

Catechumenate Session

APPRENTICES IN FAITH: A Resource for the RCIA
All Saints • Year A • November 1, 2020

*God of the living
and the dead,
you draw us up
into your life.
You make of us
one, holy communion.
You raise what is ordinary
into the extraordinary.
Blessing, glory, wisdom,
thanksgiving, honor,
power, and might
be yours
for ever and ever.
Amen.*



Sunday Word

Revelation 7:2–4, 9–14

Psalm 24:1–4ab, 5–6

1 John 3:1–3

Matthew 5:1–12a

Gathered from Everywhere

What a grand vision motivates us. We are gathered from “every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages . . .” (Revelation 7:9). A multitude gathers around the throne of God in Heaven.

We are invited to put on the white robe of commitment in our Baptism. By lives of faithful service to the kingdom we strive to keep that robe unstained until the day we enter eternity. We join with the angels and Saints—the holy men and women of every age and place—to sing God’s praises here and in the world to come.

Gathered by Love

We are children of God, not through our own devices but because we are begotten by grace. God’s initiative makes us who we are and calls us to hope and to holiness.

“See what love the Father has given us, that we should be called children of God” (1 John 3:1). God’s love is a pure gift that prompts us to purity, to a focus so sharp and clear that we move forward into a hope yet to be revealed.

Gathered as Disciples

We cannot enumerate the particulars of heavenly life which awaits us. But we can know the way to get there: through discipleship together. We follow the teachings of Jesus. We profess his truth. We embrace the blessings only he can bestow. Our reward will be great in Heaven.

Catholic Doctrine: The Communion of Saints

The unity which is ours is a gift by God bestowed by our Baptism into the life of Christ. We refer to this blessed unity in the Apostles’ Creed, professing our belief in the Communion of

Saints. This communion is outwardly characterized by each believer as they cultivate holiness and live as an active witness to the faith.

Through Baptism, we are given strength to pursue holiness and witness to Christ by sharing in holy things:

- faith itself;
- the Sacraments, especially the Eucharist;
- the special, particular gifts and graces given through the Holy Spirit to enable us to live the Christian life or to build up the Church.

Through Baptism in the Risen Christ, we are also given new family ties to all our brothers and sisters in faith that go beyond limited earthly boundaries, a communion between holy persons:

- pilgrims on Earth who journey forward toward the life yet to come
- those who have died and are undergoing purification
- those already enjoying the Beatific Vision of Heaven who intercede for us from their place around the throne of God

Both holy things and holy persons are engendered by God's love. Divine love creates one Body, one Church, in Christ.

Distinctiveness of Church Teaching

In the New Testament literature, “the saints” refers to the whole body of believers, the Church. Their saintliness derives from their union together in Christ who is the font of all holiness.

In the early centuries after the New Testament was written, the title of “saint” (from Latin *sanctus* meaning “holy”) was initially attributed to certain individuals by popular acclaim. From about the tenth century there has been a formal procedure in the Church to bestow this honorable title on those who have exhibited heroic Christian efforts toward holiness and witness. Saints are worthy of our veneration, much as we venerate the memory of deceased family members. God alone is worthy of our worship.



Key Terms

SAINTS

Persons (“holy ones”) who lead earthly lives in conformity with God through the grace of Christ and who then receive the reward of heavenly life. The Church herself is called “the Communion of Saints,” that is, all the holy ones of God (see *Catechism of the Catholic Church* 946).

CANONIZATION

The solemn pronouncement by the Pope that a deceased member of the faithful may be venerated as a Saint, that is, a model of holiness and an intercessor for us as they stand before the throne of God (see *Catechism of the Catholic Church* 828).

WORSHIP

The first and foremost religious act, which is to acknowledge and adore God. He alone deserves our respect and submission. Veneration (or devotion) is different, and it is the stance we take toward Mary, the Mother of God, and the martyrs and Saints (see *Catechism of the Catholic Church* 2096–2097, 2132).

Voices of Faith

The Spirit becomes the dwelling place of the saints and the saints are for the Spirit a place where he dwells as in his own home, since they offer themselves as a dwelling place, a temple, for God.

—Saint Basil

Saints are not “supermen” who are “born perfect,” but rather are ordinary people who followed God with all their heart.

We can pray in communion with the Church on earth and in heaven. Let us not underestimate the power of so many voices united in prayer!

—Pope Francis

Further Reading

Catechism of the Catholic Church: 2683 (Saints as a guide for our prayer), 946 (Communion of Saints is the Church)

United States Catholic Catechism for Adults: Chapter 13 (Our Eternal Destiny), especially the first point in the section entitled “Doctrinal Statements,” pages 160–161. See also Meditation, page 162.

Compendium—Catechism of the Catholic Church: 165 (holiness of the Church), 194 (holy things), 195 (holy persons)