

Solemnity of All Saints - Lectionary: 667

Reading 1 - [Revelation 7:2-4, 9-14](#)

I, John, saw another angel come up from the East, holding the seal of the living God. He cried out in a loud voice to the four angels who were given power to damage the land and the sea, "Do not damage the land or the sea or the trees until we put the seal on the foreheads of the servants of our God." I heard the number of those who had been marked with the seal, one hundred and forty-four thousand marked from every tribe of the children of Israel.

After this I had a vision of a great multitude, which no one could count, from every nation, race, people, and tongue. They stood before the throne and before the Lamb, wearing white robes and holding palm branches in their hands. They cried out in a loud voice: "Salvation comes from our God, who is seated on the throne, and from the Lamb."

All the angels stood around the throne and around the elders and the four living creatures. They prostrated themselves before the throne, worshiped God, and exclaimed: "Amen. Blessing and glory, wisdom and thanksgiving, honor, power, and might be to our God forever and ever. Amen."

Then one of the elders spoke up and said to me, "Who are these wearing white robes, and where did they come from?" I said to him, "My lord, you are the one who knows." He said to me, "These are the ones who have survived the time of great distress; they have washed their robes and made them white in the Blood of the Lamb."

Responsorial Psalm - [Psalm 24:1bc-2, 3-4ab, 5-6](#) R. (see 6) Lord, this is the people that longs to see your face.

Reading 2 - [1 John 3:1-3](#)

Beloved: See what love the Father has bestowed on us that we may be called the children of God. Yet so we are. The reason the world does not know us is that it did not know him. Beloved, we are God's children now; what we shall be has not yet been revealed. We do know that when it is revealed we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is. Everyone who has this hope based on him makes himself pure, as he is pure.

Gospel - [Matthew 5:1-12a](#)

When Jesus saw the crowds, he went up the mountain, and after he had sat down, his disciples came to him. He began to teach them, saying: "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the Kingdom of heaven. Blessed are they who mourn, for they will be comforted. Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the land. Blessed are they who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be satisfied. Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy. Blessed are the clean of heart, for they will see God. Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God. Blessed are they who are persecuted for the sake of righteousness, for theirs is the Kingdom of heaven. Blessed are you when they insult you and persecute you and utter every kind of evil against you falsely because of me. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward will be great in heaven."

Saints, Sin, and the Mystical Body of Christ the Church

Today we celebrate the Feast of All Saints, those in heaven / the church triumphant, whose names we know and to whom we ask for intercessory prayers. As well, we celebrate those Saints whose names we don't know. But this term, 'Saints', also applies to we the Church Militant – the Pilgrim Church, as we see in the writings of St. Paul recorded in the New Testament. St. Paul uses that term to refer to those who are made sacred, set apart by God, the children of God. Set apart through baptism, by which sacrament we are drawn up into the divine life of the Trinity, and made members of the [Mystical Body of Christ](#).

The Mystical Body of Christ. As individuals, I don't think we reflect on this as often as we ought as, and I don't think we reflect on it very much in terms of the communion of saints. The reason why All Saints' Day is right beside All Souls' Day, is to emphasize the reality of the Mystical Body of Christ in its entirety. We the [Church Militant](#) praying for the [Church Penitent](#). We the Pilgrim Church recalling The [Church Triumphant](#).

The Mystical Body of Christ. Reflect on this truth of faith considering what it means to become a saint. What it means to live in pursuit of that [universal call to holiness](#). To be holy. Set apart. Different. In the way we think, in what we do, how we live, the entirety of our being, transformed in Christ. Consider that sin is an obstacle to holiness. Think of sin and its consequences in your own body. It's proven time and time again that sin and a habit of sin have a spiritual, psychological, and physical effect on us. Especially if those sins are mortal in nature. Mortal sin results in the loss of the friendship of God. It results in being cut off in a sense.

Now think of yourself as a member, as a part of the Mystical Body of Christ. When you sin, you become a cancer in the body of Christ. The whole body of Christ suffers from the effects of the sins of the individual part. Not so much different than an attack on the human body. We know from science, through which we have the benefit in modern times of an extremely detailed amount of information not only about the human body, but also about all sorts of living organisms. We know that when there is a sickness / disease within us, that a healthy body is oriented toward isolating and addressing the issue so that it can return to healthy wholeness.

