SAINTS

"We believe in the communion of Saints..." is a creedal statement. When we make this statement every time we recite the creed we say that we believe in the communion of Holy People, which is another way of saying "Church." We are joined with the holy men and women who have passed before us.

The belief in the Saints has different meanings for us, but belief in the saints is connected to other important teachings in the Catholic Church. Belief in the saints expresses our belief that Life continues on, that there is an after-life. We believe that the saints are one with God in heaven, and are alive.

This also means that belief in the Saints expresses our belief in what that life is like. When we die, we do not lose of individuality, we don't disappear into nothingness. Rather, we are perfected in our individuality. We truly become who we are. We believe in the saints and they retain their name. It is teaches us that life is changed not ended, and therefore relationships take on different form, not ended either.

A belief in the saints tells us that heaven is not a place of rest and relaxation, sleeping on puffy white clouds. It is not a time of rest, but work, the saints keep on working for us. The saints represent God's continual saving work.

Catholics do NOT worship the Saints; we worship God and what God does. We honor those men and women who have given their lives to God and continue to do so. We honor them as people who still are connected to us, and are our friends.

A Saint is a person who manifested holiness in their life, and continued work of salvation. That work continued even into heaven through their writings that exist, through their examples, and through their constant prayer on our behalf.

All people are called to be saints. The Vatican II document, Lumen Gentium, Chapter 5, paragraph 39 states:

> Therefore all in the Church…are called to holiness...it is expressed in many ways by the individuals who, each in his own state of life, tend to the perfection of love, thus helping others to grow in holiness…

and in paragraph 40:

> It is therefore quite clear that <u>all Christians in any state or walk of life</u> are called to the fullness of Christian life and to the perfection of love and by this holiness a more human manner of life is fostered also in earthly society."

All people, not just priests, nuns, brothers, are called to be saints. This is not just for our own individual sake, but for the communal good. Holiness is that way we grow in love in each of our lives. It is how we live with one another, handle issues, difficulties, how we care for one another. It is not necessarily about following all the rules and regulations.

TYPES OF SAINTS

The very first saints in Christianity were the martyrs. The word "Martyr" means "witness;" that men and women gave witness to the faith by their acceptance of death. A martyr is one who was killed because they believed in the Christian faith, and refused to recant that faith. A martyr is not one who kills himself or herself, as we see in suicide bombers. A person who kills himself or herself is a corruption of the faith.

The Roman government persecuted people who were Christians, and many of these martyrs are know and continued to be honored, such as Ignatius of Antioch, Linus, Cletus, Perpetua & Felicity. These are some of the names we pray for in the Eucharistic Prayer I.

Saints are also people who led exemplary lives, demonstrated heroic virtues, a person of with a deep prayer life, or did good works. Saints were also men and women who promoted of faith, such as St. Robert Bellarmine. Some saints were people who experienced a deep conversion. It seems many of these were male who started off life being libertine, rich, spoiled, etc, and had something happened that opened their eyes. Saint Francis of Assisi is a good example of this type of Saint.

<u>Canonization Process</u>

The process to become a saint is rather long. First, the person must have been dead at least 5 years. The deceased then needs a fan club, so to speak, that begins to speak on their behalf, citing their goodness. They solicit the bishop of the diocese in which the person died to officially begin an investigation into the life of that person. The bishop obtains permission to proceed from the Vatican, and then sets up tribunal to investigate.

The tribunal collects witnesses to the life of the person, concrete facts of theological and heroic virtues, and other pertinent issues. They also collect documents are important.

All data passed to the Congregation for the Cause of Saints, and a promoter provides data to nine theologians who go through work and give their assent/dissent. If majority of assents is given, then the information is passed to Cardinal/Bishops of Congregation for the Cause of Saints for their assent/dissent. If this favorable, it goes to Pope for approval and he tells the Congregation to draft a decree, called "Decree on Heroic Virtues." A public reading of decree is made the person receives the title "Servant of God."

For beatification, a verifiable miracle needed that has been thoroughly investigated. If approved, then Pope declares the person "Blessed." To formally become a Saint another verifiable miracle must occur after "Blessed" status. If this occurs, Pope pronounces Canonization

Liturgically we celebrate the saints in a number of ways. November 1st is a Holy day, "All Saints." We formally recognize our saints in the Eucharist on this day, in close association with "All Souls" celebrated on November 2nd.

We also invoke the saints in the "Litany of Saints" which is sung at ordinations and baptisms, especially and beautifully during the Easter Vigil when we baptized those adults into

the faith.

Saints also have their individual days in which we remember them and celebrate their lives. Generally the Saint's day is the day of their death. There is a protocol or hierarchy to how we celebrate a Saints day in the Eucharist. First we remember that all direct celebrations of Jesus take primacy over any saint. So we very seldom celebrate a saint's day on Sunday.

The highest order of Saint's days is a Solemnity. A solemnity is for our "major" saints, such as the four evangelists, John the Baptist, Joseph, and of course the Virgin Mary. This usually means a Gloria is sung, the prescribed readings must be read, and the particular preface and prayers are to be used.

Memorials are "Famous" saints. The masses for these saints don't require a Gloria, but may prescribe the readings, and may or may not use a specific preface. Certain saints can get can get higher precedence if parish/diocese has them as special patron.