

Belonging to the Communion of Saints

“Since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us . . . persevere . . . while keeping our eyes fixed on Jesus.”

(Hebrews 12:1–2)

+ Leader: As we strive to live our faith, let us pray a litany of saints, asking for the help of Mary, the saints, and all great witnesses to Jesus in the Church.

Group 1: Lord, have mercy.
Christ, have mercy.
Lord, have mercy.
Holy Mary, Mother of God,
Saint Michael,
Holy angels of God,
Saint Peter and Saint Paul,
Saint John,
Saint Stephen,
Saint Perpetua and Saint Felicity,
Saint Prisca,
Saint Gregory,
Saint Augustine,
Saint Basil,
Saint Benedict,
Saint Francis and Saint Dominic,
Saint Catherine,
Saint Teresa,
(Add other saints as desired.)
All holy men and women,

Group 2: Lord, have mercy.
Christ, have mercy.
Lord, have mercy.
pray for us.
pray for us.
pray for us.
pray for us.
pray for us.
pray for us.
pray for us.
pray for us.
pray for us.
pray for us.
pray for us.
pray for us.
pray for us.
pray for us.
pray for us.

All: God of our ancestors . . .
We are surrounded by these witnesses . . .
In their midst we make every prayer
through Christ who is our Lord for ever and ever.
Amen.

(adapted from *Catholic Household Blessings and Prayers*)

The BIG Question:

In what ways do I live my Catholic faith?



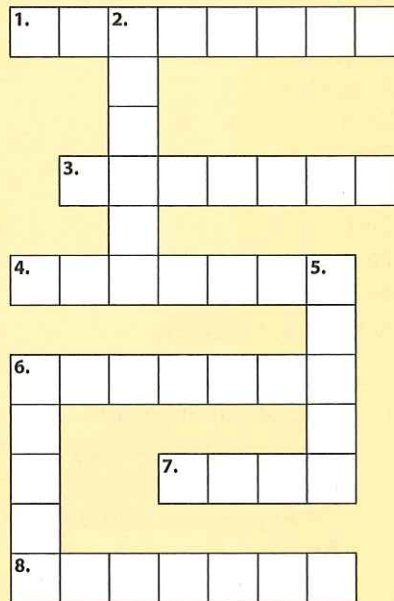
Discover some Catholics who truly lived their faith. The clues below describe some of the "Partners in Faith" you have studied this year. Use the clues to solve the crossword puzzle.

Across

1. "Everything starts with prayer" are the words of Blessed Teresa of _____.
3. To combat heresy and preach the Gospel, Saint _____ de Guzman founded the Order of Preachers.
4. Saint _____ of Assisi founded an order of mendicant friars called the Order of Friars Minor.
6. As Bishop of Milan, Saint _____ defended the truth of Christ's divinity against the Arian heresy.
7. Sister _____ Bowman shared God's message of love through song, story, poetry, and prayer.
8. Saint _____ Hurtado Cruchaga worked for the rights of workers, the homeless, and the poor in Chile.

Down

2. The Society of Jesus was founded by Saint Ignatius of _____, who also developed a method of prayer known as the Spiritual Exercises.
5. Saint Catherine of _____ used her wisdom to help others, including the pope, to make right decisions.
6. The daughter of a noble Spanish family, Saint Teresa of _____ was a brilliant spiritual writer.



Answers:

Across:
1. Calcutta
3. Dominic
4. Francis
6. Ambrose
7. Thea
8. Alberto
Down:
2. Loyola
5. Siena
6. Avila

Who was your favorite "Partner in Faith" discussed in this book? Make a list of clues about that person and have a partner guess who you are describing.

In this chapter

we learn that, as members of the Church, the Body of Christ, we belong to the Communion of Saints. Through this chapter, we hope



to understand that together we are called to become living examples of God's love



to await the day on which we will share in life everlasting with Mary and the entire Communion of Saints



to live our faith as the Pilgrim People of God, loving one another and giving witness to Jesus and our faith in him.

By completing this book you have hopefully learned much about what it means to live your faith as a member of the Church. You have read about the Church and her history, which has included times of great turmoil and times of incredible joy.

Each of us is a part of the Church's rich heritage. As disciples of Jesus, we are members of a community that has grown throughout the ages. We are closely connected to those in history who came before us. We are equally connected to those who will come after us.

