

THE FALL TRIDUUM – THE COMMUNION OF SAINTS

The origin of the Fall Triduum dates back to the ancient Celtic festival of Samhain (pronounced sow-in).

The Celts, who lived 2,000 years ago in the area that is now Ireland, the United Kingdom, and northern France, celebrated their new year on November 1. This day marked the end of summer and the harvest and the beginning of the dark, cold winter, a time of year that was often associated with human death. Celts believed that on the night before the new year, the boundary between the worlds of the living and the dead became blurred. On the night of October 31, they celebrated Samhain, when it was believed that the ghosts of the dead returned to earth. In addition to causing trouble and damaging crops, Celts thought that the presence of the otherworldly spirits made it easier for the Druids, or Celtic priests, to make predictions about the future. For a people entirely dependent on the volatile natural world, these prophecies were an important source of comfort and direction during the long, dark winter.

To commemorate the event, Druids built huge sacred bonfires, where the people gathered to burn crops and animals as sacrifices to the Celtic deities.

During the celebration, the Celts wore costumes, typically consisting of animal heads and skins, and attempted to tell each other's fortunes. When the celebration was over, they re-lit their hearth fires, which they had extinguished earlier that evening, from the sacred bonfire to help protect them during the coming winter.

By A.D. 43, Romans had conquered the majority of Celtic territory. In the course of the four hundred years that they ruled the Celtic lands, two festivals of Roman origin were combined with the traditional Celtic celebration of Samhain.

The first was Feralia, a day in late October when the Romans traditionally commemorated the passing of the dead. The second was a day to honor Pomona, the Roman goddess of fruit and trees. The symbol of Pomona is the apple and the incorporation of this celebration into Samhain probably explains the tradition of "bobbing" for apples that is practiced today on Halloween.

By the 800s, the influence of Christianity had spread into Celtic lands. In the seventh century, Pope Boniface IV designated November 1 All Saints' Day, a time to honor saints and martyrs. It is widely believed today that the pope was attempting to replace the Celtic festival of the dead with a related, but church-sanctioned holiday. The celebration was also called All-hallows or All-hallowmas (from Middle English *Alhallowmesse* meaning All Saints' Day) and the night before it, the night of Samhain, began to be called All-hallows Eve and, eventually, Halloween. Even later, in A.D. 1000, the church would make November 2 All Souls' Day, a day to honor the dead. It was celebrated similarly to Samhain, with big bonfires, parades, and dressing up in costumes as saints, angels, and devils. Together, the three celebrations, the eve of All Saints', All Saints', and All Souls', were called Hallowmas or the Fall Triduum.

Intercession of the Saints/Praying for the Faithfully Deported

Christians from the earliest centuries of the Church have expressed their communion with those who have died by praying for the dead.

Inscriptions in the Roman catacombs indicate that the early Christians honored and prayed for their deceased relatives and friends.

CHURCH FATHERS

Tertullian (211)

Wrote that Christians offered prayer and the Eucharist for the deceased on the anniversaries of their death.

St. Augustine (354 - 430)

Neither are the souls of the pious dead separated from the Church, which even now is the Kingdom of Christ. Otherwise there would be no remembrance of them at the altar of God in the communication of the Body of Christ.

SACRED SCRIPTURE

It is not uncommon that non-believers see the Anglican, Roman Catholic and Orthodox piety of the Saints and the dead in general as falling suspect of authentic spirituality. What we celebrate first and foremost is that these people are not aware of the New Life of the Christian who has been called out of this life. They are not dead, but alive!

The early Christians, in praying for their dead were expressing their belief that departed brothers and sisters underwent purification after death ("purgatory"). Their prayers were prayers that God would have mercy on them during this time of healing and purification.

The Mystical Body of Christ, according to Catholicism and universal Christian Tradition before the arrival of Protestantism in 1517, has three levels of existence, and communication and cooperation (in differing degrees) occurs between all of them.

Those on earth invoke the prayers of the saints in heaven, honor them as glorified Christians and seek to imitate them. They also pray for the souls in purgatory. Those in heaven pray for the saints on earth and in purgatory. Those in purgatory can invoke the saints in heaven and pray for us struggling with the world, the flesh, and the devil. Protestants are inclined to think that scriptural evidences for the Communion of Saints are entirely lacking, but such is not the case.