Apply this analogy to the Mystical Body of Christ. All the mortal sins committed by the members of the Mystical Body of Christ throughout the world. The result is what we see and experience, a hobbled church without integrated unity and health. Of course, because of its divine nature the gates of hell will certainly not prevail against it. But in its human aspect, it suffers. We all suffer as that body because of the sins, and their effects. The body cannot function at 100% capacity and healthiness in the same way our individual bodies cannot. And so, the whole of the Church in the whole of the world suffers. This is the natural result of the gravity of our sins and what then becomes an obstacle to becoming the saints we're called to be.

Saints, meaning ultimately a body of Christ made up of healthy, whole, integrated parts. This is what it means when we speak of Church Unity. Unity is not just an agreement to be nice to each other in the Catholic Church. It isn't merely about getting along with each other in the various Christian traditions. Unity goes to the very heart of who we are as the Mystical Body of Christ, the Church, called to be holy, set apart. This truth about the nature of mortal sin and its effects, the truth of the nature of the Church, of the importance of receiving the Eucharist in a state of Grace... all are connected to the [Communion of Saints](#) and the universal call to holiness, to the nature of the human person and what is our greatest good.

How often do we meaningfully reflect on this the nature of our role in the Mystical Body of Christ? The nature of the Mystical Body of Christ, the Church in the world and the grievousness, the effects, the consequences of the sins we commit. If we did, I suspect we would make much more of an effort, much

more of a focused effort to cooperate with God, cooperate with the graces of the sacraments fully, so as to become the saints necessary to the [Mission of the Church](#). That it might be in the world, truly for everyone, the 'sacrament of salvation'. No one would be able to say, "Well, you talk about what Christ can do for you, what the graces of God can do for you, but I see you at the bar on Saturday night doing the same thing I am. I see you. I hear you in the quiet privacy of your bedroom doing the same things I do. I hear you lying, etc., etc. I see that your marriages don't last in any greater percentage than those who don't believe, what good is this faith, this power of Christ, this Church? Maybe your beliefs make you feel better, clear up your conscience now and then, give you something to strive for; let's be honest, we open ourselves to all sorts of criticism when we don't strive to learn, understand, and live the truths of the faith intended to guide and form us as one body in the spirit. The criticisms will be true of us as long as we are a complacent, sleepy, tired body who find our pleasures in all sorts of other things other than those that are eternal. As long as we set our priorities above God and ourselves as the authorities in all things. As long as we insist on changing the definitions of what God has decided is justice, is worship, is holiness, is love, is peace. If we allow ourselves to be infected and continue in that sickness, we will necessarily create in our minds the illusion that the Church is healthy, even as we know it is not.

It is in our power through the Holy Spirit, the power of Christ, and all that God gives us. It is in our power to be a powerful Church in the world. It is in our power to not be a Church in retreat, not to be hypocrites, not to be shy about the faith but rather, to be bold. To be honest, to accept rejection in the world with charity as part of the process toward perfection to which we're called. It really is that important. The Saints we celebrate today, they knew this. They gave their lives for this. Some of them literally. They all knew, believed, and lived the truth that transforms. There is nothing, nothing that separates us from being like them except ourselves who are willing to settle for less, who say all the right things but choose not to live accordingly. Some of us know, debate, and share the teachings of the church with others, but who choose not to follow these ourselves. Do we want to be Saints? Do you want to be a Saint? Do you want a championship team? A championship team of Jesus, the Mystical Body of Christ, victorious. Do you want to be the saints that will make that possible?

To be Saints we'll need to be honest about being sinners. We'll need to understand mortal sin to understand how we become a cancer in the Mystical Body of Christ. We'll need to understand the mercifully forgiving love of God and receive it, to become the Saints we are made to be. The Catholic Church teaches that mortal sin has profound and destructive effects on a person's relationship with God, on the soul, and on the ultimate destiny of the individual.

