

Episode: The Fraternity of the Communion of Saints

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In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, Amen. My Lord and my God, I firmly believe that you are here, that you see me, that you hear me. I adore you with profound reverence; I beg your pardon for my sins and the grace to make this time of prayer fruitful. My Immaculate Mother, St. Joseph, my father and lord, my guardian angel, intercede for me.

Today, as we celebrate the Solemnity of All Saints, we want to consider a truth that we proclaim and confess in the Creed, in the Apostles Creed, and that is the reality, the truth of the Communion of Saints. Today, we celebrate a very special feast, because it is the feast of so many martyrs, so many saints who have gone before us, who have fought the good fight, who have died, and they are only known to God alone. It is kind of the church's feast of the unknown soldier. But the thing is, we believe that all those saints, all those brothers and sisters of ours who have preceded us in the faith and have handed it on to us have not simply died and been forgotten. They are alive, and they are in heaven, and they help us, and they intercede for us, because, as St. John says, they are the ones who have come out of the great tribulation and have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. And they are now before the throne of God and serve him night- day and night in his temple. These are the ones who live in the presence of God. And who are they? They are of a great variety. Each one is different. Each one is unique. Each one is his own person or her own person. Communion doesn't mean uniformity. They're all saints, and they all love God, and they have all washed their robes and the blood of the Lamb. They all have Christ in common, but each one has fought only in the way that he or she knows how, because only they know how to correspond to the unique graces that they have been given by Our Lord. If Our Lord does not repeat himself in our fingerprints, why would he repeat himself in the way we respond to him, or in the way that he creates us with different talents and different virtues and different possibilities? The great variety of saints actually gives us an idea of how great Our Lord is. It gives more glory to God. The great number of saints is like a big garden where you could see God's creative imagination at work. No flower is alike, no blade of grass is alike, no tree, no shrub, and each one carries out a specific function in that great garden of God.

In the Communion of Saints, we are united to Christ, as he himself said in St. John's Gospel, I am the vine and you are the branches. And he explained to the apostles, and he explains to us now how, only in union with him can we actually bear fruit. And the saints are those people who are now permanently united to Our Lord, and they continue to bear fruit. There is a popular saying that says, Think globally, act locally. This is a saying probably in the corporate world, repeated often in order to make people think beyond their task, to help them think universally, think of the client, think of the product that they're making. But then it also helps them not to simply dream all day about the end product, but actually do something

about it. Act locally and get down to work, because what you do now is going to affect the final product. Well, in the Communion of Saints, we do something very similar, we think globally, we're always with the church, with the whole church, with the whole body of Christ, with the church in heaven, with all the saints, with all the martyrs, with Mary, with Jesus, with the Holy Trinity, with all the angels. We're with the Church in purgatory that purifies herself from the sins that have been committed during this lifetime, but sins that have not separated those saints from- entirely from Christ's love. And also we're with the church militant, the church that fights here on Earth still alive. This is the- this is the way we think globally and we act locally, meaning that anything we do now actually affects the whole body. That's what St. Paul, in fact, said to the Corinthians. He said, "If one member suffers, the whole body suffers," for good or for bad, whatever we do now affects the whole body. This is the truth, the reality of the Communion of Saints. We're all linked together as if we were all in one chain. And we know that St. Josemaria used this example many times. He said that the chain is as weak as the weakest link or as strong as the weakest link, and we have to make sure that we are not that weak link of the entire chain, because so many people are dependent on us.

