

LIVING FAITH CHAPEL

Communion of Saints: Definitions

Introduction

- Disclaimers
- Parameters of study:
 - Definitions
 - Why?
 - What it is not
 - How we minister to one another
 - Confession and reconciliation

Definitions – “I believe in the communion of saints”

- What it’s not:
 - Not just the community that the saints enjoy in heaven
 - Does not involve personal communication between the living and the dead
 - Not exactly the same thing as the church
- “Saints” – an ordinary Christian, nothing more, nothing less (*See, e.g.* – Eph 1:1, Phil 4:21)
 - literal meaning – “the holy ones”
 - holy in justification – sinners justified by grace (1 Cor 1:30, Heb 10:10)
 - made holy in their sanctification – spiritual boot camp (1 Cor 1:20, *cf.* 1 Thes 3:7)
 - holy by their separation – separated from what is profane (John 17:14) (words, attitudes and actions)
- “Communion” – to share something in common (Eph 4:3-6)
 - common body, connected by a common Spirit, entered by a common calling, destined for a common glory, serving a common Lord, on the basis of a common faith, sealed by a common sacrament (baptism), to the glory of a common God, who is the Father of all

Westminster Confession of Faith, Chapter 26:

1. All saints, that are united to Jesus Christ their Head, by His Spirit, and by faith, have fellowship with Him in His grace, sufferings, death, resurrection, and glory: and, being united to one another in love, they have communion with each other's gifts and graces, and are obliged to the performance of such duties, public and private, as do conduce to their mutual good, both in the inward and outward man.
2. Saints by profession are bound to maintain an holy fellowship and communion in the worship of God, and in performing such other spiritual services as tend to their mutual edification; as also relieving each other in outward things, according to their several abilities and necessities. Which communion, as God offereth opportunity, is to be extended unto all those who, in every place, call upon the name of the Lord Jesus.
3. This communion which the saints have with Christ, doth not make them in any wise partakers of the substance of His Godhead; or to be equal with Christ in any respect: either of which to affirm is impious and blasphemous. Nor doth either communion one with another, as saints, take away, or infringe the title or propriety which each man hath in his goods and possessions.

[A] community of pure saints ... called together by the Holy Spirit in one faith, mind and understanding.

- Martin Luther

[T]he union, society and assembly of all believers who have something in common with each other.

- Johan Heidegger

The communion of saints is the living fellowship of all true believers who are united in love by their union with Christ and have spiritual communion with one another as they share in corporate worship, spiritual gifts, Christian graces, material goods and mutual edification.

- Philip Ryken

It describes a new community in which individuals willingly covenant to share in common, to be in submission to each other, to support one another and 'bear one another's burdens,' as Paul wrote to the Galatians, to build each other up in relationship with the Lord.

- Charles Colson