



Boston Catholic Journal



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The Communion of Saints

“And therefore we also having so great a cloud of witnesses over our head, laying aside every weight and sin which surrounds us, let us run by patience to the fight proposed to us.” (Hebrews 12.1)

... and the Kingdom of God

There are *Three Divine Persons* in One God – which we call the **Most Holy Trinity.**

Just so, as it were, there are *three bodies in One Church* — which we call the **One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church**.

This is not strange at all — since the Church is the Body of Christ and reflects within itself the Trinitarian nature of Him in Whom, through Whom, and for Whom it exists.

The Three Divine Persons in the Most Holy Trinity are, of course: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost.

The three divine bodies in the Holy Catholic Church are: **The Church Militant, the Church Suffering, and the Church Triumphant.**

Just as there are not three Gods, but three Persons in One God, there are not three Churches, but three bodies in the *one Church*:

- **The Church Militant** — that’s us, here on earth, *battling sin, evil, all the darkness that surrounds us* — and lurks within us ...
- **The Church Suffering** — these are the souls in Purgatory who have battled, won, and died ... but are, as it were, scarred, still wounded, and cannot yet attain to Heaven until the wounds are cleansed and healed, the scars that mar the *Imago Dei*, the Image of God, in which they were created in unspeakable beauty, are transformed, like the wounded body of Christ Himself on the Cross, into beauty, into glory, through the Resurrection, upon which the gates of Heaven will be flung open to them.
- **The Church Triumphant** — these are the souls in Heaven; *they have conquered: the world, sin, evil, and through Jesus Christ, death itself!* They have “**fought the good fight**”, they “**have finished the race**” and have acquired the laurel of victory, of victory over sin and death. They behold the face of God. Cleansed in the Blood of the Lamb, of all stain of sin, they have been made the image of God unmarred, and because they are spotless — they can see God un-obscured. They have become “like unto Him”. The image of God in which they were created, flawlessly reflects Him by Whom they were created. They are one with Him (although they are not Him).

This is the Holy Catholic Church: the Church *Militant*, the Church *Suffering*, and the Church *Triumphant* one Church, the members of whom — on earth, in Purgatory, in Heaven — are the one Body, the Church ... inseparable from each other. We all assist each other. *We* pray for the souls of our dead who have yet to *attain* the Kingdom — and they pray for us, *awaiting* the Kingdom!

Those already *in* the Kingdom pray for *both*. And *we* pray to them, asking *their intercession* for us on our often long and painful journey. They hear us, and yes, they help us. To place it in better perspective, would *you* turn a deaf ear to, or step aside from, your brother or your sister who in manifestly desperate straits implored *your* help here on earth?

Of course not! Neither do the the souls in Purgatory or the Saints in Heaven remain indifferent to us when we cry to *them* in our pain. **As *we* are *they* once were.** Knowing our infirmity they pray for us, for the grace that we need to endure suffering and trial, for the strength we require when our own strength is depleted, for perseverance in the face of violent persecution ... helping us, through their intercession, to do what we cannot of ourselves alone.

Do you not see it now? ***The Kingdom of Heaven is within ... it is among you!***

Do not ask *where* it is. It is in your midst. You are “**surrounded by a cloud of witnesses**”, seen and unseen, and they are, we are, all citizens of the one Kingdom.

There *is*, however, one catch: you have to surrender your passport to the world ... you must trade it for the seal of the Lamb that will bring you to your real and everlasting home: the hall of the King. He Who has prepared a place for you ... and all who await you ...

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