



# The Saints - Testimonies of Grace

“My brothers and sisters, we believe that all the ties of friendship and affection which knit us as one throughout our lives do not unravel with death.

Confident that God always remembers the good we have done and forgives our sins, let us pray, asking God to gather N. to himself.”

From The Rite of Christian Burial Vigil

Advent Retreat

Fr. James Northrop

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Archbishop Brunett Retreat Center at the Palisades

[www.thegraceofpentecost.com](http://www.thegraceofpentecost.com)



# The Communion of Saints

- The three states of the Church. “When the Lord comes in glory, and all his angels with him, death will be no more and all things will be subject to him. But at the present time some of his disciples are pilgrims on earth. Others have died and are being purified, while still others are in glory, contemplating ‘in full light, God himself triune and one, exactly as he is’ ”: (771; 1031; 1023)
- All of us, however, in varying degrees and in different ways share in the same charity towards God and our neighbours, and we all sing the one hymn of glory to our God. All, indeed, who are of Christ and who have his Spirit form one Church and in Christ cleave together.
- 955 “So it is that the union of the wayfarers with the brethren who sleep in the peace of Christ is in no way interrupted, but on the contrary, according to the constant faith of the Church, this union is reinforced by an exchange of spiritual goods.”



# The Communion of Saints

- The intercession of the saints. “Being more closely united to Christ, those who dwell in heaven fix the whole Church more firmly in holiness.... [T]hey do not cease to intercede with the Father for us, as they proffer the merits which they acquired on earth through the one mediator between God and men, Christ Jesus.... So by their fraternal concern is our weakness greatly helped.” (1370; 2683)
- Do not weep, for I shall be more useful to you after my death and I shall help you then more effectively than during my life. I want to spend my heaven in doing good on earth. (St. Terese of Liesuex)
- 957 Communion with the saints. “It is not merely by the title of example that we cherish the memory of those in heaven; we seek, rather, that by this devotion to the exercise of fraternal charity the union of the whole Church in the Spirit may be strengthened. Exactly as Christian communion among our fellow pilgrims brings us closer to Christ, so our communion with the saints joins us to Christ, from whom as from its fountain and head issues all grace, and the life of the People of God itself”: (1173)
- We worship Christ as God’s Son; we love the martyrs as the Lord’s disciples and imitators, and rightly so because of their matchless devotion towards their king and master. May we also be their companions and fellow disciples!
- 958 Communion with the dead. “In full consciousness of this communion of the whole Mystical Body of Jesus Christ, the Church in its pilgrim members, from the very earliest days of the Christian religion, has honored with great respect the memory of the dead; and ‘because it is a holy and a wholesome thought to pray for the dead that they may be loosed from their sins’ she offers her suffrages for them.” Our prayer for them is capable not only of helping them, but also of making their intercession for us effective. (1371; 1032, 1689)
- Catholic Church. (2000). Catechism of the Catholic Church (2nd Ed., pp. 249–250). Washington, DC: United States Catholic Conference.



# Why Is This Important

- We do well to keep in mind the early Christians and our many brothers and sisters throughout history who were filled with joy, unflagging courage and zeal in proclaiming the Gospel. Some people nowadays console themselves by saying that things are not as easy as they used to be, yet we know that the Roman empire was not conducive to the Gospel message, the struggle for justice, or the defence of human dignity. Every period of history is marked by the presence of human weakness, self-absorption, complacency and selfishness, to say nothing of the concupiscence which preys upon us all. These things are ever present under one guise or another; they are due to our human limits rather than particular situations. Let us not say, then, that things are harder today; they are simply different. But let us learn also from the saints who have gone before us, who confronted the difficulties of their own day. So I propose that we pause to rediscover some of the reasons which can help us to imitate them today.
- Francis. (2013). *Evangelii Gaudium* (pp. 195–196). Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana.