Throughout this book you've been asked big questions. You've explored what you know and how you feel. You've met people whose courage and steadfastness have encouraged you in large or small ways. You have set goals for yourself and have been challenged to learn more about your faith and define

who you are—a young Catholic with a rich heritage and a promising future.

Reflect on the heritage of the Church. How are you an important part of this rich heritage? of the Church's future?

Activity Think about who you are, especially in light of your belonging to the Church. How would you describe yourself to a younger person learning about ways to live his or her faith? Write this description below.

WHERE?
am i going in life?

**WHAT DO I DO TO
TAKE CHARGE
OF MY LIFE?**

**Does my
VOICE
count?**

Do I welcome
change
or do I fear it?

**How do I
make decisions?**

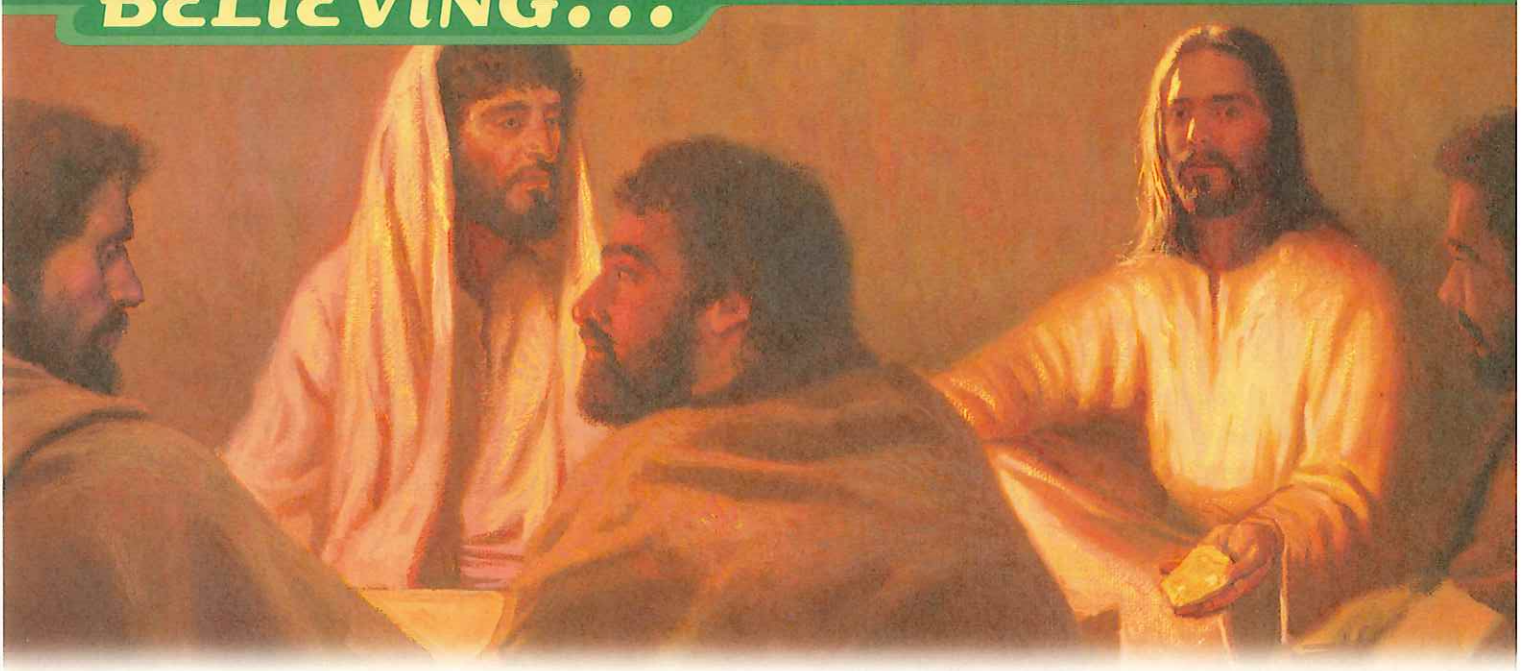
?

why do I need to follow laws?

“The foregoing generations beheld God and nature face to face; we, through their eyes,” wrote Ralph Waldo Emerson (1803–1882), U.S. essayist, poet, and philosopher.

