

## The Communion of Saints (Part 1)

After that I saw a huge number, impossible to count, of people from every nation, race, tribe and language; they were standing in from of the throne and in front of the Lamb, dressed in white robes and holding palms in their hands. Revelation 7:9

I believe in the holy catholic church, the communion of saints....  
Apostles Creed

These figures ... are only a tiny representative selection out of all the hosts of saints available to the people for whom this church was built. They are fellow Christians, believed to be now with God, who are thought of as ready and willing to offer inspiration, support, company, a sense of history, and even simple narrative interest and variety, if it is desired. They are the forebears, who have now reached the fullness of life promised in Christ's resurrection. They have been through the mill and have made a heroic stand for the invisible Transcendent, for loving and helping other people as the expression of authenticity in a people of good will.

Margret Vesser, Geometry of Love

## The Statues



St Vincent de Paul

**Facing the Apse, beginning at the rear right and up the left side of the Nave.**

**St. Isabella of Portugal (1271 - 1336)**

**Symbol: Queen holding rose and bread**

**Feast Day July 4th**

**Patroness of the 3rd Order of St Francis**

**If you love peace all will be well.  
Favored saying**

Daughter of Peter III of Aragon and Constance, granddaughter of Frederick II, she was given the name of her great aunt, St. Elizabeth of Hungary. Her birth began the work of peacemaker which distinguishes her, for it reconciled her father and grandfather.... (S)he was married to King Denis of Portugal.

As a queen, she led a life of prayer, austerity and charitable works. ...With her maids of honor she devoted much time to working for the poor or the sick and visiting hospitals. Denis was an unfaithful husband.... Isabella not only bore with his infidelities with patience and gentleness but gave his illegitimate children a mother's care. Denis's son ... twice rebelled against his father. On both occasions she reconciled father and son, riding between the combatants. She was banished for a time on the slanderous suggestion that she was encouraging he son's revolt.... She also stopped two other wars. In 1325 Denis died a penitent....

Divesting herself of every ornament or token of rank, Isabella become a Franciscan tertiary, wearing the habit and living in a house adjoining the convent of Poor Clares she had founded at Coimbra.

In 1336 her son, King Alfonso, began a campaign against the king of Castile.... Despite failing health ... Isabella followed the army. She caught up with it at Extremoz and was successful in making permanent peace between the hostile kings. But the effort proved mortal. ... Her birth had been peace, her work had been peace, and for peace she gave her life. She died on July 4th. ... When mankind is faced with the alternative of peace or suicide, the intercession of this saint of peace is more than ever valuable.

The Saints. A concise Biographical Dictionary, edited John Coulson.

**St. Rita Of Cascia (1381-1457)**  
**Feast Day    May 22nd**

**Symbol: Nun holding roses / crucifix**  
**Patroness of Impossible Causes and**  
**Victims of Abuse**

**Praise to the Father and the Son, Praise to the Spirit, Three in One; O grant us  
 grace in heaven to reign through Rita's prayer and life-long pain.**  
**Hymn of St Rita, Lauds, Office of St Rita**

The standard works of reference are generally a little guarded about St. Rita of Cascia.... Nevertheless she is venerated as 'the saint of the impossible,' 'the advocate of desperate causes,' and those who come across her image ... do so with the sense of gratitude appropriate to so necessary and irreplaceable a vocation as that to which her name has been given.

She was born of peasant stock in 1381 and ... her wish to enter the Augustinian convent as Cascia was frustrated by her parents' order that she should marry. The husband chosen for her turned out to be a dissolute boor, who terrorized her and her children for eighteen years, until at last his heart was touched by her exemplary patience. Too late, however; for shortly after, he was killed in a brawl, under circumstances which made her two sons vow to avenge him. She prayed that they might die rather than carry out their purpose, and her prayers were answered. ... St. Rita ... return(ed), for the last twenty-five years of her life, to the convent which she was at last permitted to enter, and in which her charity was only equaled by the austerity of her life.

