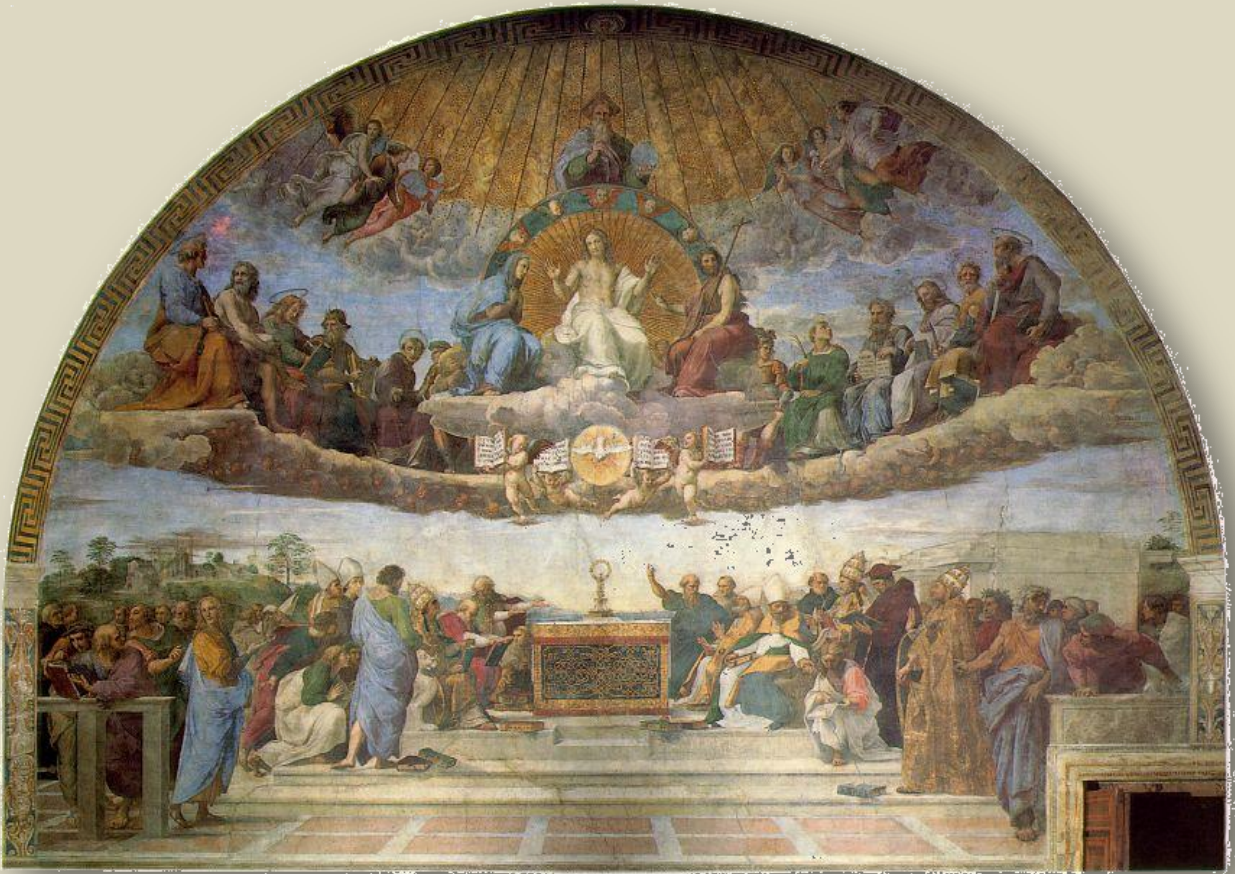


Communion of Saints



Does scripture teach that we can ask the saints in heaven to pray for us on earth? In the New Testament the baptized were called saints and in his book of Revelation the apostle John recorded a vision of those in heaven receiving prayers from the saints on earth:

“Between the throne and the four living creatures and among the elders, I saw a Lamb standing as though it had been slain.....the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb, each holding a harp and with golden bowls full of incense , which are the prayers of the saints.....then I saw the seven angels who stand before God and seven trumpets were given to them. And another angel came and stood at the altar with a golden censor and he was given much incense to mingle with the prayers of all the saints upon the golden altar before the throne;and the smoke of the incense rose with the prayers of the saints from the hand of the angel before God.” Revelation 5:6, 5:8-9 8:3-4



Psalm 141: "Let my prayer come like incense before you."