With the Communion of Saints, we not only think globally and act locally, however. With the Communion of Saints, because it is a reality of grace, we also act globally. We can actually affect others in the way they struggle. We can send graces through this great transfusion of blood, as St. Josemaria used to call it, a great- a great concrete way of- great concrete image of describing how we affect one another. He says in *The Way*, "Live a special Communion of the Saints and at the moment of interior struggle, as well as during the long hours of your work, each of you will feel the joy and the strength of not being alone." We're not alone. St. Josemaria actually realized that this was the case when one time he felt an interior motion to pray a Memorare for one of his spiritual children who was in trouble. He did not know who it was, he just had this feeling of distress that someone was in trouble, and sure enough, it was actually Blessed Alvaro, who was being set up with a woman by a very good mother who wanted to set up a date with- with Blessed Alvaro and her daughter. And of course, Blessed Alvaro, by then, was already committed the celibacy to live in Opus Dei, and he was- the reason why he was in touch with this woman and her daughter is because he was living in their house when he was an engineer in their pension. But quickly enough Don Alvaro was able to get out of that- of that setup, and he later on, told St. Josemaria about that kind of awkward moment and moment of temptation. And he- and St. Josemaria said, I knew that, and we were all praying for you with the Memorare. And from then on, in Opus Dei, everyone prays several times a day, many Memorares for the person who needs it most. And we believe that all those prayers actually are channeled through the intercession of Our Lady to help that person or those persons who are in great need, those brothers and sisters of ours who are part of the one body of Christ in the church. This is the reality of the Communion of Saints put into practice. We, too, Lord, can pray a Memorare for our family members for those who need it most, or for the whole Church, so that we live in this great unity of Christ's members.

As St. Paul would say, we are all one in Christ, Jesus, we are one body. And he would ask, who is weak? and I am not weak. Who suffers? and I do not suffer. St. Paul suffered everything that all his spiritual children suffered. And he even says at some point that to the Galatians that he is suffering pains of labor until Christ is formed in them. That's how much his passion was for them to be Christ-like. The Communion of Saints, is something that will lead us by the hand to this truth, the truth that Our Lord says in the Gospel of John, "Without me, you can do nothing if we are not united to the vine, how can we yield fruit? Without me, you can do nothing." I think also the kind of complementary statement which is also given to us in Scripture by the Holy Spirit in the mouth of St. Paul, "I can do all things in him who strengthens me." Both of those statements, revealed statements, actually are very consoling. Without me, without Christ, you can do nothing, and then I can do all things in him who strengthens me. What great hope we have in the

Communion of Saints, knowing that we are not alone. We are weak. Each one of us is very weak, but together, we can be very strong.

St. Josemaria compared our fraternity in this great Communion of Saints with the strength or the possibilities of a house of cards. Look at those cards. Each one would not be able to stand on its own, but together, they can make a great house, a great castle of cards, because they all lean on one another. Look at what he says in one of his writings, he says, "Do you see one strand of wire entwined with another, many woven tightly together form that cable strong enough to lift huge weights you and your brothers with wills united to carry out God's will can overcome all obstacles." See, our Communion of Saints is not only these wires entwined one with another, but all of them have this core cable also of God. We count on God's strength. So we're not only- we don't only have a horizontal kind of communion with one another here down below, but we also have a great vertical communion with- with God, and that is what makes up the body of Christ. St. Ignatius of Antioch, an early apostolic father used to say that we are like a choir, each one has a voice- each one has a different tone, but all of us in great unity, in great unison, great harmony, together in union with our bishops, and we can also say the Pope, we have that great music- we give off that great music to give glory to God, and somehow we are all together in one mission. This is the reality of the Communion of Saints.

Pope Benedict XVI, in his encyclical on hope, talks about the Communion of Saints in a very special way. And he- he says these words which can help us in our prayer to realize how responsible we are for the holiness of others, he says, "Our lives are involved with one another through innumerable interactions, they are linked together. No one lives alone, no one sins alone, no one is saved alone. The lives of others continually spill over into mine in what I think, say, do and achieve. And conversely, my life spills over into that of others, for better or for worse. So my prayer for another is not something extraneous to that person, something external. Not even after death, in the interconnectedness of my of being, my gratitude to the other, my prayer for him, can play a small part in his purification." This reality is- is really amazing how we are all together, and we see it in just human interaction. We live solidarity, and we have cancer drives, and we all jog a mile or- or wear a little ribbon, because we want to live solidarity with those people who are suffering from that illness and simply those people who are suffering from- from cancer, when they look at us, they feel more encouraged, even from a human point of view, to keep on fighting, give them hope. Well, if that's a reality, just in human terms, how greater and how more real it is when grace flows from one member of the Body of Christ to another, like blood in the body. There is some reality that we actually send to the others if we are in communion, if we're in the state of grace, especially, we can- we can do a lot for those people so that they can receive the strength of Christ through our little contribution. And even the people who are not in the state of grace, but who are part of the body of Christ can receive a lot of help. They can receive the grace of their conversion, one by those people who are praying for them, especially Our Lord, Our lady, and all the saints, you and I too can pray for so many conversions, and they too, somehow will be children of our prayer, like the people in Asia minor became children of St. Paul's prayer.