We are to consider her an emblem of patient obedience; and we are to remember that her flower is the rose. Her reality, indeed, like the scent of the rose, is something easier to perceive than to analyze. But it has persisted like the rose she asked for when she lay dying. Blossoming in winter, it achieves the impossible.

The Saints. A concise Biographical Dictionary, edited John Coulson.

**St. Vincent de Paul (1580-1660)      Symbol: 16th C. cleric with child or infant**  
**Feast Day September 27th            Patron of Charitable Societies**

**"(C)harity is above all the rules and it is necessary that everything be related to it. She is a noble woman. You should do what she orders. In such a case it is to leave God for God. God calls you to prayer, and at the same time he calls you to the poor sick person. That is called leaving God for God."**

**Letters**

The de Pauls were peasant farmers at Pury near Dax in Gascony.... (Vincent) spent his childhood watching his father's sheep.

Vincent was educated by the Franciscans at Dax; to help him in his further studies at the University of Toulouse his father sold livestock, a realization of his scanty capital that... amounted to an act of faith in his son's future.

After ordination ... there followed two years during which we lose sight of Vincent.... He then obtained a benefice ... and the appointment as one of the chaplains in the household of Queen Margot of Valois.... Vincent seems at this time to have begun in earnest to lead a life of self-denial and prayer;... he accepted the position of chaplain in the powerful de Gondi family and, while ministering to some of the peasants on their estates, discovered the condition of religious and moral destitution in which these poor people were allowed to remain; the ignorance and laxness of many of the clergy were the main causes of this lamentable state of affairs.

He became a friend of the poor, endeavoring with all the means in his power to work for their moral and religious regeneration, concerning himself at the same time with their material needs, making the later very frequently the means to achieve the former. A short experience as parish priest ... showed him more clearly still the extent of the problem ... it was increasingly plain to him that he would have to work on a far larger scale. ... He did everything in his power to help the galley slaves left to rot for days in Paris on their way to Marseille, he organized 'charity confraternities' all over France to provide food and clothing for the poor, he began a religious congregation ... whose principal function was to be the preaching of missions to country folk and the training of the clergy. From his charity confraternity grew up his Sisters of Charity....

The peasant priest ... had become a figure of national importance. .... His letters and his conferences show him ... as one of the regenerators of the church in France in the sixteenth century. The retreats he organized at St. Lazare for those about to be ordained, the monthly 'days of recollection' that he instituted for the clergy of Paris ... were a further potent influence in the work of regeneration.

He remained to the end the peasant, but in the best sense of the term. His humility was outstanding, dominating with an inflexible will his proneness to swift anger, and ... seems to have undergone no striking mystical experience, his work, which was all for God, was impregnated with constant prayer. There with his all-embracing charity, is the principal lesson ... marked by his simplicity in spiritual matters and in his approach to God.

The Saints. A concise Biographical Dictionary, edited John Coulson.

**MARY - Immaculate Conception Symbol: Standing on globe with moon behind, crushing a snake**

**Feast Day December 8th Patroness of the United States**

**Yes, from this day forward all generations shall call me blessed,  
for the Almighty has done great things for me.  
Luke 1:48-49**

Already in the second century Christian writers from all over the ancient church were recognizing Mary's freely accepted part in the Redemption as repairing Eve's part in the Fall. 'Eve,' says St Irenaeus, who represents Asia Minor, Rome, Gaul and a tradition coming from St. John himself,' was disobedient, and so brought death upon herself and upon the whole human race ... Mary was obedient and so became the cause of salvation both for herself and for the whole human race....'

The Greek Fathers realized that God must have prepared Mary to be the mother of the Redeemer and that her role as Second Eve involved her immaculate conception. She was the daughter of her father and mother, but she never incurred original sin, being always one with her son. Eve was created immaculate, Mary was so conceived. Eve's descendants are deprived by the original sin of that state of grace which they should have inherited, and there is consequent disorder in their natures. Mary was ceaselessly in God's grace, and this the Greek Fathers found also expressed in the angel's greeting: 'Hail, full of grace.'