1) **The "Apocrypha"** Perhaps the clearest proofs of this doctrine exist in the books known to Protestants as the "Apocrypha" (called "Deuterocanonical" by Catholics), which Protestants removed from the Bible (the first time this had happened in the history of Christianity). In 2 Maccabees 15:11-16 Jeremiah the prophet prays for the Jews centuries after his death (compare Jer 15:1), along with the deceased high priest Onias. Likewise, Tobit 12:1-22 (especially 12,15) presents Raphael the angel as one of the "seven holy angels, which

present the prayers of the saints." Tobit 12:15 is apparently referred to in Rev 5:8 and 8:3-4, which speak of the "prayers of the saints" being offered to God, and in Rev 1:4, which mentions the "seven Spirits."

2) **St. Paul - Rom 6:3-4** - Or are you unaware that we who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were indeed buried with him through baptism into death, so that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might live in newness of life.

Col 2:12- You were buried with him in baptism, in which you were also raised with him through faith in the power of God, who raised him from the dead.

3) **Revelation 1:4** "John to the seven churches which are in Asia: Grace {be} unto you, and peace, from him which is, and which was, and which is to come; and from the seven Spirits which are before his throne." {cf. Rev 3:1; 4:5; 5:6}

The seven angels participate in the giving of "grace" and "peace" by God, a principle anathema to Protestants. Some Protestant commentators, aware of a certain difficulty here for their position, seek to redefine the "seven Spirits" as the Holy Spirit, but a check with the cross-references above (inc. Tobit) makes this implausible. Other commentators accept these spirits as the seven archangels of Jewish angelology, as indeed they appear to be.

4) **Revelation 5:8 and 8:3-4** "And when he had taken the book, the four beasts and four {and} twenty elders fell down before the Lamb, having every one of them harps, and golden vials full of odours, which are the prayers of saints."

"And another angel came and stood at the altar, having a golden censer; and there was given unto him much incense, that he should offer {it} with the prayers of all saints upon the golden altar which was before the throne. (4) And the smoke of the incense, {which came} with the prayers of the saints, ascended up before God out of the angel's hand."

The saints (the 24 elders are usually regarded as dead Christians) and angels lay the prayers of the Christians on earth at the feet of God; that is, they are praying for them and acting as intercessory intermediaries. Thus, the propriety of invoking them logically follows from the plain fact of their intercession.

4) **Revelation 6:9-10** "And when he had opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of them that were slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held: (10) And they cried with a loud voice, saying, How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth?" {cf. Zech 1:12}

These dead Christian martyrs are uttering what are known as "imprecatory prayers," pleas for God's judgment of the wicked and vindication of the righteous (e.g., see Ps 35:69; 79:109; 139; Jer 11:18 ff.; 15:15 ff.; 18:19 ff.; Jesus in Mt 26:53). Thus, dead saints are praying for Christians on earth, and, by logical extension, can be asked for prayers. They are aware of earthly events (Heb 12:1), and are more alive, unfathomably more righteous (Jas 5:16), and obviously closer to God than we are.

They need not be omniscient to hear our prayers, but merely out of time. It makes no less sense to ask for their prayers than to request those of any person on earth. In fact, the prayer above was answered by God who hastens the end of the age (8:1-5). Therefore, if the prayers of the Christians in heaven is so important in this instance, one can only imagine their immense weightiness in the overall scheme of things.

5) **Matthew 18:10** "Take heed that ye despise not one of these little ones; for I say unto you, That in heaven their angels do always behold the face of my Father which is in heaven."

The notion that every person has their own guardian angel, who has direct access to God, is strongly implied. If Jesus said He could have asked for the assistance of an angel (Mt 26:53) - and He certainly would not have been worshiping them in so doing - then we, who need their help infinitely more than He, can do the same without necessarily engaging in idolatry (anything can become an idol if we let it). The Communion of the Saints is nothing more than the recognition that saints after death (and angels) are more alive than us, aware of happenings on earth, desirous of aiding us, and able to be asked for help and to assist us with their prayer and intercession.

6) **The Veneration of Saints** Devotions to angels and saints no more interfere and corrupt the incommunicable Glory of the Eternal God and Creator than does the love we have towards friends and relatives. A tender and healthy attachment to the saints will give vent to feelings in the language of hyperbole, just as human lovers wax eloquent in their romantic praises of each other, never intending to literally worship the object of love and affection.

If we honor the memory of political heroes (e.g., Jefferson, Lincoln) with statues, and war heroes with monuments (e.g., the Vietnam Memorial), why can we not honor the great Christian saints and the towering righteous men and women of the Old Testament? We address judges as "Your Honor" and are commanded to "honor thy mother and father" in the Ten Commandments. The saints are still alive and able to influence and assist us.

Thus, the Veneration of Saints is more than merely mental inspiration (although it includes that aspect as well). God somehow takes up into Himself the whole creation and 'lives in it,' 'moves' in it, and in it 'is' (cf. Acts 17:28). The veneration given to angels and saints is essentially different from the worship offered to God. To God alone belongs the adoration of the whole man. But God's glory is also reflected in His children. They are dewdrops in which the sun's radiance is mirrored. They are venerated because God is present in them.

