

The Congregation of Saint Athanasius  
A sermon preached by Father Bradford at Evensong & Benediction  
The Solemnity of All Saints  
November 1, 2015

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Our Catholic religion teaches us two great things about the present condition of the Blessed Saints of God. The first thing is that they are living an active, conscious, and personal life. For how could a life lived closer to God be anything less than active, conscious, and personal? And second, the Blessed Saints are still in the closest fellowship with us. The first truth would be slight consolation if the saints were *remote* from us! But reigning with Christ in glory, and reflecting their Master in all things, the saints are not forgetful of their brethren on earth. Nor are they powerless to aid us in our heavenward journey.

This is what is behind the article of faith we proclaim in the Creed when we declare, “I believe in the Communion of Saints.” We are not affirming the communion of the Saints of Heaven with each other! It is the communion of *all* the members of Christ’s Church, whether on earth or in Purgatory, or in the Church Triumphant. It is all Church. It is all one fellowship. There is one fellowship because Christ’s Body is One.

The New Testament cannot be read without learning the saints in glory are with us here and now. In a parable Christ told, the rich man Dives in Hades had care and prayers for his brothers on earth. On the Mount of Transfiguration the apostles saw Moses and Elijah in fellowship with the Lord Jesus. The eleventh chapter of *The Epistle to the Hebrews* states the belief of the Church most clearly. “Wherefore, seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus.”

That Biblical affirmation is the basis of the Collect used on All Saints’ Day. It begins, “O Almighty God, who hast knit together thine elect in one communion and fellowship in the mystical body of thy Son Christ our Lord.” As you and I live our days, pursuing holiness of life and eternal salvation, we have an audience and cheering section made of up the heavenly aristocracy of Heaven.

In a volume called *The Other Side of the Hill*, Frank Boreham told the story of a champion cricket player who in his middle years went blind. He would be led to

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his son's matches. The blind man could hear the excitement. But he could not see his son at bat. The son excelled at the sport, as once did his father. Then the father died, and the next Saturday the cricket team expected to have their best bat missing at the match. But the young man appeared, ready to play, and had the best game of his career. When his teammates thought this remarkable so soon after the death of his father, the young man answered, "How could I help it? *This was the first time my father ever saw me bat.*" Blindness is not a feature of the heavenly realm.

The cricket player's sentiment was soundly scriptural, and perfect for All Saints' Day. "Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus." *Amen.*