So when, in 1854, Pius IX defined that Mary's Immaculate Conception has been revealed by God, he was not adding an extraneous dogma to the deposit of faith.... It had met with many difficulties in the minds of western theologians. Against the heresy of Pelagius, which denied original sin, the church had insisted on the universal need for redemption. Mary was not exempt, although the great champion of grace, St Augustine, had declared that for the honor of our Lord, he wished there to be absolutely no question of sin in her case. The feast of her Conception (early introduced in England) was opposed even by St Bernard and St Thomas Aquinas. But when, at Oxford, Duns Scotus published the distinction - Christ did redeem his mother, but so that he kept all sin from her - the way opened for the theological development summarized in Pius IX's definition. And so the church glorified her whom the poet Wordsworth so finely calls 'our tainted nature's solitary boast.' But Mary's privilege does not separate her from our race.

The Saints. A concise Biographical Dictionary, edited John Coulson.

**St. Teresa of Liseux (1873-1897)**  
**Feast Day    October 1st**

**Symbol: Nun holding roses**  
**Known as the Little Flower of Jesus**

**"I will let fall a shower of roses - I will spend my heaven doing good upon earth."**

St. Teresa entered Carmel at the age of fifteen years and three months (1n 1888). She became a novice one year later, and a professed Carmelite on September 24th 1890. For three years she was given menial employments in the convent, cleaning, dusting, mending linen and such like. At seventeen she was put in charge of the sacristy and at twenty was appointed 'Companion of the novices' under Mother M. de Gonzague. The first signs of tuberculosis that carried her away three years later appeared in June 1894. She continued in her occupations without relaxation until the end of Lent 1896, and died soon after... on September 30th, 1897.

...She never had any visions or revelations; she never worked any miracles in her lifetime, but in the obscurity of the cloister, in ordinary and commonplace circumstances, she found all the materials she needed to build her sanctity and reach perfection...

This was no easy task, for she had a difficult nature to conquer. Even in her first childhood, her pride and obstinacy were already much in evidence.... Meanwhile she was subject to black moods, to days of depression without any apparent cause, and during the last eighteen months of her life to an obsession, that of religious doubts, apparently causeless also. We must see in this neurosis the main element of those sufferings to which she alludes constantly, and 'which were all the more painful to bear because she was the only one who knew them.' In fighting this distressing condition, she showed a persistent and admirable courage. ... There is no doubt that her 'Little Way,' here complete surrender to the love and power of God, was her method of approach to the problem.... For her it could not be solved by obedience and authority, but only by her way of trust and absolute self surrender to the love of God. In a similar way she put her obsession of doubts 'which she could not explain' to the service of her perfection. She had never wavered, never surrendered to her haunting doubts, and she did not falter at the end. ... (S)he voiced with her last breath her vehement protest that the silence of God had neither touched her faith nor diminished her love, and her last words were 'Oh! I love him. My God, I love you.'

**MARY - Our Lady of Guadalupe (Painting)**      **Symbol: Standing on moon held by an angel**  
**Feast Day**      **December 12<sup>th</sup>**      **Patroness of the Americas**

**"Know certain that I am the perfect and perpetual Virgin Mary, Mother of the True God... here I will show and offer all my love, my compassion, my help and protection to the people. I am your merciful Mother, the Mother of all who love me, of those who cry to me, of those who have confidence in me. Here I will hear their weeping and their sorrows ... their necessities and misfortunes ... Listen and let it penetrate your heart... Do not be troubled or weighed down with grief. Do not fear any illness or vexation, anxiety or pain. Am I not here who am your Mother? Are you not under my shadow and protection? Am I not your fountain of life? Are you not in the folds of my mantle? In the crossing of my arms? Is there anything else you need?"**

### **Our Lady to Juan Diego 1531**

In 1531 a "Lady from Heaven" appeared to a poor Aztec, Juan Diego, at Tepeyac, a hill northwest of Mexico City (10 years after the conquest of the Aztecs by Cortez). The story of the apparitions are described in the Nican Mopohua, a 16th century document written in the native Nahuatl language. She identified herself as the Mother of the True God, instructed Juan Diego to have the bishop build a temple on the site and left an image of herself imprinted miraculously on his tilma (a poor quality cactus-cloth).

