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The Communion of Saints: More United Than Ever

Praying for and accompanying loved ones and all those in need now, offering sacrifices for them. This is a splendid program for our spiritual life during these challenging days of confinement.

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“I will not leave you orphans” (*Jn* 14:18). Jesus addresses these affectionate words to his apostles—to

his *friends*, as he likes to call them—in his earthly farewell before entering into his Passion. He doesn't want them to feel alone in the trying moments that are coming. It's only natural, He seems to be saying, that you will be sad when you witness my Passion and Death on the Cross. But your sadness will soon pass. "I will see you again and your hearts will rejoice, and no one will take your joy from you" (*Jn 16:22*).

Being in the best company

Nothing and no one can rob us of our joy when we realize we are always accompanied by the greatest Love imaginable—by the infinite and unconditional love of a God who created me, redeemed me and forgiven me so many times. A God, who out of love, became one of us in order to be as close as possible to us, to share our history and to die for sins that were not his. A love without

limits, stronger than death. God is always at our side, as Jesus explicitly promised: “I am with you all days, even unto the consummation of the world” (*Mt 28:20*).

In this difficult and very special situation, marked by dramatic overtones with the spread of the pandemic, the truths of our faith, especially God’s loving and unfailing presence at our side, should fill us with consolation and hope.

We are never alone. The living Christ is at our side and always accompanies us. He is truly present, close to us in a powerful and intimate way. Our Lord, united to the Father in the Spirit, is nearer to us than our innermost being: *intimior intimo meo*, as Saint Augustine ardently exclaimed, based on his own experience

These days offer us a precious opportunity to look within, to pray

and to discover, or to appreciate once again, how deeply God is present in our lives. The Three Divine Persons, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, truly dwell in our heart. When we freely accept this gift and strive to listen, a loving dialogue filled with light and consolation opens in the depths of our heart.

It is for this that we have been created. God himself provides the best company; our dialogue with Him truly fills our life with new meaning built on love; it gives us light to confront every situation, even suffering and death when they come with a heart-rending suddenness.

Jesus said to the Samaritan woman, "If you knew the gift of God" (*Jn* 4:10), inviting her to sincerely seek the truth. If only during these days of forced confinement we were able to appreciate a bit more fully God's gift...

Communion of Saints

God also accompanies us through our closeness to others. This closeness goes beyond mere physical presence, and leads us into the mysteries of our union with God. Love unites us all. We feel this deeply when we cannot be physically close to the persons we love. Love overcomes the limits of space and time and joins together those who truly love one another in the Love that unites all created hearts—a Love with the face of a Person in which all other faces share. We often proclaim this truth of our faith in the Creed: “I believe in the Communion of Saints.”

The communion of saints is a marvelous reality. In a certain way it is the Church herself. Through this communion all believers form one body with Christ as the Head. Christ's life in the Holy Spirit reaches all of us who are united to Him and united

among ourselves as members of his body, as the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* teaches (cf. no. 947).

We also read in the Catechism that the term “communion of saints” has two closely related meanings: “communion in holy things” and “communion among holy persons” (no. 948).

The spiritual goods are a “common fund” in the Church: universal and unlimited gifts that come from God through Christ. Christ is the inexhaustible fount from which these goods flow: a common faith, the grace of the sacraments and the gifts of the Holy Spirit, the various charisms, and material goods that are distributed among the members of the one body of Christ (cf. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, nos. 949-952).

The fruit of the sacraments is meant for all the faithful. The life and grace

that any member receives affects the entire body. The good reaching one member helps all the other members.

This truth of our faith that leads us to feel closely united to everyone can greatly encourage us, especially in difficult situations. My prayer assists all my brothers and sisters in the faith. It helps all those I love even though they are far away, and even those I don't know personally.

Everything uniting us to Christ, every gift that comes to us from Him, is shared by all and helps us all. The celebration of the sacraments, now restricted in many places, is of benefit to everyone. Even though only one Mass were celebrated in the whole world, we would all draw supernatural life from it, since in the Mass the infinite source of our redemption becomes present once again: the Passion, Death and Resurrection of Christ.

My love for God, my serene and trusting prayer, my devotion to our Lady, to Saint Joseph, to all the saints; my work, my daily tasks done with love, accepting the hardships of each day patiently... all are of benefit for everyone in the Church: for my family members, my friends, my loved ones... and also for those who are in greater need, persons perhaps unknown to me, but who are never forgotten; and for the deceased... for everyone! The sick, the dying, those affected by the current crisis, are receiving divine life also through my union with God: through my prayer, my penance, my work, my service at home, a thousand daily details of love.

The love that spurs me to serve others, to console someone or provide material assistance, is the same love that leads me, with supernatural outlook, to pray and offer small sacrifices for people who

perhaps are far away, but who are very close to us in Christ's heart. This is a real help to others and an effective and caring love.

More closely united than ever

“For none of us lives to himself, and none dies to himself” (*Rom 14:7*). “If one members suffers, all members suffer together” (*1 Cor 12:26-27*). The Catechism says: “In this solidarity with all men, living or dead, which is founded on the communion of saints, the least of our acts done in charity redounds to the profit of all” (no. 953).

We are all united through sharing in the life of Christ himself. We all help one another and accompany one another. We are united with the saints in heaven to whom we have recourse as our intercessors, and with those who have died and are being purified, and for whom we pray. All of us are united in Christ!

Saint Josemaria lived during some very difficult times of war and persecution. He was forced into isolation, confined with some of his spiritual sons in a tiny room in the Honduran Consulate in Madrid during the Spanish Civil War. He was overwhelmed by his concern for so many loved ones who were physically far away and scattered all over the country, with no possibility of having contact with them. But at the same time he was always serene and filled with supernatural outlook and trust in God.

Some of his words taken from his preaching during those days were recorded by one of those listening: “Through the communion of saints, we can never feel alone, since spiritual strength is constantly reaching us from prisons and trenches, wherever one of your brothers is present. Considering this reality impels us to thoroughly

examine our conduct here where we are confined, as though in a prison. For, amidst our apparent inactivity, we have the possibility to do a great deal of good. We can accompany each of our brothers in danger and protect them. Always keep this consideration in mind. May it spur you on in your interior life. Don't forget that, although we Christians are many in number, we form a single body in Christ, in union with the holy souls in purgatory and those now part of the Church triumphant" (Notes from a meditation, April 8, 1937).

Praying for and accompanying loved ones and all those in need now, offering sacrifices for them. This is a splendid program for our spiritual life during these challenging days of confinement. We have no other choice but to limit our activity... but let us not limit our love! Let us not fail to send, through this communion

of life and love in the Church, our assistance to everyone, to all mankind. Let us intensify our daily prayer for all men and women now, a true spiritual help for them. And let us feel more accompanied and more loved than ever.

Since the saints accompany and assist us from heaven, as Saint Josemaria said in that same meditation, how much more will our Immaculate Mother take care of us. Her intercession gives us such great confidence! And we also have recourse to Saint Joseph, whom God placed at the head of his family on earth, so that he may watch over us and teach us to generously take care of everyone, in this communion with everyone united in God's love.

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