St. Josemaria lived this Communion of Saints to such a great degree that he was able to communicate it during the Civil War in Spain in the 1930s to the young people that were following his spirit. And one time he- he received a letter from someone, and he was very moved by this letter. In fact, he kept it, and we have it now, because it was from a college student. A college student who was a soldier in the army. And the one thing this college student got right was the reality of the Communion of Saints that St. Josemaria had somehow passed on to him. And so here's the letter Miguel wrote to St. Josemaria, "Yesterday thinking about mortifying myself for your quick escape, I put bird shot in my boots, but I don't know whether they

hid in the crevices or were too small, but the fact was that they almost did not disturb me no matter how much I walked. Therefore, if you are detained a few days more, you have to thank me for it, because I don't know how to do these things." This was a letter from Cordova, August 7, 1938 from Miguel. Here Miguel is a soldier, he has bird shot. He puts it in his boots to suffer a little bit, just a little bit for St. Josemaria, for his quick escape, whatever that escape may have been, during those difficult moments, he needed to get away. And Miguel knew that he was aware that St. Josemaria had to do something, and he needed prayers and sacrifices and through the Communion of Saints, that he could do that. But he put bird shot- he didn't suffer at all, because somehow they- they- they hid, you know, in between the toes or whatever. And because of that, he didn't suffer that much and he says, Well, Father, if you don't escape, or if you- if your plans went awry for whatever reason, you know that it was my fault, because I really didn't mortify myself- didn't mortify myself well, because I didn't suffer anything, because I didn't notice anything.

Well, it's kind of funny, but here's a college student trying to do his best, and of course, his prayers, even though he didn't suffer that much from the bird shot in his boots. All that prayer, all that intention worked. St. Josemaria was moved, and we too can be moved by the thing- the things people in love do for each one of us. Well, we can do the same if this college student was able to do it for a supernatural purpose, we too- how much more can we do? How much- how much- How many sacrifices can we do for the Holy Father right now that the Church needs a lot of prayers? How much- how many green beans can we eat that we don't like, or whatever it is that we don't like, eating less of what we like more of what we don't like, as soon as we would suggest in our meals, in a hidden way, in a way that no one notices. So that we don't flout our piety around. But all those hidden things can actually- little things can help those people in need in the church, and they help primarily the member who we are- the member of the church that we are primarily but also the others.

Let us take stock of this reality, that we are all interconnected, that- and we all have to be connected, not only with one another, but with Christ, who is divine. And if we do that, we will yield much fruit, much apostolic fruit, many conversions will occur in the church to add on to that great multitude which St. John saw in the Apocalypse. That great multitude that no one could count, so many people will be saved because of our effort. Let us turn to Mary, who is always a woman of unity. She kept the unity on that Holy Saturday when everybody else perhaps was losing hope, and she kept the unity of the Church, especially during those ten days after Our Lord's ascension, before Pentecost. And then after the Holy Spirit comes upon the church, and he pours his gifts upon the apostles, the apostles live a great Communion of Saints, great unity of spirit, and they discern everything that they have to discern in order to follow God's will. Let us ask Our Lady for this great grace that we too can live today.

I thank you, my God, for the good resolutions, affections, and inspirations that you have communicated to me in this time of prayer. I ask your help in putting them into effect. My Immaculate Mother, St. Joseph, my father and lord, my guardian angel, intercede for me.