In John's vision he saw twenty four elders worshiping the Lamb of God each holding bowls of incense which, "are the prayers of the saints." He also saw angels taking the prayers of the saints to God.

Throughout the New Testament baptized Christians are referred to as "saints." In his letters to the Romans, Corinthians, Ephesians, Philippians and Colossians, Paul addresses them as "saints."

In his letter to the Colossians Paul distinguishes the saints on earth from the saints in heaven.

"To the saints and faithful brothers in Christ at Colossae.....May you be strengthened with all power according to his glorious might, for all endurance and patience with joy, giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified us to share in the inheritance of the saints in light." Col. 1:2, 12-13

The "saints in light" would be all those in heaven and particularly those recognized by the Church as canonized saints. While the Church recognizes all the baptized as "saints" in a particular sense, the saints in heaven who are in the presence of God are saints in the fullest sense.

The Body of Christ



Fr. Dwight Longenecker: “Have you noticed the detail in the account of the conversion of St Paul? When the risen Lord appears he says, “Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?” He doesn’t say, “Why are you persecuting my disciples” or “Why are you persecuting my friends or my brothers or those who believe in me,” but “Why are you persecuting me.”

“Thus, straight from the lips of the risen Lord the truth that the apostolic church and he are one and the same. The church is the Body of Christ. Where the Church is, there is Christ. The ramifications of this are profound. If the Church is Christ, then when we leave the church, we leave Christ. When we are in schism from the church we are in schism from Christ. When we dissent from the teaching of the Church we dissent from Christ. When we disobey and run far away from the church we disobey and run far away from Christ.”

“This profound link between Christ and his church which Paul experiences at his conversion stays with him throughout his ministry so that he equates the Body of Christ with the Church and understands the organic and mysterious unity between the Church and the wholeness of Christ.”

Click [HERE](#) to read Father Longenecker

It is from Paul's teaching that the Church is the Body Of Christ that Catholics understand that we are united with those who have gone before us and we can ask them to pray for us.

"For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ.....For the body does not consist of one member but of many. If the foot should say, "Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body," that would not make it any less a part of the body. And if the ear should say, "Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body," that would not make it any less a part of the body.

If the whole body were an eye, where would be the hearing? If the whole body were an ear, where would be the sense of smell? But as it is, God arranged the organs in the body, each one of them, as he chose. If all were a single organ, where would the body be? As it is, there are many parts, yet one body. The eye cannot say to the hand, "I have no need of you," nor again the head to the feet, "I have no need of you." On the contrary, the parts of the body which seem to be weaker are indispensable, and those parts of the body which we think less honorable we invest with the greater honor, and our un-presentable parts are treated with greater modesty, which our more presentable parts do not require. But God has so composed the body, giving the greater honor to the inferior part, that there may be no discord in the body, but that the members may have the same care for one another. If one member suffers, all suffer together, if one member is honored, all rejoice together." *1 Corinthians 12:12-26*

For Catholics there is not one Body of Christ on earth and another Body in heaven. We are all one body therefore we cannot say to the members of the Body of Christ in heaven: "I have no need of you."

Paul also tells us that in Christ, "things in heaven and things on earth" are united (Ephesians 1:10), so if we are in Him, we are by that very fact in communion with the saints in Heaven.

Natural death cannot separate Christians from Christ or from each other. That is why Paul says, "What will separate us from the love of Christ? . . . I am convinced that neither death, nor life... will be able to separate us from the love of God in Jesus Christ our Lord" (Rom 8:35-39)



OUR ONE MEDIATOR IS CHRIST.

Protestant objections: In 1 Timothy 2:5 Paul says that there is one mediator between God and man and that is Jesus.

Catholic Answer: Catholics agree with Paul that there is only one mediator and that is Christ however Timothy 2:5 needs to be read in its context. In the first verse of 1 Timothy 2 Paul urges us to be intercessors:

“First of all, then, I urge that supplications, prayers, intercession and thanksgivings be made for all men....this is good and it is acceptable in the sight of God our Savior who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of truth. For there is one God and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Jesus Christ.”

Jesus is our one mediator but scripture shows we can be secondary mediators through prayer.