A more detailed consideration of Mortal Sin

Mortal sin is defined as deliberately choosing something gravely contrary to the divine law and the ultimate end of man. It is a disorder that reaches the point of turning the soul away from its ultimate end, God, to which it is bound by charity. The gravity of sin is traditionally measured not just by the degree of engagement of the person's freedom, but also by the objective matter of the act.

A sin is considered mortal when three conditions are simultaneously met:

1. **Grave Matter:** The object of the sin must be a grave violation of God's law. Some sins are considered intrinsically grave and mortal by reason of their matter.
2. **Full Knowledge:** The person must have full knowledge of the sinful character of the act and its opposition to God's law.
3. **Deliberate Consent:** The act must be committed with deliberate consent, meaning the person freely chose to commit the act despite knowing it was wrong.

Principal Effects of Mortal Sin

Mortal sin fundamentally alters the spiritual state of the person, resulting in several severe consequences:

1. Destruction of Charity and Loss of Sanctifying Grace

Mortal sin **destroys charity** in the heart of the person. Charity is the life of the soul, and without it, eternal beatitude is impossible. This destruction of charity deprives the soul of sanctifying grace, which is the principle of union with God.

- The soul ceases to be turned away from God when guilt is pardoned through grace, but while in a state of mortal sin, the friendship with God is lost.
- The reception of the Eucharist requires a soul to be in a state of sanctifying grace; therefore, mortal sin makes one unworthy to receive Holy Communion until the sin has been confessed and absolved.

2. Separation from God and Eternal Punishment

By turning away from God, the immutable Good, mortal sin incurs a debt of eternal punishment. The person who sins gravely against God, their neighbor, or themselves cannot be united with God.

- If a person dies in mortal sin without repenting and accepting God's merciful love, they remain separated from Him forever by their own free choice.
- This state of definitive self-exclusion from communion with God and the blessed is called "hell".
- The eternal punishment is divided into the pain of loss (*pæna damni*), which is the privation of the beatific vision of God, and the pain of sense (*pæna sensus*), which is suffering in punishment of the inordinate turning to a created thing in place of God.

3. Spiritual Weakening and Inclination to Evil

Mortal sin can lead to several psychological and spiritual consequences in this life.

- Remorse of conscience.
- An inclination towards evil, as habits are formed by a repetition of similar acts.
- A darkening of the intelligence and a hardening of the will.
- A general vitiating of nature, which weakens the right exercise of the soul's faculties, though it does not totally destroy the substance and faculties of the soul.

Reconciliation and Forgiveness

Despite the gravity of mortal sin, God's mercy offers a path to reconciliation. Mortal sin can be forgiven through the ordinary means of the Sacraments of Baptism and of Penance or Reconciliation.

The Sacrament of Penance

The Sacrament of Penance (Confession) is the ordinary way for a Catholic to be restored to a state of grace after committing a mortal sin. This sacrament requires specific dispositions from the penitent.

- **Contrition:** Sincere sorrow for each mortal sin, animated by an awareness that God listens, and not just personal regret.
- **Confession:** The willingness to submit personal sins to the sacred tribunal of a sacramental confession, requiring a clear manifestation of specific mortal sins without concealment.
- **Resolution:** A sincere resolution not to continue in any mortal sin that has been confessed, which includes the resolution to struggle against temptation and avoid occasions of sin. A confession where the person fully intends to resume the sin is invalid.

Perfect Contrition and Desire for Penance

In cases of distress or near death, a person who is sincerely repentant and appeals to God's mercy can be restored to grace by an act analogous to Baptism by desire, often called "Penance by desire". This involves perfect contrition, which is sorrow for sin arising from love of God, and includes the intention to confess the sin sacramentally as soon as possible.

Briefing: Sainthood, Sin, and the Mystical Body of Christ

This briefing synthesizes an analysis of the universal call to holiness, the nature of sin, and the interconnectedness of all believers within the "Mystical Body of Christ." The central thesis posits that individual sin, particularly mortal sin, functions as a "cancer" within the Church, causing the entire body to suffer and undermining its mission in the world. The documents argue that true Church unity stems not from superficial accord but from the collective pursuit of holiness by its members. A failure to live out this call results in a "hobbled" and hypocritical Church, open to legitimate criticism and unable to function at full capacity. The path forward requires a focused effort to cooperate with God's grace, modeled on the lives of the saints. A detailed theological framework of mortal sin is provided, outlining its three defining conditions (grave matter, full knowledge, deliberate consent), its principal effects (loss of grace, separation from God, spiritual weakening), and the path to reconciliation through the Sacrament of Penance.