It is believed that Our Lady used the Aztec Nahuatl word of coatlaxopeuh, which is pronounced quatlaxupe and sounds remarkably like the Spanish word Guadalupe. Coa means serpent, tla is the noun ending which can be interpreted as the, and xopeuh means to crush or stamp out. Our Lady was actually calling Herself the one "who crushes the serpent."

(T)he Aztecs annually offered at least 20,000 men, women and children in human sacrifice to their gods. The early Mexican historian Ixtlilxochitl estimated that one out of every five children in Mexico was sacrificed. The climax of these ritual killings came in 1487 for the dedication of the new, and richly decorated with serpents, temple of Huitzilopochtli, in Tenochtitlan (now Mexico City). In a single ceremony, ... the Aztec ruler Tlacaellal presided over the sacrifice of more than 80,000 men.

Most historians agree that Juan Diego was born in 1474 in the calpulli or ward of Tlayacac in Cuauhtitlan, which was established in 1168 by Nahua tribesmen and conquered by the Aztec lord Axayacatl in 1467. It was located 20 kilometers (14 miles) north of Tenochtitlan (Mexico City). His native name was Cuauhtlatoatzin, which could be translated as "One who talks like an eagle" or "Eagle that talks".

The Nican Mopohua describes him as a 'macehualli' or "poor Indian", one who did not belong to any of the social categories of the Empire, priests, warriors, merchants, but not a slave. He was a member of the lowest and largest class in the Aztec Empire. When talking to Our Lady he called himself "a nobody" and believed that it was the source of his lack of credibility before the Bishop. The Blessed Virgin Mary talked to him in his language, Nahuatl, calling him "Juanito, Juan Dieguito", "the most humble of my sons", "my son the least", "my little dear".

## **BAPTISMAL FONT** (free standing)

**St. John the Baptist**  
**Feast Day June 24th**

**"There was a man sent from God whose name was John. He came to bear witness to the light, to prepare an upright people for the Lord."  
 John 1:6-7 and Luke 1:17**

Christianity sets out to achieve something anthropologically and sociologically impossible, a contradiction in terms: to be a group without boundaries. In spite of many fallings-off down the centuries, the ideal remains and is clearly enunciated in Scripture: Christians have to try to shut nobody out. The Christian ideal is to transcend race and even family: every human being, and not merely "one's own," should receive unconditional favor.... As for "sinners" being unacceptable, Christ was repeatedly accused of preferring their company to that of the "proper."...

Many churches stress the initiatory aspect of baptism by placing their baptismal fonts inside the church, but near the front door - often in a side chapel dedicated to Saint John the Baptist. Every baptism recalls the moment when Christ - who, as God, was sinless - entered into the waters of baptism and so initiated his public ministry. The other possibility is for the font to be placed in front, not far from the altar itself. This position emphasizes both the centrality of the ceremony to all of Christian life, and the importance of the community: when the font is in front, baptism can be performed before the assembled congregation, often during Mass. The baby (or adult), baptized and anointed with the oil of the Spirit, is held up (or presented) by the priest to be applauded by the welcoming community. He or she is then dressed in new white clothes and presented with a candle, lit from the tall Easter candle - a symbol of Christ as "the light of the world" - that stands near the font.