# The Saints Help Us Keep Perspective

- Every generation faces challenges. The Saints help us recognize God's unfailing grace in the midst of those difficulties. They remind us that God will provide exceedingly and abundantly.
- The Saints weren't perfect. But they were passionate and open to Grace.  
“The saints expressed in various ways the powerful and transforming presence of the Risen One. They let Jesus so totally overwhelm their life that they could say with St Paul “it is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me” (Gal 2:20). Following their example, seeking their intercession, entering into communion with them, “brings us closer to Christ, so our companionship with the saints joins us to Christ, from whom as from their fountain and head issue every grace and the life of the People of God itself” (cf. Second Vatican Council, Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, Lumen Gentium, n. 50).” BXVI



# The Narrow Road

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**Francis. (2013). *Evangelii Gaudium* (pp. 195–196). Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana.**



# The Call To Holiness

The classes and duties of life are many, but holiness is one—that sanctity which is cultivated by all who are moved by the Spirit of God, and who obey the voice of the Father and worship God the Father in spirit and in truth. These people follow the poor Christ, the humble and cross-bearing Christ in order to be worthy of being sharers in His glory. Every person must walk unhesitatingly according to his own personal gifts and duties in the path of living faith, which arouses hope and works through charity.

**Catholic Church. (2011). Dogmatic Constitution on the Church: Lumen Gentium. In Vatican II Documents. Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana.**



# Holiness Being Perfected In Love

Jesus' whole life, his way of dealing with the poor, his actions, his integrity, his simple daily acts of generosity, and finally his complete self-giving, is precious and reveals the mystery of his divine life. Whenever we encounter this anew, we become convinced that it is exactly what others need, even though they may not recognize it: "What therefore you worship as unknown, this I proclaim to you" (Acts 17:23). Sometimes we lose our enthusiasm for mission because we forget that the Gospel responds to our deepest needs, since we were created for what the Gospel offers us: friendship with Jesus and love of our brothers and sisters. If we succeed in expressing adequately and with beauty the essential content of the Gospel, surely this message will speak to the deepest yearnings of people's hearts: "The missionary is convinced that, through the working of the Spirit, there already exists in individuals and peoples an expectation, even if an unconscious one, of knowing the truth about God, about man, and about how we are to be set free from sin and death. The missionary's enthusiasm in proclaiming Christ comes from the conviction that he is responding to that expectation". Enthusiasm for evangelization is based on this conviction. We have a treasure of life and love which cannot deceive, and a message which cannot mislead or disappoint. It penetrates to the depths of our hearts, sustaining and ennobling us. It is a truth which is never out of date because it reaches that part of us which nothing else can reach. Our infinite sadness can only be cured by an infinite love.

**Francis. (2013). *Evangelii Gaudium* (pp. 197–198). Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana.**



# Be Encouraged

- “Hence the true disciple of Christ is marked by love both of God and of neighbour” (Lumen Gentium, n. 42). This is the true simplicity, greatness and depth of Christian life, of being holy. This is why St Augustine, in commenting on the fourth chapter of the First Letter of St John, could make a bold statement: “Dilige et fac quod vis [Love and do what you will]” And he continued: “If you keep silent, keep silent by love: if you speak, speak by love; if you correct, correct by love; if you pardon, pardon by love; let love be rooted in you, and from the root nothing but good can grow” (7,8 pl 35). Those who are guided by love, who live charity to the full, are guided by God, because God is love. Hence these important words apply: “Dilige et fac quod vis”, “Love and do what you will”.



# Be Encouraged

We might ask ourselves: can we, with our limitations, with our weaknesses, aim so high? During the Liturgical Year, the Church invites us to commemorate a host of saints, the ones, that is, who lived charity to the full, who knew how to love and follow Christ in their daily lives. They tell us that it is possible for everyone to take this road. In every epoch of the Church's history, on every latitude of the world map, the saints belong to all the ages and to every state of life, they are actual faces of every people, language and nation. And they have very different characters.

Actually I must say that also for my personal faith many saints, not all, are true stars in the firmament of history. And I would like to add that for me not only a few great saints whom I love and whom I know well are “signposts”, but precisely also the simple saints, that is, the good people I see in my life who will never be canonized. They are ordinary people, so to speak, without visible heroism but in their everyday goodness I see the truth of faith. This goodness, which they have developed in the faith of the Church, is for me the most reliable apology of Christianity and the sign of where the truth lies.



