



What's What

A weekly communication that provides an opportunity for our faith community to grow together in faith.

Praying to the Saints

Many people, both Catholic and non-Catholic alike, often wonder why Catholics pray to saints. After all, the saints are human beings. Why not pray directly to God?

While it is certainly true that the saints are human, the Church has a long tradition of praying to (or more correctly stated, praying through the intercession of) the saints. Originally the word "saint" was used to describe any member of the Christian faith community. Christians, believing in the resurrection, believe that membership in this community does not end when a person dies. In fact the dead are said to join the "communion of saints" in heaven. In modern usage the term saint refers to anyone who is in heaven.

Catholics do not pray to saints (including Mary), properly speaking. Prayer is communication with God. However, Catholics do communicate with the saints, as they are also members of the Church and community of believers. As members of the Church, the saints in heaven can and do provide us with assistance. This is not because God is too busy to help us or hear our prayer. It is because there is a bond of love that exists between the people in heaven and the people on earth. Because of this bond, we can ask the saints for assistance, guidance and prayer in the same way that we can ask these things of people alive today.

The saints, having completed their earthly lives, are in a unique position to assist us in our Christian journey. Being in heaven with God, they have a perspective that we do not have. It is for this reason that we often ask the saints for guidance, assistance and strength.

It is important to remember that the saints have experienced many of the same joys, hardships and struggles that we face in our own faith journey. This makes them excellent people to "lean on" or ask for support. For example, St. Monica can be a model of perseverance in prayer, as she prayed for her son (St. Augustine) when he ceased to believe in Christ. Since the saints have struggled and been victorious in their struggles, it only makes sense that we turn to them for help when we face similar struggles.

Catholics often read the writings of the saints as a way of learning how they handled their struggles. These writings include stories of how they overcame life's difficulties, as well as the mistakes they made in their lives. The great thing about the writings of the saints is that it provides the Church with 2,000 years of experience in living the Christian life. The saints have taught us that there is great diversity in the manner in which our Christianity can be lived out. This means that we do not have to fit into one mold. We can be ourselves in responding to

the call to know, love and serve God.

While there is great diversity among the way the saints lived their lives, there is a theme they all share in common, the saints always point us to Christ. They show us how they were able to enter into a deep relationship with Christ, and they want the same for each one of us. Thus, they are always willing to assist us in our quest to grow closer to Christ. Because the saints are willing to help us find our way to Christ, we invoke their name in prayer, and welcome their assistance.

- by Deacon Brian Carpenter

Issue 31 —
Praying to the Saints
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Things to talk about:

- Do you ever ask for the saints to pray for you?
- When you were confirmed did you chose a patron saint? If so, who and why?
- How do the saints help you understand your connection to the larger church?

Did You Know?

St. Therese of Lisieux said "Until the end of the world I will spend my heaven doing good upon the earth." Her statement shows how she believed that the saints can and do provide assistance for the Church on earth.

June 29 is the feast of Saints Peter and Paul. It is one of the few feasts for a Saint that can be celebrated on Sunday's due to the universal significance of these two saints to the universal Church.

Canonized Saints are those who have gone through a Church process called canonization. Among other things, this lengthy process seeks confirmation of 2 miracles attributed to the saint after his/her death. This is a form of confirming that the Saint is in Heaven. When a Saint is canonized, the Saint may be publicly invoked in liturgy, most commonly in the Litany of the Saints and the Canon of the Mass.

Canonization does not make someone a Saint: it is only a declaration that the person is a Saint. It is generally recognized that there are many more saints in heaven than have been canonized on earth.

The earliest Saints, such as Peter and Paul, were not canonized. They were declared Saints by popular consensus.



Saints of the Day: The Apostles Peter and Paul

Peter

The New Testament clearly shows Peter as the leader of the apostles, chosen by Jesus to have a special relationship with him. With James and John he was privileged to witness the Transfiguration, the raising of a dead child to life and the agony in Gethsemane. His mother-in-law was cured by Jesus. He was sent with John to prepare for the last Passover before Jesus' death. His name is first on every list of apostles.