Margret Vesser, *Geometry of Love*

**Prior to the renovation of St. Vincent de Paul in the early 1990's, the baptismal font was located to the left of the narthex, in a side room dedicated to St. John the Baptist. The windows located in this room (now the Reconciliation Chapel) show the room's original intent. There are two stained glass windows in the Reconciliation Chapel: 1) the Baptism of Jesus by John the Baptizer and 2) Jesus instructing Nicodemus from John 3: 1-8 regarding being born again. The font, however, was moved to its present location.**

**St. Anthony of Padua (1195-1231)**

**Symbol: Book or holding child  
Jesus**

**Feast Day June 13th**

**Patron of the Illiterate and  
Hammer of Heretics**

**"... as for you there, with the mitre on your head"  
St Anthony before the bishops of France**

St. Anthony of Padua was born in 1195, probably near Lisbon... (A)t the age of fifteen, he joined the Canons Regular of St. Augustine. The Coimbra monastery had a renowned school of biblical studies, which (Anthony) ... studied with intense application for eight years and became a profound theological and scriptural scholar.

(H)e took the painful and unusual step of leaving the Canons Regular of St. Augustine in order to join the Franciscans. These soon conceded him permission to go to Morocco. But the longed-for martyrdom was not for him. Illness supervened at once and he was ordered home. On his return journey, his ship was driven out of its course by a storm, and he had to land a Messina in Sicily. He then joined his Franciscan brethren in Italy.

Within a year, however, his brilliant gifts were discovered quite by accident. ...The immediate sequel was his appointment as preacher to the whole of Italy. It was a period when the church never had greater need of preachers to combat the prevailing heresies.... He was always on the road, traveling ceaselessly from the south of Italy to the north of France. ...The people's response was his greatest stimulus. The churches could not hold the crowds who came to hear him. ...

His favorite line was a virulent attack on the weakness of the secular clergy and on the prevalent sins of contemporary society: their greed, their luxurious living, their tyranny. A typical anecdote was of the famous occasion when he was invited to preach at a synod at Bourges, presided over by the Archbishop Simon de Sully. With the words 'Tibi loquor cornute,' Anthony launched into a denunciation of the prelate who had invited him, which petrified his audience.

Sweetness of disposition was not his most notable trait; he had a tongue that could blister; he was bold rather than meek. ... An aristocrat by birth, he has become the special advocate of the poor and the downtrodden. A scholar who had no living rival as a biblical expert, called by his contemporaries 'Hammer of the Heretics' and 'Living Ark of the Covenant' he has become the patron of the illiterate, the finder of lost trifles.... One of the most effective preachers the world has ever known is now mostly invoked against the most petty, almost comical, little ills of life.

**St. Joseph (1st Century)**  
**Feast Day March 19th**  
**Feast Day May 20th**

**Symbol: Staff of Jesse / Lily**  
**Patron of the Universal Church**  
**Patron of Workers**

**This is how Jesus Christ came to be born. His mother Mary was betrothed to Joseph; but before they came to live together she was found to be with child through the Holy Spirit.... (A)n angle of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, 'Joseph son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because she has conceived what is in her by the Holy Spirit.... When Joseph woke up he did what the angle had told him to do....**

**Matthew 1: 18,20,24**

Singularly little is know about St. Joseph. ... The genealogy in both gospels places him in the live of David. At the beginning of our era this royal descent was no longer a title to rank or riches, and everything we know about Joseph suggests that he was one of the unprivileged poor....

The Gospels remain ... the only reliable source of information about Joseph. Yet with all their reticence they have left a sharp outline of this character. ... (I)t is clearly their purpose to present him as the patient instrument of God, who does what is required of him with unquestioning faith. His pious observance of Jewish Law, his faithful protection of the family in his charge, his willing acceptance of hardship, his prompt obedience to the demands of God, his constancy under trial, his calm dignity at all times, these mark him out as the 'just' or godly man, who can be proposed as a model to all Christians, and to all Christian working men in particular. Christ's own attractive human character, with its forthrightness, courage and deep charity, was developed under the example and upbringing he received from Joseph. Yet Joseph's true greatness lies at a deeper level.... It would be more accurate to say that Joseph was, short of generation, the true father of Christ, a term which the gospels do not hesitate to use constantly. Jesus was truly the fruit of the marriage in which Joseph played an indispensable role. If his fatherhood was virginal it was not thereby something less than physical fatherhood; by its spiritual nature it was an earthly reflection of the paternity of God himself. ... Both Mary and Joseph are integral parts of the mystery of the incarnation; and in so far as this mystery is extended through time in the mystical body of the Word made flesh, Joseph continues his role of fostering, protecting and guiding the church, not by any mere extrinsic title, but by the very nature of things.