# Be Encouraged

In the Communion of Saints, canonized and not canonized, which the Church lives thanks to Christ in all her members, we enjoy their presence and their company and cultivate the firm hope that we shall be able to imitate their journey and share one day in the same blessed life, eternal life.

Dear friends, how great and beautiful, as well as simple is the Christian vocation seen in this light! We are all called to holiness: it is the very measure of Christian living. Once again St Paul expresses it with great intensity when he writes: “grace was given to each of us according to the measure of Christ’s gift.... His gifts were that some should be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ” (Eph 4:7, 11-13).

I would like to ask all to open themselves to the action of the Holy Spirit, who transforms our life, to be, we too, as small pieces in the great mosaic of holiness that God continues to create in history, so that the face of Christ may shine out in the fullness of its splendour. Let us not be afraid to aim high, for God’s heights; let us not be afraid that God will ask too much of us, but let ourselves be guided by his Word in every daily action, even when we feel poor, inadequate, sinners. It will be he who transforms us in accordance with his love. Many thanks. (B16 General Audience -April 13, 2011)



# Learn But Understand Everyone Is Unique

Learn from My saints. Study them. Receive their teachings. Draw inspiration from their friendship with Me. But do not try to imitate them. Each of My friends arrives at union with Me by the path traced for him by the Holy Spirit. Even when two paths may appear similar, know that they are not identical. All of these paths converge in union with Me, in the light of My Face, and all of them lead to the open door of My Sacred Heart.

Yours is the way of adoration. I have called you to abide before My Eucharistic Face and to make it possible for others to follow that same vocation. Even when many souls are called to the same way of life, each soul has its secret of love, a way of experiencing My friendship most intimately, that can be shared with no one else.



# Learn But Understand Everyone Is Unique

My love is a personal love. I love each soul that I have created as if that soul were the only soul in the universe, and I adapt My infinite love to the particular sensibilities and needs of that soul with all the wisdom and tenderness of My divine Heart. Trust in the path that I have opened before you and be faithful to it. N. is the first of a family of sons who will grow and flourish in the radiance of My Eucharistic Face.

Allow My love to direct all things. Remain little and humble. Prefer to stay in the background, allowing Me to direct and determine the course of events and the growth of this work of Mine. The more faithful you are to adoring Me in the Sacrament of My love, the more will I be faithful to you in manifesting the wonders of My providence.

Monk, A Benedictine. In Sinu Jesu: When Heart Speaks to Heart--The Journal of a Priest at Prayer (p. 151). Angelico Press. Kindle Edition.



# Personal Favorites

- St. Faustina (Love her Diary “Divine Mercy in My Soul)
- St. Francis de Sales (A great confessor, friend, and encouraging guide)
- St. Maximillian Kolbe (A light of grace in horrible darkness)
- St. John Paul II (“Jesus Christ is the center of the universe of and human history”)
- St. Augustine (Doctor of Grace)



# The Saints Were Real People

- Too often they are presented as extraordinary “untouchable”
- They had their struggles but found peace in surrendering to God’s will for their lives.
- They teach us that with God all things are possible.
- They had a sense of humor. (Lorna Kelly and Mother Teresa. St. Thomas More. St. Theresa of Avila “Lord Save us from silly devotions and sour-faced Saints!”)



# “Friends In High Places”

Larnelle Harris

I've got hope when things look  
bad  
And I can smile when I should be  
sad  
I've got friends who lift me up  
when I'm feeling low  
And they watch over me wherever  
I may go

I've got friends in high places  
So high but not so far away  
I've got friends in high places  
And I'm gonna be with them  
someday

There's the Father right by His

Son And the angels, each and  
everyone  
And other friends I miss so much  
and I long to see  
But knowing I'll be with them one  
day comforts me

I've got friends in high places  
So high but not so far away  
I've got friends in high places  
And I'm gonna be with them  
someday

Why should I run  
Why should I hide  
What's there to fear

When my friends are on my side

I've got friends in high places  
So high but not so far away  
I've got friends in high places  
And I'm gonna be with them  
someday

I've got friends in high places  
So high but not so far away  
I've got friends in high places  
And I'm gonna be with them  
Yes, I'm gonna be with them  
someday