

The Litany: Calling on the Saints to Intercede for Us

Greetings!

To prepare children to participate in the Easter Vigil, parents, grandparents, and other mentors in the faith may want to discuss the singing of the Litany of the Saints at that liturgy. During the Easter Vigil, we reflect on the events of salvation history as we await the proclamation of the Resurrection. We experience much in the liturgy of this night. The full initiation of those who have been preparing for Baptism, Confirmation, and First Communion through the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults occurs on this sacred night. Before the Baptisms, we call upon the saints to intercede for us.

The veneration of the saints is one of the things that sets Catholics apart from many other Christians. Devotion to and celebration of the holy men and women who have come before us is an ancient tradition, reflected in the practice of early Christians who sought out important sites in the lives of the martyrs and visited the places of their burial.

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These practices, as well as contemporary devotions to the saints, reflect a fundamental truth: that to belong to Jesus is to be in communion with one another. Jesus is the vine and we are the branches, intimately connected with one another. Christ is the Head and we are his Mystical Body. This communion does not end with death. Where Christ has gone we hope to follow, so our communion with our brothers and sisters, forged in our Baptism, continues. This is true of those the Church has recognized formally as saints as well as of men and women who have lived out holiness in anonymity. When we talk about the Communion of Saints, we mean the heavenly Church as well as the Church on earth.

While it is not uncommon to call upon the saints to intercede for us, Baptism is a moment when it is particularly appropriate. It is the beginning of life in Christ and, as such, a beginning of life in the Communion of Saints. Our fellow disciples who have been raised are called upon to be with us in



It is particularly appropriate to call on the saints just prior to the celebration of Baptism.

solidarity as we pray for these newest Christians. The saints epitomize what is possible for the neophytes and for us there assembled: that, as we hear from St. Paul during the Epistle at the Easter Vigil, having died with Christ Jesus, we might live with him. The Second Vatican Council document *Lumen gentium* (the *Dogmatic Constitution on the Church*) tells us that in their closeness to Christ, the saints “establish the whole Church more firmly in holiness.” They remind us of the destination of all history: for God to be all in all and his kingdom to have no end.