**What helps me to
achieve my goals?**

?



Jesus Christ calls all of us into communion with his Father.

Jesus taught his disciples about many things. He taught them about God his Father and about his relationship to the Father and to them. He said, “I am the true vine, and my Father is the vine grower. . . . you are the branches. Whoever remains in me and I in him will bear much fruit” (John 15:1, 5). Jesus called his disciples to be joined to him—in union with him—as branches are joined to a vine. He wanted his disciples to share in the love and care of the Father, the vine grower. Jesus wanted his disciples to be in communion—in a deep relationship of love and unity—with God and with one another.

At the Last Supper Jesus prayed to his Father for his disciples, saying, “I pray not only for them, but also for those who will believe in me through their word, so that they may all be one, as you, Father, are in me and I in you” (John 17:20–21). Jesus’ prayer was for all of his disciples through the ages—that they might be one, united in the faith that is passed on through the Apostles. Jesus asked his Father to bring all who would come to know him and believe in him into a deep relationship of love and unity with God and one another. Jesus asked that they would grow “in communion.”

On the day now known as Pentecost, the Holy Spirit strengthened the faith and unity of Jesus’ disciples. The Holy Spirit brought the world into “the time of the Church” (CCC, 732). Filled with the

Holy Spirit, the disciples recognized the Eucharist as the reality of Christ’s presence in the breaking of the bread. They understood that “all who eat the one broken bread, Christ, enter into communion with him and form but one body in him” (CCC, 1329). They shared a communion:

- in the faith
- of the sacraments
- of *charisms*, or special graces
- of possessions
- in charity.

As a community of disciples, the members of the early Church “devoted themselves to the teaching of the apostles and to the communal life, to the breaking of the bread and to the prayers. . . . And every day the Lord added to their number those who were being saved” (Acts of the Apostles 2:42, 47).

Activity What are some ways your life can show that you are part of a community of disciples who live in communion with God? As a group, role-play these ways.



Together all faithful members of the Church are joined in the Communion of Saints.

In Baptism we are saved—freed from sin—and born into the Church, the family of God. We are joined to Jesus Christ and filled with the Holy Spirit. We become part of the Body of Christ, the Church, and are united with all those who have been baptized in Christ. The Holy Spirit works in each of us, members of Christ's Body,

- preparing us through his grace to move toward Christ
- manifesting to us the meaning of Christ's Death and Resurrection
- making present the mystery of Christ, especially in the Eucharist
- bringing us into communion with God, to reconcile us and ready us to live with him forever.

As disciples of Christ and faithful members of the Church, we, like the first disciples, are called to the mission of sharing the Good News of Christ and spreading the Kingdom of God. We are called to live as the image of God in which we were created—giving witness to God's presence in the world. We are called to become living examples of God's love to everyone we meet. And to do this we need the help of other disciples. We need their example, their solidarity with us, their prayers on our behalf, and their encouragement to support us. We need the Church—the communion of all of those who have been baptized and who believe in and follow Jesus Christ.

As members of the Church, together we proclaim our beliefs. In the Apostles' Creed, after we state our belief in "the holy catholic Church," we acknowledge that we believe in "the communion of saints." The Church is the *Communion of Saints*. This communion

is a union "in holy things," especially the Eucharist. It is also a communion "among holy persons," the faithful united in Christ.

The *Catechism* explains the Communion of Saints as "the communion of all the faithful of Christ, those who are pilgrims on earth, the dead who are attaining their purification, and the blessed in heaven, all together forming one Church" (CCC, 962, quoting *Credo of the People of God*, 30).

All the members of the Church, from her very beginning until the present, are joined in the Communion of Saints, all praying for one another and helping one another to spread God's

Kingdom here on earth while looking toward the fullness of the Kingdom in heaven.

"All who eat the one broken bread, Christ, enter into communion with him and form but one body in him."

(CCC, 1329)

Activity Reread this page and highlight the statements that you think are most important. Then prepare an announcement sharing this good news.