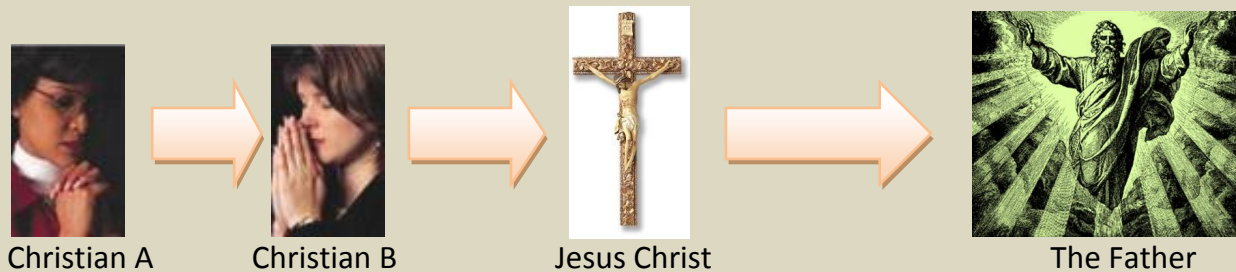
Protestant objection: Secondary mediators or intercessors are unbiblical!

Catholic Answer: If I ask you to pray for me, you have just become a mediator between me and God!

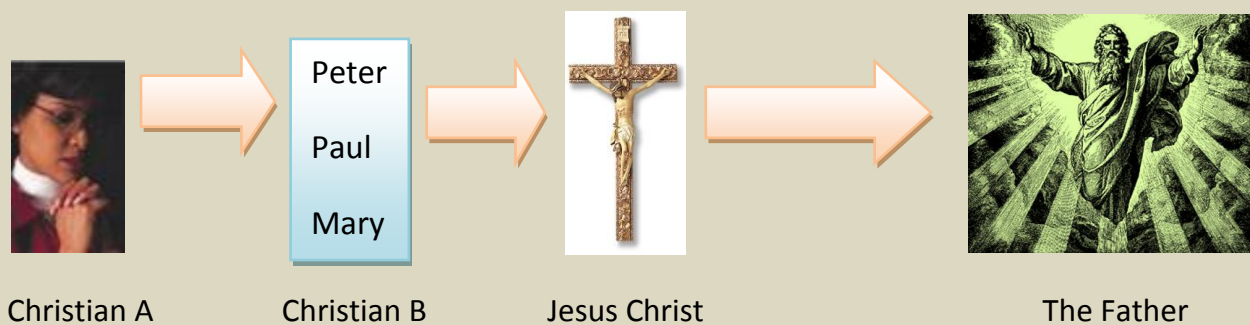
In this illustration we see that Jesus is our one mediator between God and humanity



If we ask a Christian to pray for us they become a mediator between Jesus and the Father



The Catholic teaching of asking the saints to be mediators



What Catholics believe is biblical. We are to pray for one another and as members of the One Body of Christ we can ask the saints in heaven to pray for us as secondary mediators.

Objection: The saints are dead. You can't ask dead people to pray for you.

Catholic Answer: The saints are not dead they are alive in Christ!

“Because of the communion of saints, the faithful who are still pilgrims on earth are able to help the souls in purgatory by offering prayers in suffrage for them, especial the Eucharistic sacrifice. They also help them by almsgiving, indulgences, and works of penance.”



Cloud of witnesses

By faith Abel.....by faith Enoch.....by faith Noah.....by faith Abraham....by faith Sarah....by faith Isaac....by faith Jacob...by faith Joseph.....by faith Moses...Therefore since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses let us also lay aside every weight and sin which clings so closely.....Hebrews 11:1-39 and 12:1



Moses and Elijah appear with Jesus at the Transfiguration Mark 9:2-8

Moses who had died and Elijah who was taken by God appear with Jesus and talked with Him. This is possible because they were alive in Christ.

Scripture says we are surrounded by witnesses! (Hebrews 12:1) Witnesses are alive. Dead witnesses are no witnesses at all!

Jesus said, ""Have you not read in the book of Moses, in the passage about the bush, how God told him, 'I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob'? He is not the God of the dead but of the living. You are greatly misled" (Mk 12:26-27)

The book of Revelation shows those in heaven offering our prayers to God. Rev 5:8,8:3-4

Protestant objection: We are to "pray" only to God not to saints. Prayer is worship.