1. The Mystical Body of Christ: A Threefold Communion

The core theological concept presented is that of the Church as the Mystical Body of Christ. This body is not limited to believers on Earth but comprises a complete "communion of saints."

- **Definition of "Saints":** The term "saints" has two applications:
 1. **Modern Sense:** Those in heaven, known as the **Church Triumphant**. This includes canonized saints to whom intercessory prayers are offered, as well as those whose names are unknown.
 2. **Pauline Sense:** All who are made sacred and set apart by God through baptism. These are the children of God, drawn into the divine life of the Trinity and made members of Christ's mystical body. This group is also referred to as the **Church Militant** or the Pilgrim Church.
- **The Complete Body:** The placement of All Saints' Day next to All Souls' Day is cited as a deliberate emphasis on the entirety of the Mystical Body of Christ, which includes:
 - **The Church Triumphant:** The saints in heaven.
 - **The Church Penitent (or in Purgatory):** The souls being purified, for whom the Church Militant prays.
 - **The Church Militant:** Believers on Earth, who recall the Church Triumphant as their model and goal.

2. The Analogy of Sin: A Sickness in the Body

The central argument uses a powerful analogy comparing the effect of sin on the Mystical Body of Christ to a disease afflicting a human body.

- **Sin as a Cancer:** An individual who commits mortal sin is described as becoming a "cancer in the body of Christ." This act severs the individual's friendship with God and has repercussions for the entire community.
- **The Body's Response:** Drawing from modern science, the analysis notes that a healthy biological organism is oriented toward isolating and addressing any sickness to return to wholeness. The Mystical Body of Christ is similarly affected by the "sickness" of its members' sins.
- **A "Hobbled Church":** The cumulative effect of mortal sins committed by members results in a "hobbled church" that suffers in its human aspect. While its divine nature ensures that "the gates of hell will not prevail against it," its human portion is weakened.

3. The Universal Call to Holiness and Its Obstacles

The pursuit of sainthood is presented as the "universal call to holiness," which means being "set apart" and "different" in thought, action, and way of life. Sin is the primary obstacle to achieving this state of a healthy, integrated body.

- **The Nature of True Unity:** Church unity is defined not as a superficial agreement "to be nice to each other" but as something that "goes to the very heart of who we are as the Mystical Body of Christ." This authentic unity can only be achieved when the body is composed of "healthy, whole, integrated parts."
- **Obstacles and Consequences of Failure:** A failure to pursue holiness leads to a compromised and ineffective Church, characterized by:
 - **Hypocrisy and Criticism:** When believers engage in the same sins as non-believers, the Church opens itself to mockery and loses its credibility. The source offers a potent critique:
 - **Complacency:** The Church becomes a "complacent, sleepy, tired body" when its members find their pleasures in worldly things and set priorities above God.

- **Self-Authority:** Members who set themselves as the ultimate authority effectively "change the definitions of what God has decided is justice, is worship, is holiness, is love, is peace."

4. A Detailed Analysis of Mortal Sin

The source provides a detailed theological breakdown of mortal sin, defining its nature, conditions, effects, and the path to forgiveness.

Conditions for Mortal Sin

For a sin to be considered mortal, three conditions must be met simultaneously.

| Condition | Description |
|---------------------------|--|
| Grave Matter | The act itself must be a grave violation of God's law. |
| Full Knowledge | The person must be fully aware of the sinful character of the act and its opposition to God's law. |
| Deliberate Consent | The person must freely choose to commit the act despite knowing it is wrong. |

Principal Effects of Mortal Sin

Mortal sin has severe spiritual and psychological consequences for the individual and their relationship with God.

1. Destruction of Charity and Loss of Sanctifying Grace:

- It destroys charity, the life of the soul, and deprives it of sanctifying grace, which is the principle of union with God.
- The "friendship with God is lost."
- It makes one unworthy to receive Holy Communion until the sin is absolved.

