



The Holy See

POPE FRANCIS

GENERAL AUDIENCE

Saint Peter's Square
Wednesday, 30 October 2013

Video

Dear Brothers and Sisters, Good morning!

Today I would like to speak about a very beautiful reality of our faith, namely, the “communion of saints”. *The Catechism of the Catholic Church* reminds us that two realities are meant by this expression: communion ‘in holy things’ and ‘among holy persons’ (n. 948). I wish to pause on the second meaning: this is one of the most consoling truths of our faith, since it reminds us that we are not alone but that there is a communion of life among all those who belong to Christ. It is a communion that is born of faith; indeed, the term “saints” refers to those who believe in the Lord Jesus and are incorporated by him into the Church through Baptism. That is why the first Christians were also called “saints” (cf. Acts 9:13,32,41; Rm 8:27; 1 Cor 6:1).

1. John’s Gospel states that, before his Passion, Jesus prayed to the Father for communion among his disciples, with these words: “that they may all be one; even as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe that thou hast sent me” (17:21). The Church, in her most profound truth, is *communion with God*, intimacy with God, a communion of love with Christ and with the Father in the Holy Spirit, which extends to brotherly communion. This relationship between Jesus and the Father is the “matrix” of the bond between us Christians: if we are intimately part of this “matrix”, this fiery furnace of love, then we can truly become of one single heart and one single soul among us. For God’s love burns away our selfishness, our prejudices, our interior and exterior divisions. The love of God even burns away our sins.

2. If we are rooted in the source of Love, which is God, then a reciprocal movement also occurs: from brothers to God. The experience of fraternal communion leads me to communion with God. Union among us leads to union with God, it leads us to this bond with God who is our Father. This is the second aspect of the communion of saints that I would like to underline: *our faith needs the support of others*, especially in difficult moments. If we are united our faith becomes stronger. How beautiful it is to support each other in the wonderful adventure of faith! I say this because the tendency to be closed and private has influenced the religious sphere as well, so much so that it often becomes difficult to ask for spiritual help from those would share this Christian life with us. Who among us has not experienced insecurity, confusion and even doubt on our journey of faith? We have all experienced this, myself as well. It is part of the journey of faith, it is part of our life. None of this should surprise us, because we are humans beings, marked by fragility and limitations. We are all frail, we all have limitations. Nevertheless, in these difficult moments it is necessary to trust in God's help, through child-like prayer, and, at the same time, it is important to find the courage and the humility to open up to others, to ask for help, to ask for a helping hand. How often have we done this and then succeeded in emerging from our difficulty and finding God again! In this communion — communion means common-union — we form a great family, where every member is helped and sustained by the others.

3. And we come to another aspect: the communion of saints goes *beyond earthly life, beyond death and endures for ever*. This union among us goes beyond and continues in the next life; it is a spiritual communion born in Baptism and not broken by death, but, thanks to the Risen Christ, is destined to find its fullness in eternal life. There is a deep and indissoluble bond between those who are still pilgrims in this world — us — and those who have crossed the threshold of death and entered eternity. All baptized persons here on earth, the souls in Purgatory and all the blessed who are already in Paradise make one great Family. This communion between earth and heaven is realized especially in intercessory prayer.

Dear friends, we have this beauty! This is our reality, all of ours, that makes us brothers and sisters, that accompanies us on the journey of life and lets us find another face above in heaven. Let us go forward on this journey with trust, with joy. A Christian must be joyful, with the joy of having so many baptized brothers and sisters to journey with him; sustained by the help of brothers and sisters who are taking the same path toward heaven; and also by the help of brothers and sisters who are in heaven and are praying to Jesus for us. Go forward on this path with joy!

To special groups

I greet all the English-speaking pilgrims present at today's Audience, including those from England, Wales, Ireland, Denmark, the Netherlands, the Philippines, Vietnam and the United States. Upon all of you, and your families, I invoke God's blessings of joy and peace!

Lastly, I greet the sick, newlyweds and young people, with a special thought to students from universities in Italy. This Friday we will celebrate the Solemnity of All Saints. May their witness of faith strengthen in each of you, dear young people, the certainty that God is with you on the journey of life; may it sustain you, dear sick people, by alleviating your daily suffering; and may it be of help to you, dear newlyweds, in building your family on faith in God.