Popular devotions

Members of the Church can give worship to God and honor the saints through *popular devotions*. Although liturgical worship is our official way of praying, a popular devotion is a way of prayer that has grown up "among the people." Some examples of popular devotions, or "popular piety," are "the veneration of relics, visits to sanctuaries, pilgrimages, processions, the stations of the cross, religious dances, the rosary, medals, etc." (CCC, 1674). These devotions enrich, but may not replace, the Mass and the liturgical life of the Church. Popular devotions may be encouraged and supported in parish and diocesan life, but bishops have a responsibility to ensure that popular devotions lead to a deeper living of the Gospel of Christ. And popular devotions should never encourage an attitude of superstition or "magical thinking" about the way God gives us his blessings.

What devotions are popular in your family, parish, or diocese?

CATHOLIC IDENTITY

Mary is our greatest saint and the perfect example of discipleship.

How can we help one another to grow in holiness?

From the beginning of the Church, some members of the Communion of Saints have been remembered in a special way. We honor martyrs, who died heroically for their faith in Jesus Christ, and all other saints who lived lives of holiness on earth and now share in the joy of eternal life with God. Because the saints are closely united to Christ, they pray for us constantly. They help the Church to grow in holiness. Their love for the Church is great. Other holy men and women were also friends and servants of God. The lives of all these people are examples for us.

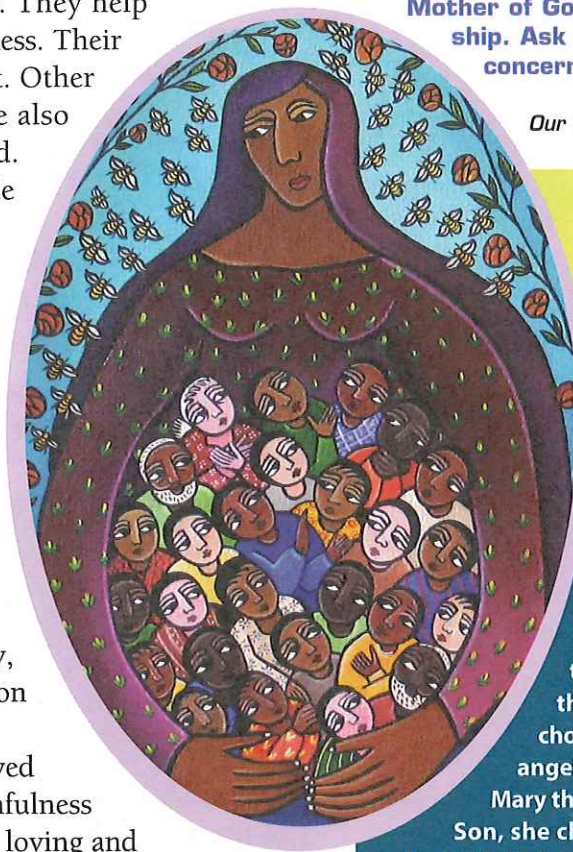
In this Communion of Saints, the Church, we consider the Blessed Virgin Mary to be our greatest example of holiness. Her role is inseparable from her union with Christ and flows directly from it. Mary is the Mother of the Son of God, the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity, Jesus Christ. She was in union with Christ from the very moment that he was conceived within her. And Mary's faithfulness to God, her openness to his loving and saving plan, and her love and care for Jesus throughout his life and throughout his suffering and Death truly show that she was Jesus' first and most faithful disciple.

Dying on the Cross, Jesus said to his disciple John, "Behold, your mother" (John 19:27). Through these words Jesus gave us—those who believe in and follow him—his mother, Mary, as our Mother and the Mother of the Church. And even after Jesus' Death and Resurrection, as the disciples waited in prayer and with hope for the coming of the Holy Spirit, Mary, their mother, waited with them.

Looking forward to the glory that we will someday share with God—the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—we, members of the Communion of Saints, look to Mary for our example of faithful discipleship. Like Mary we are called to live in openness to God's loving and saving plan for us. And we await the day on which we will share in life everlasting with Mary and all the other holy men and women in the Church.

Activity Meditate on the phrase *Behold, your mother*. Think of Mary. Reflect on her as the Mother of God and our role model for discipleship. Ask Mary to bring your prayers and concerns to her son.

Our Lady by Laura James



Mysteries of Mary's life

The Immaculate Conception: From the moment she was conceived, God preserved Mary from all sin, even from Original Sin, which affects every other human being born into this world. God preserved Mary from sin because he had chosen her to be the Mother of his only Son, Jesus Christ.

