

# The Apostles' Creed: Week 13

*...The communion of saints...*

***In the Scriptures:***

**1. Praise the Lord!**

Sing to the Lord a new song,  
And His praise in the assembly of saints.  
Let Israel rejoice in their Maker;  
Let the children of Zion be joyful in their King.  
Let them praise His name with the dance;  
Let them sing praises to Him with the timbrel and harp.  
For the Lord takes pleasure in His people;  
He will beautify the humble with salvation.  
Let the saints be joyful in glory;  
Let them sing aloud on their beds.  
Let the high praises of God be in their mouth,  
And a two-edged sword in their hand,  
To execute vengeance on the nations,  
And punishments on the peoples;  
To bind their kings with chains,  
And their nobles with fetters of iron;  
To execute on them the written judgment—  
This honor have all His saints.

Praise the Lord!

*(Psalm 149)*

- 2.** And what more should I say? For time would fail me to tell of Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, of David and Samuel and the prophets— who through faith conquered kingdoms, administered justice, obtained promises, shut the mouths of lions, quenched raging fire, escaped the edge of the sword, won strength out of weakness, became mighty in war, put foreign armies to flight. Women received their dead by resurrection. Others were tortured, refusing to accept release, in order to obtain a better resurrection. Others suffered mocking and flogging, and even chains and imprisonment. They were stoned to death, they were sawn in two, they were killed by the sword; they went about in skins of sheep and goats, destitute, persecuted, tormented— of whom the world was not worthy. They wandered in deserts and mountains, and in caves and holes in the ground.

Yet all these, though they were commended for their faith, did not receive what was promised, since God had provided something better so that they would not, apart from us, be made perfect.

Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight and the sin that clings so closely, and let us run with perseverance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus the pioneer and perfecter of our faith, who for the sake of the joy that was set before him endured the cross, disregarding its shame, and has taken his seat at the right hand of the throne of God.

*(Hebrews 11:32-12:2)*

3. After these things I looked, and behold, a great multitude which no one could number, of all nations, tribes, peoples, and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, with palm branches in their hands, and crying out with a loud voice, saying, "Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!" All the angels stood around the throne and the elders and the four living creatures, and fell on their faces before the throne and worshiped God, saying:

"Amen! Blessing and glory and wisdom,  
Thanksgiving and honor and power and might,  
Be to our God forever and ever.  
Amen."

Then one of the elders answered, saying to me, "Who are these arrayed in white robes, and where did they come from?"

And I said to him, "Sir, you know."

So he said to me, "These are the ones who come out of the great tribulation, and washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Therefore they are before the throne of God, and serve Him day and night in His temple. And He who sits on the throne will dwell among them. They shall neither hunger anymore nor thirst anymore; the sun shall not strike them, nor any heat; for the Lamb who is in the midst of the throne will shepherd them and lead them to living fountains of waters. And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes."

*(Revelation 7:9-17)*

***As described by Christian writers:***

4. The Church is simply the community of all the saints. All who from the beginning of the world were or are or will be justified – whether Patriarchs, like Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, or Prophets, whether Apostles or martyrs, or any others - make up one Church, because they are made holy by one faith and way of life, stamped with one Spirit, made into one body whose head, as we are told, is Christ. I go further. The angels and virtues and powers in heaven are co-members in this one Church, for, as the Apostle teaches us, in Christ 'all things whether on the earth or in the heavens,

have been reconciled.' You must believe, therefore, that in this one Church you are gathered into the *Communion of Saints*.

- Niceta of Remesiana, "Explanation of the Creed"

5. It is quite evident that Paul perceived himself as the member of a Body whose sympathy and cooperation he depended on. He counted on the prayers of these churches to gain for him what otherwise might not be given. The prayers of the Church were to him as real a factor in the work of the Kingdom as the power of God.

Who can say what power a church could develop and exercise if it would assume the work of praying day and night for the coming of the Kingdom, for God's power, or for the salvation of souls? Most churches think their members gather simply to take care of and edify each other. They don't know that God rules the world by the prayers of His saints, that prayer is the power by which Satan is conquered, and that through prayer the Church on earth has access to the powers of the heavenly world. They do not remember that Jesus has, by His promise, made every assembly in His Name a gate to heaven, where His presence is to be felt, and His power experienced by the Father fulfilling their desires.

- Andrew Murray, "With Christ in the School of Prayer"

6. When we remember the dead, now with the Lord, we receive new strength for the battles we face every day. We realize again that we do not exist for this life only. We remind ourselves that the daily grind, the regular struggles with temptation, the tough decisions we have to make, are part of a battle in which we will finally triumph. Remembering the dead, the door of heaven opens, and we hear the song of victory once more. We remember our ultimate destiny in God's kingdom. The cloud of witnesses stands and cheers, urging us on.

...Making worship inclusive of the whole community of saints—the living and the dead, however and whenever it's done—broadens our understanding of the church, reminds us of those who went before us on the journey of faith, and reinvigorates our trust in Christ's ultimate victory over sin and death. It's right there in one of the best-loved and most frequently sung of Christian hymns:

*Holy, holy, holy! All the saints adore thee,  
casting down their golden crowns around the glassy sea;  
cherubim and seraphim falling down before thee,  
who wert and art, and evermore shalt be.*

- Leonard J. Vander Zee, "A Cloud of Witnesses: Why We Should Celebrate All Saints' Day"

***Why we believe in the communion of saints:***

- Previously we've seen that all Christians belong to the holy universal Church, which is the Body (and Bride) of Christ. This makes us "saints", a term meaning "holy ones", which refers not just to exceptional believers but to what we all are in Christ. Since we are all part of one family, this means that the saints of past and future ages, and saints all around the world, belong to us, and their triumphs (by God's grace) are also our triumphs.
- Historically, there has been much controversy between Roman Catholics and Protestants about the intercession of saints and the afterlife. But these controversies should not distract us from some basic common ground. It is clear from Scripture that we ought to *remember* those who have gone before us, and that our worship of the Holy Trinity on earth is joined with the unceasing worship of those in heaven. Since Christ is the Resurrection and the Life, even the saints in heaven are alive in him. They share in this life with the saints on earth, as we all await the final redemption of the universe at Christ's second coming.