



CHURCH OF ST. IGNATIUS LOYOLA

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Thirtieth Sunday in Ordinary Time

THOSE WHO HAVE GONE BEFORE US IN FAITH

With the coming of November, the Church's liturgical year begins to wind down. The new Church year always begins with the first Sunday of Advent, which this year falls on December 3rd. As the Church comes to the end of its calendar year, other endings naturally come to mind. There is the final ending of the world when Christ will "come again in glory to judge the living and the dead", as we say each Sunday in the Nicene Creed. And there's the personal ending each of us will experience in death as we pass from this life to the next. The scripture prayers and readings during Advent will touch upon all these endings.

The month of November has traditionally been the month when the Church remembers in a special way all the dead - all those *who have gone to their rest in the hope of rising again* (from the second Eucharistic Prayer of the Mass). On November 1st we will celebrate the Feast of All Saints. By "All Saints" we mean all the dead, canonized or not, who have reached their human fulfillment and who live now in full union with God. The first scripture reading on the Feast of All Saints refers to them as "a great multitude that no one can count, from every nation, from all peoples and languages." Imagine! A great multitude beyond counting.

Surely, that great multitude includes people we have known - some of our own deceased relatives and friends.



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belief that our prayers can be efficacious in helping to bring the dead into the bliss of heaven.

The feast of All Saints and the feast the next day that commemorates all the dead *who have died in the peace of Christ and all the dead whose faith is known to you alone* (from the fourth Eucharistic Prayer) are among the best reminders we have of the Church's teaching on the communion of saints - one of the

On November 2nd we will celebrate the Feast we used to call the Feast of All Souls. In more recent years All Souls Day has come to be known as "the Commemoration of all the Faithful Departed." There is a good reason for the change in name. We remember persons that day, not just their souls! These are persons who were not quite ready at the time of their death to come into the presence of God, who left this world with "unfinished business" so to speak, and who need purification and completion before joining the company of the saints. The Church gives the name of Purgatory to this final stage of preparation or purgation for the ultimate vision of God. From its earliest days, the Church has encouraged prayers for the dead in the

articles of faith mentioned in the Nicene Creed that we profess at every Sunday mass. Our Christian belief in the communion of saints means that there is a vital connection between the living and the dead. All those who make up the Church on earth, all the saints in heaven, and all the dead who have not yet come to heaven are intimately related to one another. Death does not, and cannot, sever this connection. The Second Vatican Council accepted “with great devotion the venerable faith of our ancestors regarding this vital fellowship with our brethren who are in heavenly glory or who are still being purified after death” (from the **Dogmatic Constitution on the Church**).

An interesting theological opinion shared by many respected Catholic theologians today is that the communion of saints is not limited to those living and dead who are members of the Church. Rather, the communion of saints embraces all those who have been the recipients of God’s salvific work in Christ. In other words, the communion of saints is coterminous with the kingdom of God rather than with the Church. This is yet to become official Church teaching. But if that were to happen it would represent a good example of development in the Church’s understanding of its faith. And it would be consistent with the Second Vatican Council’s understanding of salvation outside the Church for those who are unaware of God’s revelation in Jesus.

With the coming of November, we should be immensely consoled by our belief in the communion of saints. We are never alone. We are always in close fellowship with the saints and the not-yet saints. We remain connected with our loved ones who have preceded us in death. And in some way, it seems our happiness and peace on earth is not complete until our entire family of faith can be united. St. Paul says we are the Body of Christ and that if one part suffers, all the parts suffer with it. And if one part is honored, all the parts share in the joy. I suggest that during the next month when you pray alone, think of inviting a favorite saint or a relative who has died to come and join you. They are certainly interested in prayer. And they are certainly interested in you.

Fr. William Bergen, S.J.

Fra Angelico. *The Last Judgement*. Detail: *The Blessed*. c.1431. Tempera on wood. 105 x 210 cm. Museo di San Marco, Florence, Italy



“We are always in close fellowship with the saints and the not-yet saints.”

Frequently asked questions about the Saints - The Church has venerated Catholic saints since the beginning. Who are the saints? Who decides who is and is not a saint? How many are there? Do saints hear our prayers? Find the answers to these questions and articles on saints.

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[What is the process for canonizing someone?](#)

[How many saints are there?](#)

[Do saints hear our prayers?](#)

[Are saints' names required for Baptism?](#)

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To find out the answers to these questions and more go to:
<http://www.americancatholic.org/Features/Saints/faqs.asp>



St. Ignatius Loyola