The Annunciation: Mary's vocation as the Mother of God did not mean that she had no responsibility for her choices. At the Annunciation, when the angel Gabriel announced to the Virgin Mary that she was to be the Mother of God's Son, she chose to reply in faithfulness and trust, "Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord. May it be done to me according to your word" (Luke 1:38).

The Assumption: At the end of her life on earth, God blessed Mary in an extraordinary way: He brought her, body and soul, to live forever with the Risen Christ. This event, known as the Assumption of Mary, is an important feast in the Church and is a Holy Day of Obligation in many countries. As the *Catechism* states, "The Assumption of the Blessed Virgin is a singular participation in her Son's Resurrection and an anticipation of the resurrection of other Christians" (966).

Pray the Hail Mary, asking Mary to pray to God that you too will be Jesus' faithful disciple.

We are the Pilgrim People of God.

As Jesus' disciples and members of the Church, we look to Mary as the mother of Jesus and as our Mother, knowing that, "in the bodily and spiritual glory which she possesses in heaven, the Mother of Jesus continues in this present world as the image and first flowering of the Church as she is to be perfected in the world to come" (*Dogmatic Constitution on the Church*, 68).

We are the Pilgrim People of God. We are on an earthly pilgrimage toward the fulfillment of God's Kingdom. On this journey we are joined with all those members of the Church before us who have lived their faith in Jesus Christ. We are filled with the Holy Spirit, who dwells in and is shown forth through the Church's Tradition, Scripture, Magisterium, liturgy, prayer, charisms and ministries, signs of apostolic and missionary life, and witness of the saints. Through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit we, with all those who have preceded us

and will follow us, are the People of God, the Body of Christ, the Communion of Saints, the seed of God's Kingdom on earth. And our mission is to proclaim the Good News of Christ and to evangelize the world.

"We await the day on which we will share in life everlasting with Mary and all the other holy men and women in the Church."

As disciples of Christ and members of the Church we await the fulfillment of God's Kingdom—when Christ will come again in glory at the end of time. *We live our faith*, acting justly, focusing on loving

God and one another, and giving witness to Jesus and to our faith in him!

Activity Work together to write a mission statement for the Pilgrim People of God who live their faith each day. How will you put it into action in your own life?



Recognizing Our Faith

Recall the question at the beginning of this chapter: *In what ways do I live my Catholic faith?* Write down several ways that you can live your faith. In what way has what you have learned in this course affected your response?

Living Our Faith

Decide on one topic or saint from this book that you would want to learn more about or explore on your own.

The Seven Martyrs of Thailand

In 1940 Thailand was at war with its neighboring countries. Foreign missionaries were banned from the country. Catholics living in Thailand were ordered to adopt Buddhism, the religion practiced by the Thai ruler. But many Catholics refused to give up their faith. Seven of these Catholics especially stand out. Among them was Philip Sipong, a father and catechist. He refused to stop teaching about Jesus and so was shot by police. The police then rounded up six other people, including two religious sisters, and ordered them to give up their faith. But they also refused. On December 26, 1940, they were marched to the village cemetery and shot to death. The youngest of these martyrs was fourteen!

Partners in FAITH

In 1989 Pope John Paul II beatified the seven martyrs of Thailand: Philip Sipong, Sister Agnes Phila, Sister Lucia Khambang, Agatha Phutta, Cecilia Butsi, Bibiana Khampai, and Maria Phon. Today a church stands at the place of their execution in Songkhon, Thailand.

What needs of the Church can we bring to these martyrs—these members of the Communion of Saints who pray to God on our behalf?



Putting Faith to Work

Talk about what you have learned in this chapter:



We understand that together we are called to become living examples of God's love.



We await the day on which we will share in life everlasting with Mary and the entire Communion of Saints.

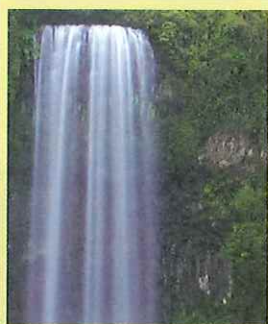


We live our faith as the Pilgrim People of God, loving one another and giving witness to Jesus and our faith in him.

Decide on ways to live out what you have learned.