2. Separation from God and Eternal Punishment:

- It incurs a debt of eternal punishment. If a person dies in a state of unrepentant mortal sin, they remain separated from God by their own free choice.
- This state of "definitive self-exclusion" is called "hell."
- Eternal punishment is twofold: the "pain of loss" (*pæna damni*, the privation of seeing God) and the "pain of sense" (*pæna sensus*, suffering as punishment for turning to a created thing over God).

3. Spiritual Weakening and Inclination to Evil:

- It leads to remorse of conscience.
- Repeated acts form habits, creating an inclination toward evil.
- It causes a "darkening of the intelligence and a hardening of the will."

5. The Path to Sainthood and Reconciliation

Despite the gravity of sin, the documents stress that it is within the power of believers to become saints and build a "powerful church in the world" through cooperation with God's grace.

- **The Call to Action:** Believers are called to be "bold," "honest," and not hypocrites, accepting rejection from the world as part of the pursuit of perfection. The saints are the ultimate model, as they "knew it" and "gave their lives for it." The only barrier is "ourselves who settle for less." This call is likened to the passionate desire for a "championship team of Jesus."
- **Reconciliation through the Sacrament of Penance:** The ordinary path to forgiveness for mortal sin is the Sacrament of Penance (Confession). This requires three dispositions from the penitent:
 1. **Contrition:** Sincere sorrow for sins.
 2. **Confession:** The clear manifestation of specific mortal sins to a priest.
 3. **Resolution:** A sincere resolution to stop committing the confessed sin and to avoid occasions of sin. A confession is considered invalid if the person intends to resume the sin.
- **Perfect Contrition:** In urgent situations, such as near death, a person can be restored to grace through perfect contrition (sorrow arising from love for God) combined with the intention to confess sacramentally as soon as possible.

Glossary of Key Terms

| Term | Definition |
|-------------------------------------|--|
| Cancer in the Body of Christ | An analogy for a member of the Mystical Body of Christ who commits mortal sin, causing the whole body to suffer from the effects of that sin. |
| Church Militant | Also called the Pilgrim Church; refers to the members of the Church on Earth. |
| Church Penitent | Refers to the members of the Church in purgatory. |
| Church Triumphant | Refers to the saints in heaven. |
| Communion of Saints | The entire body of Christ, encompassing the Church Triumphant, Church Penitent, and Church Militant. |
| Contrition | A required disposition for the Sacrament of Penance; it is sincere sorrow for each mortal sin, animated by an awareness that God listens. |
| Deliberate Consent | One of the three conditions for a mortal sin; the act must be committed with a free choice despite knowing it was wrong. |
| Full Knowledge | One of the three conditions for a mortal sin; the person must have full knowledge of the sinful character of the act and its opposition to God's law. |
| Grave Matter | One of the three conditions for a mortal sin; the object of the sin must be a grave violation of God's law. |
| Hell | The state of definitive self-exclusion from communion with God and the blessed, which results from dying in mortal sin without repenting. |
| Holy | To be set apart and different in the way one thinks, acts, and lives, with one's entire being transformed in Christ. |
| Mortal Sin | A sin that meets the three conditions of grave matter, full knowledge, and deliberate consent. It destroys charity, causes the loss of sanctifying grace, and separates the soul from God. |
| Mystical Body of Christ | The Church, of which all baptized persons are made members. The body as a whole suffers from the sins of its individual parts. |
| Sacrament of Penance | Also known as Confession, it is the ordinary way for a Catholic to be restored to a state of grace after committing a mortal sin. |
| Sacrament of Salvation | The mission of the Church to be a sign and instrument of salvation for everyone in the world. |
| Saints | In one sense, the Church Triumphant in heaven. In the Pauline sense, all those made sacred and set apart by God through baptism. |
| Sanctifying Grace | The principle of union with God, which is destroyed in the soul by mortal sin. |
| Unity (Church Unity) | A concept that goes to the very heart of the Church's identity as the Mystical Body of Christ, called to be holy and set apart. It is more than an agreement to simply get along. |
| Universal Call to Holiness | The call for every member of the Church to live a holy life in pursuit of becoming a saint. |