Catholic Answer: Catholics use the word "pray" differently than do Protestants. The word "pray" historically means to "ask or petition." In England they still address the court saying, "I pray thee". When we pray to saints we are merely asking for their petition to God.



The original King James Bible is written in the Old English and we can see that the word “pray” can be used to mean “ask or petition”. This is how Catholics use it when we pray to saints.

Numbers 21:17 Let us pass, I **pray thee**, through thy country

1 Kings 2:17 And he said, Speak, I **pray thee**, unto Solomon the king.

Acts 8:34 And the eunuch answered Philip, and said, I **pray thee**, of whom speaketh the prophet?

Mark 5:23 My little daughter lieth at the point of death: I **pray thee**, come and lay thy hands on her, that she may be healed.

When we pray to God we are worshiping Him but not all prayer is worship. For Catholics prayer is also a form of mental communication but it should not be confused with the prayer of worship that is given to God alone.

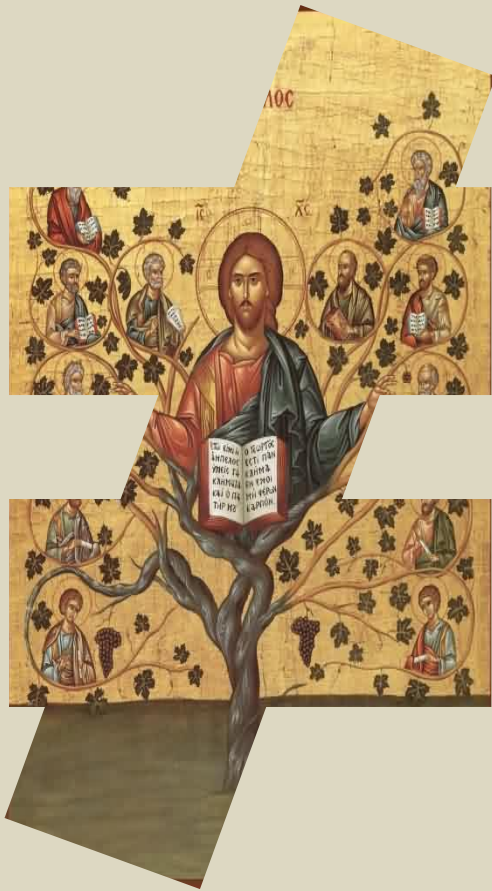
Protestant Objection: How can the saints in heaven hear all those multiple prayers in different languages? That would require them to be like God.

Catholic Answer: The saints in heaven are graced by Christ in unimaginable glory.

“Eye has not seen, and ear has not heard nor has it entered the human heart, what God has prepared for those who love Him.” 1 Corinthians 2:9

The saints in heaven are not limited by space and time as we are because they are living in eternity. It is not necessary for them to be like God to hear all the prayers from those on earth. In their glorified state and by the grace of God the saints are capable of doing things we cannot imagine.

Jesus has told us that He is the vine and we are the branches. We are connected to the saints in heaven through the One Vine.



Jesus is the vine and all those in the Body of Christ, in heaven and on earth, are joined together.

John 15: 5-14

I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing. If anyone does not abide in me he is thrown away like a branch and withers; and the branches are gathered, thrown into the fire, and burned. If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. By this my Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit and so prove to

be my disciples. As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Abide in my love. If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love. These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full.

This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this that someone lay down his life for his friends. You are my friends if you do what I command you.

We know that "the prayer of a righteous person has great power" (James 5:16).

Who could be more righteous or pray more fervently than those already perfected and in the Lord's presence?

We know that those in heaven care for us, "There will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents" (Luke 15:7)

Catechism of the Catholic Church

956 The intercession of the saints: "Being more closely united to Christ, those who dwell in heaven fix the whole Church more firmly in holiness. . . . They do not cease to intercede with the Father for us, as they proffer the merits which they acquired on earth through the one mediator between God and men, Christ Jesus By their fraternal concern is our weakness greatly helped."

Next Topic: **Purgatory**

Additional resources:

Books *Any Friend of God is a Friend of Mine* ---Patrick Madrid

Fundamentals of Catholic Dogma--- Ludwig Ott

Debate between Catholic Apologist Patrick Madrid and Protestant James White on the Communion of Saints can be purchased [HERE](#)