A sound biblical basis for Veneration of Saints can be found in the Pauline passages where the Apostle exhorts his followers to "imitate" him (1 Cor 4:16; Phil 3:17; 2 Thess 3:7-9) as he, in turn, imitates Jesus Christ (1 Cor 11:1; 1 Thess 1:6). Also, we are told to honor and imitate the "heroes of the faith" in Heb 6:12 and ch. 11, and to take heart in the examples of the prophets and Job, who endured suffering (Jas 5:10-11). It has been said that the painter is most honored when his masterpiece is complimented, because he knows that such praise reflects back upon himself (see 2 Cor 3:18).

SPIRITUALITY

The communion of saints is based on four essential points:

1. All Christians are members of Christ's body and one another (Rom. 12:5; 1 Cor. 12:27).
2. Jesus has only one body (Eph. 4:4; Col. 3:15).
3. Death cannot separate Christians from Christ or from one another (Rom. 8:35-39; cf. Lk. 20:37-38).
4. Christians are bound in mutual love (Jn. 13:34-35; Rom. 12:10).

Many people who do not share the catholic Christian expression of the faith life have difficulty with the appearance that in their prayers, to pray the intercession of the Saints. This "praying to" appears to them to indicate a worship of the Saint as if giving to the Saint what is due to God alone.

However, earliest Christianity has always defined prayer as conversation, as in conversation with God. Conversation, as any other act of communication (e.g., talking, conversation, yelling, etc.), requires *a sign of the direction of the communication* one talks *to* someone, communicates *with* someone, prays *to* someone, converses *with* someone, yells *at* someone, etc. Hence, praying to God, a Saint, the Virgin Mary indicates simply the direction of prayer communication. It is more a matter of grammar and understanding communication than acknowledging the worship of the receiver.

The doctrine of the communion of saints was taught by the Fathers, both in the Scriptures and the Tradition as they handed down in words and practice. It is explicitly contained in the Apostles Creed and reaffirmed this teaching at the Second Council of Nicea (787) the Council of Rome, 993, and further addressed it at the Councils of Florence (1438-45). Anglicans like Roman Catholics and Orthodox Christians believe that worship is due to God alone but they honor those saints who have gone before us as a sign of faith and victory in living the Christian life.

The church is a community that is formed in Jesus Christ. The Lord sends the Spirit of love to us to endow us with the necessary gifts to continue Christ's work for the kingdom. Jesus calls all Christians to lives of holiness.

The communion of saints includes those who are now living on earth (a pilgrim people or the church militant as well as those who are blessed in heaven (the church in glory or triumphant)

The role of the *communio sanctorum* in Christian spirituality is based in the fellowship with Christ and fellowship among Christians that is epitomized in the Eucharistic celebration of Christ's body. Gathered around the Table of the Lord and unified by the Holy Spirit. We encounter the Lord in the words proclaimed in Scripture and in the elements of bread and wine that we offer for consecration. We receive the gift of the risen Lord, the source of all that is holy, to redeem and sustain us. The Spirit of love that surrounds this celebration unifies us. It emphasizes the transcendent unity of Christians, "the saints" past and present, that shapes Christian spirituality through the quality of life engendered by Christian *koinonia* and that takes expression in congregational life, community life, and various forms of devotion.

THE CONCEPT OF THEOSIS

The ultimate goal of the saint is to imitate God and live the life of deification (*theosis*). St. Maximos the Confessor (seventh century) writes that the saints are men who have reached theosis; they have avoided unnatural development of the soul, that is, sin, and tried to live the natural way of life (i.e., living according to created nature), turning and looking always towards God, thus achieving total unity with God through the Holy Spirit (On Theology, 7.73).

It may be stated here that the Saints are first of all "friends" of God. Secondly, through their genuine piety and absolute obedience to God, they pleased Him and have therefore been "sanctified" both in soul and body, and subsequently glorified in this world. Third, they have been accepted in God's bosom after their passing from the world into eternal life. Fourth, many of them have been given special "grace" or "favor" to perform miracles either before their departure from this world or after. Fifth, they have been granted the special gift to pray and intercede for those still living in this world and fighting the "good fight" for the glory of God and their own perfection in Christ. This intercession springs from the fact that they also are part of the "Communion of Saints". They share prayers and good works with Christians on earth and there is a constant interaction and unity between the glorified saints in Heaven and Christians who still live in the world.

For more information and study on this go to [GOOGLE BOOKS](#)