



The Catechism of the Catholic Church – 27th March 2024

Catechism Commentary 23

This week's readings begin by talking about the communion of saints, a phrase that is used in the Apostles Creed. This communion of people consists of three levels, so to speak.

- **Firstly**, there is the Church Triumphant, i.e., the faithful that have already reached their heavenly home whether canonized or not. Needless to say, Mary the Mother of God, is the greatest saint in heaven. Not only do the saints praise God, they intercede for members of the church suffering and militant. The Council of Trent (1545-1563) taught that: "the saints who reign together with Christ offer up their own prayers to God for people. It is good and useful suppliantly to invoke them, and to have recourse to their prayers, aid, and help for obtaining benefits from God, through His Son Jesus Christ our Lord, who alone is our Redeemer and Saviour."
- **Secondly**, there is the Church Suffering, i.e., those who are being cleansed of their sins in purgatory
- **Thirdly**, there is the Church Militant, i.e., those who are still pilgrims on earth, who have many means of holiness available to them, e.g., in the form of such things as the sacraments, the scriptures, and Church teaching.

Mary, is the most eminent person in the Church Triumphant. The Father chose her from among all women to be the mother, according to human nature, of His Divine Son. As she is Mother of Christ in the natural order, she is also the Mother of His Mystical Body, the Church, of which He is the Head in the order of grace. She is our gracious advocate who constantly intercedes for all her children, those in purgatory and those on earth. St Bernard said of her: **"Our heavenly Father who wants to show all possible mercy, gives us Jesus Christ as our principal advocate, and then gives us Mary as our advocate with Jesus."**

- The Second Vatican Council acknowledged and endorsed what Catholic tradition had repeatedly said about Mary's intercessory role when it declared: **"The Blessed Virgin is invoked in the Church under the title of Advocate.....By her maternal charity, she cares for the brothers and sisters of her Son, who still journey on earth surrounded by dangers and difficulties, until they are led into their blessed home."**
- In the *Memorare*, which dates back to the third century, we say: **"Remember, O most gracious Virgin Mary, that never was it known that anyone fled to your protection or sought your intercession was left unaided."**

- Pope Pius VII summed up what we have said so far when he declared in 1805: **"While the prayers of those in heaven have, it is true, some claim on God's watchful eye, Mary's prayers place their assurance in a mother's right. For that reason, when she approaches her divine Son's throne, as Advocate she begs, as Handmaid she prays, but as Mother she commands."**

Sometimes non-Catholics mistakenly maintain that Catholics worship Mary. While we reverence both God and Mary, we do so in quite distinct ways. St Thomas Aquinas wrote, **"Reverence is due to God on account of his excellence, which is communicated to certain creatures not in equal measure, but according to a measure of proportion; and so the reverence which we pay to God, and which belongs to *latria* (i.e., worship), differs from the reverence which we pay to certain excellent creatures; this belongs to *dulia* (i.e., honour or veneration)."** So in English we could say that while we *worship* only God, we *venerate* the saints and especially Mary the Mother of God.

Speaking about Our Lady, Vatican II said that she will, **"Shine forth on earth, until the day of the Lord shall come, as a sign of sure hope and solace to the people of God during its sojourn on earth."** Mary has gone before us in faith and also as a first fruit of the Resurrection, which all the faithful will experience at the end of time (1 Corinthians 15:20-21). The Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary is a sign for us as to what is in store for all those who stay faithful to her Son Jesus Christ.

The final session, no. 24, will be on Wed 10th April at 7.30 PM.

Happy Easter.