The Saints. A concise Biographical Dictionary, edited John Coulson.

**Sacred Heart of Jesus**  
**Feast Day**    **Friday following the**  
**Feast of the Body and Blood of Christ**

**Symbol: Jesus with heart showing**

**When they came to Jesus, they found he was already dead, and so instead of breaking his legs one of the soldiers pierced his side with a lance; and immediately there came out blood and water. This is the evidence of one who saw it...**

**John 19: 33-35**

Jesus looking predictably and complacently sweet, together with any merely masochistic dwelling on his sufferings being "my fault" - these, many feel, have got to go: nineteenth-century attitudes towards the Sacred Heart can seem very out-of-date.

After the twentieth century's repeated confrontations with horror and the triumph of evil-from the Holocaust to the Rwanda massacres, from the Gulag to Pol Pot's regime, from the Chinese Cultural Revolution to devastating wars and social breakdown in Africa, Latin America, Asia and Europe - Christians feel called upon to take more seriously than ever ... that ...God has chosen to be one with the victims, the marginalized, the weak. God, therefore, is experienced very directly as pure love, which means that in "this world" he is wounded, in pain, without shelter, without help, without attention.

Christians feel the intensity, to "help God," especially in the poor and suffering of this world. Jesus said, "whatever you do to these my brothers and sisters ... you do it to me." These words are implicit in the notion of the Sacred Heart. To ignore them has become intolerable to modern thinking and committed Christians.

In reconsidering the image of the Sacred Heart, moreover, it cannot be denied that Christianity is a profoundly bodily religion. Christ's becoming human is called "incarnation," God's literally "becoming flesh." The image of the Sacred Heart recalls the fact that, after his bloody death, Jesus was pierced by a spear, "and out of this side ran blood and water." No, Christians cannot get away from the body: as fact and symbol, as medium and foundation, as necessarily the way to God. The bodily pain, famine, thirst, and hopelessness of others demand relief; such sufferers are the very person of Christ. Christians, perhaps modern ones especially, cannot simply avert their eyes from the image of the Sacred Heart.

## THE WAY OF THE CROSS

(T)he great biblical liberation stories are narrated at the yearly vigil of the Resurrection, Easter eve. Christ's breaking out of the tomb is for the Christians the climatic event in the series. The penultimate journey towards the Resurrection was Christ's journey to his crucifixion, his being forced to carry the instrument of his own torture and death out of the walls of Jerusalem to the hill called the Skull, Golgotha in Hebrew, Calvary in Latin. This journey is commemorated in every Catholic church by the Stations of the Cross.... The Stations are fourteen episodes from the crucifixion of Jesus, from his condemnation to his burial and including his road to Calvary. From early times Christian pilgrims to Jerusalem would walk through the city, where they were shown places said to have been exactly where each event took place. Some of the episodes are quite unscriptural and almost certainly imagined by people who felt they "must have," "should have," occurred....

Beginning in the fourteenth century, members of the Order of Saint Francis of Assisi, living in Jerusalem and entrusted with the care of the holy places, "systematized" the Stations of the Cross, gradually giving them a canonical number and order. Not everybody could visit the Holy land, of course. But this has never been a major problem for Christians. A way was provided for people to visit the Holy Land and to follow the journey of Jesus to Calvary "in spirit," without actually going there.

Stations of the Cross were made and placed in every church: a picture of each event, with spaces left between them. The spaces are important: they allow people to "walk the distance," making their own "journey1 of spiritual accompaniment, responding inwardly, in their own way. At each picture the devotee stands still (is "stationary") and contemplates the picture and its' meaning for him or her....

Margret Vesser, *Geometry of Love*

Today, many churches consider the tabernacle as the fifteenth station on the Way of the Cross. This completes the journey of Jesus through to the Resurrection.