And to Peter only did Jesus say, "Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah. For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my heavenly Father. And so I say to you, you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church, and the gates of the nether world shall not prevail against it. I will give you the keys to the kingdom of heaven. Whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven; and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven" (Matthew 16:17b-19).

But the Gospels prove their own veracity by the unflattering details they include about Peter. He clearly had no public relations person. It is a great comfort for ordinary mortals to know that Peter also has his human weakness, even in the presence of Jesus.

He generously gave up all things, yet he can

ask in childish self-regard, "What are we going to get for all this?" (see Matthew 19:27). He receives the full force of Christ's anger when he objects to the idea of a suffering Messiah: "Get behind me, Satan! You are an obstacle to me. You are thinking not as God does, but as human beings do" (Matthew 16:23b).

Peter is willing to accept Jesus' doctrine of forgiveness, but suggests a limit of seven times. He walks on the water in faith, but sinks in doubt. He refuses to let Jesus wash his feet, then wants his whole body cleansed. He swears at the Last Supper that he will never deny Jesus, and then swears to a servant maid that he has never known the man. He loyally resists the first attempt to arrest Jesus by cutting off Malchus's ear, but in the end he runs away with the others. In the depth of his sorrow, Jesus looks on him and forgives him, and he goes out and sheds bitter tears.

Paul

If Billy Graham suddenly began preaching that the United States should adopt Marxism and not rely on the Constitution, the angry reaction would help us understand Paul's life when he started preaching that Christ alone can save us. He had been the most Pharisaiic of Pharisees, the most legalistic of Mosaic

lawyers. Now he suddenly appears to other Jews as a heretical welcomer of Gentiles, a traitor and apostate.

Paul's central conviction was simple and absolute: Only God can save humanity. No human effort—even the most scrupulous observance of law—can create a human good which we can bring to God as reparation for sin and payment for grace. To be saved from itself, from sin, from the devil and from death, humanity must open itself completely to the saving power of Jesus.

Paul never lost his love for his Jewish family, though he carried on a lifelong debate with them about the uselessness of the Law without Christ. He reminded the Gentiles that they were grafted on the parent stock of the Jews, who were still God's chosen people, the children of the promise.

In light of his preaching and teaching skills, Paul's name has surfaced (among others) as a possible patron of the Internet.

From www.americancatholic.org/features/saintofday/



Connections to Doctrine & Tradition

- St. Peter is the first Pope of the Church. The scriptural basis for the papacy can be seen when Jesus give all authority to Peter. (Mt 16:18-19). Benedict XVI is the 264th successor of St. Peter.
- The succession of Popes guarantees that the authentic teaching of the apostles is preserved in the Catholic Church (CCC 857).
- The Papacy is a visible sign of unity within the Church (LG 23)
- At the Council of Jerusalem (circa A.D. 50) St. Paul was given permission to preach to the gentiles.

Want to know more?

Would you like to know more about the Saints? Check out the following books and websites for more information:

- [My Life With the Saints](#) by Fr. James Martin, S.J.
- [Butler's Lives of the Saints](#) by Alban Butler
- <http://saints.sqpn.com/patron00.htm>

These are just suggestions. In providing these we assume no responsibility for, nor do we necessarily endorse these books or websites, their content, or their sponsoring organizations.

"What's What" is a publication of the Youth Ministry Department of St Mary, Canandaigua, and St Bridget, Bloomfield.

Our Youth Ministry Mission Statement:

Building on the mission of our parishes to follow the way of Christ in our thoughts, words, and deeds, and to make Christ more fully present in all who live within our community, the Youth Ministry mission is to empower young people to live as disciples of Jesus Christ in the world today; to affirm the gifts of our youth and provide opportunities for young people to share their gifts with the larger community; and to meet the religious, spiritual and social needs of all youth with the committed leadership, guidance and support of our parish family, providing an opportunity for our entire faith community to grow together in Christian faith.