire and, prostrate before her, pour out your tears from an humble and contrite heart. You will find her, I surely promise you, more ready than any earthly mother and more lenient in her love for you.

**ca. 1156—Saint Elisabeth of Schönau, *Third Book of Visions***

5 I spoke to her, saying, "I beg you, my lady, may you deign to reveal something to me about Origen? He was a great doctor of the church, who honorably and lovingly wrote your praises in many places. Is he saved or not, since the catholic church condemns him for the many heretical things found in his writings?" To this she answered in this way, "It is not the will of God that much should be revealed to you about this. However, you should know that the error of Origen did not come from malice, but from the excessive fervor by which he immersed his thought in the profundity of holy scripture, which he loved, and in the divine secrets, which he wished to scrutinize too much. On account of this, the

punishment in which he is detained is not grave. Know indeed that for those honors that he offered me in his writings, a special light shines on him among the other souls on those special feasts in which my memory is celebrated in the church. However, what will be done to him on the last day is not to be revealed to you now, for the Lord wishes to keep this among His secrets."

**ca. 1160—Elisabeth of Schönau, *Letter to Burchard, Abbot of Odenheim***

—*Veneration of relics*—

I also asked the angel about your holy patrons Bonosius and Abrunculus and with what kind of merit they stood before the Lord. He said, "They were saints before the Lord from their earliest age and bore much fruit among the people. Therefore, their sanctity was declared by the Lord in the many miracles that have been performed in curing the sick and raising the dead." He added to this, saying, "Know that the place where their relics are held has been sanctified greatly by their merits."

**1253 —Pope Innocent IV, 180<sup>th</sup> Bishop of Rome, *Letter to Bartolomeo, Bishop of Spoleto***

God, rewarder of every good ... granted favors for the exaltation of his ever glorious name to those who asked for them because the clear merits of the virgin [Saint] Clare [of Assisi] were interceding.

**1377-1378—Saint Catherine of Siena, Doctor of the Church, *The Dialogue***

77 [*God the Father:*] My goodness permits this to strengthen them and make them great in my own sight and the world's, since they have made themselves small for me, and I have made them great in myself, everlasting Life, and in the mystic body of holy Church. There they are forever remembered because their names are written in me, the book of life (cf. Rev. 13:8). Thus the world holds them in reverence because they have despised the world. ...

79 ... Paul felt himself bound up in the vessel of his body, and this blocked him off for a time from seeing me [cf. Rom. 7:23-24]. In other words, until the hour of his death his eye was bound so that he could not see me, the eternal Trinity, with the vision of the blessed immortals who forever offer glory and praise to my name. Instead he found himself among mortals who are constantly offending me, deprived of seeing me as I really am. ...

158 [Saint Dominic] was a light that I offered the world through Mary and sent into the mystic body of holy Church as an uprooter of heresies. Why did I say “through Mary”? Because Mary gave him the habit—a task my goodness entrusted to her.

**1418—Thomas à Kempis, *The Imitation of Christ***

1:19 At the great Festivals good spiritual exercises should be renewed, and the prayers of the Saints implored more fervently than ever. ...

1:23 Who will remember you when you are dead? Who will pray for you? Act now, dear soul; do all you can; for you know neither the hour of your death, nor your state after death. While you have time, gather the riches of everlasting life (Luke 12:33; Gal. 6:8). Think only of your salvation, and care only for the things of God. Make friends now, by honouring the Saints of God and by following their example, that when this life is over, they may welcome you to your eternal home (Luke 16:9).

—*Veneration of relics*—

4:1 Many make pilgrimages to various places to visit the relics of the Saints, wondering at the story of their lives and the splendour of their shrines; they view and venerate their bones, covered with silks and gold. But here on the Altar [in the Blessed Sacrament] are You Yourself, my God, the Holy of Holies, Creator of men and Lord of Angels!

—1517, *Start of the Protestant Revolt*

**1565—Saint Teresa (of Jesus) of Ávila, founder of the Discalced Carmelites, Doctor of the Church, *Life***

19 O my Jesus, what a sight it is to see a soul that has risen so high and has fallen into sin, raised up again when You stretch out Your hand to it. Then it is conscious of Your manifold greatness and mercy, and of its own wretchedness. Then it truly dissolves, and recognizes Your power. It dares not lift up its eyes; it raises them only to acknowledge its great debt to You. It devoutly prays the Queen of Heaven to intercede with You. It invokes the help of the saints, who also fell after You had called them.

