

## “Year of the Eucharist”—The Communion of Saints—Fr. Steve Lape



God right along with us as we pray, sing and rejoice in God’s eternal love & mercy. We are all one family in Christ, as we hope to someday be forever where these saints are (in Heaven with God), and as the saints in Heaven pray for us to stay close to Christ & join them.

As St. Bernard, the 12th century abbot, once said in a sermon: “Calling the saints to mind inspires, or rather arouses in us, above all else, a longing to enjoy

As we continue to celebrate the “Year of the Eucharist” in our diocese until June 2018, it’s important to reflect on why celebrating Mass is so central to our Catholic life. Considering that the month of November is a special time of awareness of loved ones who have died, with All Saints Day on Nov. 1st and All Souls Day on Nov. 2nd, it’s fitting to think about the Eucharist in terms of being a “communion of saints.” It’s an expression found in the Apostles Creed, which is shorter and sometimes used in place of the Nicene Creed, which is what we usually say after the homily at Mass. (You can compare the two in the front page of the Gather hymnals.)

Whenever we celebrate Mass together--to be nourished by God’s inspired words from the Bible, by receiving Jesus’ Body and Blood, and by the encouraging presence of our brothers and sisters in Christ who gather with us for worship and praise as One Body of Christ—we are not the only ones present for this celebration. The saints in Heaven also celebrate with us! Every Mass on earth points to the eternal banquet we long to share with the saints in Heaven. Thus, we are being given a taste of Heaven on earth in every Mass! Although we cannot see or hear them, the heavenly saints are worshipping and praising

their company, so desirable in itself. We long to share in the citizenship of heaven, to dwell with the spirits of the blessed, to join the assembly of patriarchs, the ranks of the prophets, the council of apostles, the great host of martyrs, the noble company of confessors and the choir of virgins. In short, we long to be united in happiness with all the saints... Therefore, we should aim at attaining this glory with a wholehearted and prudent desire.” (from *The Liturgy of the Hours*, Vol. 4, p.1526-27)

The Catechism of the Catholic Church sums it up this way: “Communion of saints...refers first to the ‘holy things’, above all the Eucharist, by which ‘the unity of believers, who form one body in Christ, is both represented and brought about.’ ‘Communion of saints’ refers also to the communion of ‘holy persons’ in Christ who ‘died for all,’ so that what each one does or suffers in and for Christ bears fruit for all. We believe in the communion of all the faithful of Christ, those who are pilgrims on earth, the dead who are being purified (in purgatory), and the blessed in heaven, all together forming one Church...” (#960-962) Thus, our main purpose in life should always be to become a heavenly saint. May our words & deeds always be clear in showing that desire!