

St. Raymond of Penafort RCIA THE COMMUNION OF SAINTS

Before you watch the video teaching...

1. What comes to mind when you hear the word “saint”? Have you ever thought of yourself as a “saint”?
2. What do you think happens to a person when they die?

Outline for the teaching...

1. What happens to use when we die?

- The body is buried (whole or as cremated remains)
- The soul (remember, as humans we are body and soul) goes before God in judgment and (according to some) God asks one question: Did you love? We can't lie...so what will it be?
- YES – welcome to heaven
- I REALLY TRIED (but wasn't always successful) – welcome to purgatory
- NO (I did my own thing) – welcome to hell
- Don't we get “another chance”? Wouldn't that be fairer? We have plenty of chances while we are alive...none after we die.

2. Who/what are Saints?

- People who led very holy lives or lives of heroic virtue and are now in heaven
- Saint comes from the Latin word “sanctus” which means holy (or even “set apart”; different from the norm)
- Some of the saints did “great things” for the church, others lived very simple and humble lives
- Since they are in heaven, they can intercede for us (pray for us to the Father) and they are deserving of our honor because they are victorious
- A holy person who lived before Christ might also be considered a saint (see Matthew 27:52; graves open and the dead are raised)
- In Philippians 1:1 Paul sees all the believers as holy ones (saints) while they are still living on earth
- *Hagiography* is the study of and writings about lives of the saints

3. Members of the Church – The “Communion (union with) of Saints”

- How are we “related” to the saints?
- There is the *Pilgrim church* (people living on earth striving to live holy lives by following in the footsteps of Jesus; we are part of the pilgrim church until our death) – that is the group!
- There is the *Suffering church* (those who have died by were not yet “perfected” so they need to experience a purification in purgatory before they can enter into the glory of heaven; purgatory does not last forever, people will be freed and enter heaven)
- There is the *Glorified church* –(the communion or community of saints in heaven who will remain there forever with the Blessed Trinity)
- Where do we fit in?
 - We are a pilgrim people opposing evil day by day by day
 - We can pray for the souls in purgatory (remember them at Mass, have Mass offered for the dead)
 - We can seek intercession from saints (they lived in similar situations as us, what did they do?)

4. Canonization Process

- Is the Formal Declaration by the pope that a person is in heaven and that their life is worthy of imitation by the faithful of the world (think “Hall of Fame” in a way)
- In the first 1200 years of the Church, people were declared saints by the people (there was no real process)
- Pope Gregory IX restricted canonization to the pope in 1234
- It involved a “Sacred Congregation for Causes and Saints” (made up of Bishops, Theologians, Medical Doctors and a variety of lay faithful)
- The process can start 5 years after death and must demonstrate a life of heroic virtue or martyrdom and two miracles attributed to this person’s intercession (strict process for what gets called a “miracle”)

5. Stages in Canonization

- A person is declared a “Servant of God” when the local Bishop decides to begin the process after investigating the life and seeing a case for “extraordinary virtue”
- “Beatification” takes place after one miracle is found credible; the person is now called “Blessed” and allowed to be “venerated” in a local area (their religious community or the diocese or country where they lived)
- “Canonization” (meaning added to the canon, which means their names can be mentioned in the Eucharistic Prayer at Mass) takes place after a second miracle is found credible; they are now called “Saint” and “venerated” by the Universal Church as well as being given a “Feast Day” (which is usually when they died)

6. “Patron Saints”

- Given the particulars of a saint’s life, they may become “the Patron Saint” of something or some group given their own experiences. This happens by popular acclaim, the church rarely declares someone a “patron saint” in a formal way
- St Francis, Patron of Animals – he overcome fear and saw the beauty of God’s creation in animals
- St Cammilus, Patron of Nurses – he was a nurse
- St Raymond, Patron of Librarians – he establishes a library system in Spain which was used throughout the world
- St. Katherine Drexel, Patron of Racial Harmony – as a white woman she advocated for the rights of black and native Americans

Discussion Questions

1. Have you thought about “what happens when die” in this way before? Does it seem “fair to you”?
2. What about purgatory? Does it make sense to you? Do you need for information to help you understand this teaching of our Church?
3. Take some time to search for a “patron saint” for yourself (use that computer). Who is it and what is it in their life that inspires you? *If you are having a tough time with this, your faith partner can assist you of course, as can Deacon Bill or Fr. Chris.*

O when the saints, go marching in;

O when the saints go marching in;

O Lord I want to be in that number,

O when the saints go marching in. . . .