**1619—Saint Francis de Sales, Bishop of Geneva, Doctor of the Church, *Introduction to the Devout Life***

2:16 *Our Duty to Honor and Invoke the Saints*

Since God often sends us inspirations by means of his angels, we should frequently return our aspirations to him by the same messengers. The holy souls of the dead who dwell in paradise with the angels and, as our Savior says, are equal “and like the angels” (Matt. 22:30), also perform this office of inspiring us and interceding for us by their holy prayers. Philothea, let us join our hearts to these heavenly spirits and blessed souls. Just as young nightingales learn to sing in company with the old, so also by our holy associations with the saints let us learn the best way to pray and sing God’s praise. “In the presence of the angels I will sing your praises” (Ps. 137:2), says David.

Honor, reverence, and respect with a special love the sacred and glorious Virgin Mary. She is the Mother of our sovereign Father and consequently she is our own Mother in an especial way. Let us run to her and like little children cast ourselves into her arms with perfect confidence. At every moment and on every occasion let us call on this dear Mother. Let us invoke her maternal love and by trying to imitate her virtues let us have true filial affection for her.

**1750—Saint Alphonsus Maria de Liguori, Bishop of Saint Agatha, Doctor of the Church, *The Glories of Mary***

1:2 Fortunate, indeed, are the clients of this most compassionate Mother; for not only does she succor them in this world, but even in purgatory they are helped and comforted by her protection. And as in that prison poor souls are in the greatest need of assistance, since in their torments they cannot help themselves, our Mother of mercy does proportionately more to relieve them.

**1897—Saint Thérèse (of the Child Jesus) of Lisieux, Doctor of the Church, *The Story of a Soul***

—*Veneration of relics*—

6 [Thérèse:] “After the Colosseum, we went to the Catacombs. Céline and I managed to lie down together in what had once been the tomb of St. Cecilia and to scoop up some of the earth which her sacred remains had sanctified.” ...

*Epilogue* [Thérèse] was also conscious that her union with Christ was to bear fruit in eternity, and this was no lack of humility; it was a simple recognition of the graces already bestowed upon her. ...

On July 17, 1897, she said: "I feel that my mission is soon to begin, to make others love God as I do, to teach others my 'little way.' I will spend my Heaven in doing good upon earth. Why not, since the Angels can take care of us while still enjoying the Beatific Vision? I will not be able to rest until the end of the world when the Angel has said: 'Time is no more!' (Rev. 10:6). Then I shall rest and be able to rejoice, for the number of the elect will be complete."

**1964—Second Vatican Council, 21<sup>st</sup> ecumenical council, *Lumen Gentium***

69 It gives great joy and comfort to this sacred synod that among the separated brethren too there are those who give due honor to the Mother of Our Lord and Saviour, especially among the Easterns, who with devout mind and fervent impulse give honor to the Mother of God, ever virgin. The entire body of the faithful pours forth urgent supplications to the Mother of God and of men that she, who aided the beginnings of the Church by her prayers, may now, exalted as she is above all the angels and saints, intercede before her Son in the fellowship of all the saints, until all families of people, whether they are honored with the title of Christian or whether they still do not know the Saviour, may be happily gathered together in peace and harmony into one People of God, for the glory of the Most Holy and Undivided Trinity.

**2001—Pope Saint John Paul the Great, 264<sup>th</sup> Bishop of Rome, *Commentary on the Solemnity of All Saints***

1-2 Today we celebrate the Solemnity of All Saints. In the light of God, we remember all those who witnessed to Christ during their earthly life, doing their best to put into practice his teachings. We rejoice with these brothers and sisters who have gone ahead of us travelling the same path that we must take and now enjoy their merited reward in the glory of heaven.

They are the ones who, as the Apocalypse describes it, "have passed through the great tribulation and have washed their garments and made them white in the blood of the Lamb" (Rev. 7:14). They knew how to go against the tide, accepting the Sermon on the Mount (cf. Matt. 5:3-10) as the norm that guided their lives: poverty of spirit and simplicity of life, meekness and non-violence; repentance for their sins and expiation of the sins of others; hunger and thirst for justice; mercy and compassion; purity of heart; dedication to making peace; sacrifice for justice (cf. Matt. 5:3-10).

Every Christian is called to holiness, that is, to live the beatitudes. Some are examples for all; the Church points to the brothers and sisters who are pre-eminent in virtue and have become instruments of divine grace. Today we celebrate them all together, so that with their help we can grow in the love of God and be the "salt of the earth and light of the world" (cf. Matt. 5:13-14).

The communion of saints crosses over the portal of death. It is a communion that has its centre in God, the God of the living (cf. Matt. 22:32). "Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord henceforth" (Rev. 14:13), we read in the Book of the Apocalypse.