ENCOUNTERING GOD'S WORD



Jesus said of his disciples,

“Here are my mother and my brothers. For whoever does the will of my heavenly Father is my brother, and sister, and mother”

(Matthew 12:49–50).



READ the quotation from Scripture.



REFLECT on the following:

Doing the will of God the Father makes us part of Jesus' family. How do you do the will of God? How can you show that Jesus is your Brother and Mary is your Mother?



SHARE your reflections with a partner.



DECIDE to ask Jesus and Mary for help in doing God's will.

Write *True* or *False* next to the following sentences. On a separate sheet of paper, change the false sentences to make them true.

1. _____ Jesus called his disciples to be joined to him as branches are joined to a vine.
2. _____ As disciples of Christ and faithful members of the Church, we are called to live as the image of God, giving witness to God's presence in the world.
3. _____ In the Lord's Prayer, after we state our belief in "the holy catholic Church," we acknowledge that we believe in "the communion of saints."
4. _____ Dying on the Cross, Jesus said to his disciple Peter, "Behold, your mother," and so gave Mary to us as our Mother and the Mother of the Church.

Underline the correct answer.

5. (Charisms/Martyrs/Ministries) died heroically for their faith in Christ.
6. On the day known as Pentecost, the (Lord's Prayer/Holy Spirit/Magisterium) strengthened the faith and unity of Jesus' disciples.
7. (The Magisterium/The Apostles/The Communion of Saints) includes all the members of the Church from the beginning of the Church until the present.
8. (The Blessed Virgin Mary/Saint John/Saint Peter) is Jesus' first and most faithful disciple and in the Communion of Saints is our greatest example of holiness.

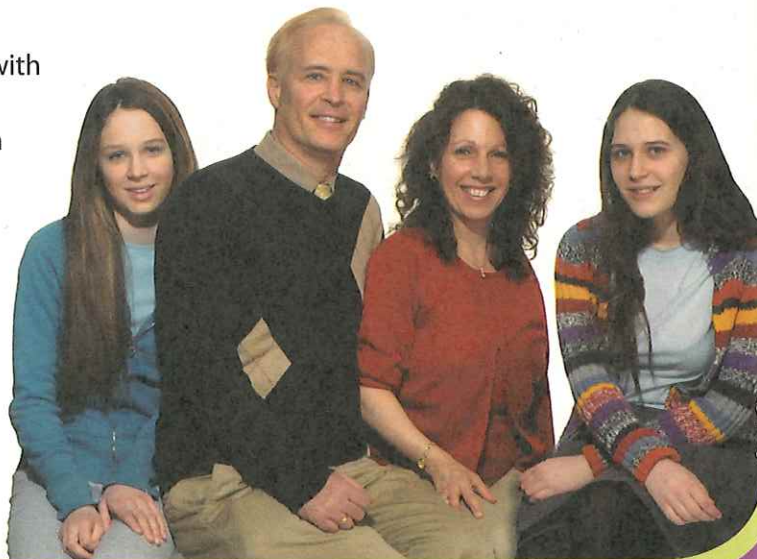
9–10. **ESSAY:** What does it mean to speak of ourselves as the Pilgrim People of God?

Sharing Faith with Your Family

Discuss the following with your family:

- Jesus Christ calls all of us into communion with his Father.
- Together all faithful members of the Church are joined in the Communion of Saints.
- Mary is our greatest saint and the perfect example of discipleship.
- We are the Pilgrim People of God.

Ask your parents to reflect on the ways their parents or ancestors handed down the Catholic faith to them and their families. How will you hand down the faith to the next generations?



The Worship Connection

Some churches have bells that ring at 6 a.m., 12 noon, and 6 p.m. For centuries it was Catholic custom to stop and pray the *Angelus* (see page 308) upon hearing the bells.

More to Explore

Explore the Internet for more information on the topic or saint that you named in "Living Our Faith."

Catholic Social Teaching ☒ Checklist

Theme of Catholic Social Teaching:

Life and Dignity of the Human Person

How it relates to Chapter 24: As members of the Church we must live as the image of God in which we were created. We must also recognize God's image in all other human beings and treat all human life as sacred because it is a gift from God.

How can you do this?

☐ At home:

☐ At school/work:

☐ In the parish:

☐ In the community:

Check off each action after it has been completed.