

HOMILIES FROM THE HERMITAGE
NO. 36 : FINAL OF FOUR QUARTERS
THE COMMUNION OF SAINTS

**NOVEMBER IS A MONTH IN WHICH WE COMMEMORATE
NOV. 1ST ALL SAINTS: NOV. 2ND ALL SOULS: CHRIST THE KING.**

The Communion of the Saints is an old Tradition of the Church in which we celebrate all who have gone before us. Consider three groups: **THE CHURCH TRIUMPHANT: THE CHURCH MILITANT: THE CHURCH SUFFERING.**

When I was young I had a vision:

The Church Triumphant conjured up a vision of Cardinals and Bishops in their splendid vestments for Pontifical Mass and other services.

The Church Militant conjured up Christ's Army fighting untruth and sometimes fellow-Christians!

The Church Suffering conjured up people in pews listening to sermons.

In fact the three groups represent; a) The Saints in Heaven: b) the Faithful in earth on their journey: c) the Holy Souls in Purgatory, their place in Heaven secured, they are being purified so that they can look at God face to face.

All groups are covered in the Apostles' Creed with 'The Communion of Saints' The belief of the Church is that all of us in the three groups are the Church of Christ and are all united in the all Body of Christ. These final weeks of the Church's year turn on the thoughts of the second coming to Christ when all things will become right. Therefore we celebrate, help and pray as needed for our brothers and sisters in Christ.

On November 1st we celebrate all the holy people who have completed their time on earth who have reached the glory of Heaven to be fully with God as He always wished from before all time.

One November 2nd we pray for those who have completed their time on earth but who are not yet fully capable of facing God face to face but who need a kind of purification (or purgation) of the smaller things which have still remained in us which make us not yet fully as God wishes. Our prayers can help us in their journey of purgation and so we pray for those who have gone before us to help them to be enable to meet God face to face.

The Church militant? They are ourselves in this world are on the journey which can be considered as a campaign or a journey to God in that there is an element of battle against the powers of darkness who seek to estrange us from God and those parts in our life in which stray onto the wrong path.

So in these months let us prepare for the Feast of Christ the King, the final celebration of our liturgical year, and celebrate 'The Saints'—the early name for the Church, Christ's followers.

HOMILY 36A :THE FOUR LAST THINGS

November is a month when traditionally we ponder ‘the four last things’

DEATH

JUDGEMENT

HELL

HEAVEN

This pious tradition seems to have been somewhat in abeyance in recent years: people are happy enough with Heaven: they are not too keen on Death, and some somehow seem that ‘we may live for ever’ (This was the slogan of Persian Kings ‘O King, live for ever!!!.) Judgement and Hell seem to slip pass our minds, although the first will be ours and the second a state which we might have opted for by our life.

Death comes to us all (although St. Paul does suggest that some of us may still be alive at the Second Coming of Christ.)

Judgement will be a statement of what our life has been—for Christ or against. There is no third ‘neutral’ option: no ‘abstain’ (those ‘for Christ’ will include those who had not known Christ and who without fault have not been able to acknowledge Him but have lived a good life according to a godly conscience).

Heaven and Hell:

These are not ‘places’ into which God will tip us! Heaven and Hell are ‘states’ into which we become according to the state of our soul/life at the time of death. Those who had chosen and tried to follow God will find that their state is to attain ‘the face of God’ (albeit some will need a purgation of faults before they can be ‘face to face’ God.) Those who have deliberately have chosen to reject God and His Law (Love of God and neighbour) will find that it will be impossible for them to come ‘face to face’ with God. That has been their choice and God will respect that. Their choice is what we call ‘Hell’ this state frustrates the person from being who God has wished each of us to be.

God does not ‘send anyone’ to Hell: it is the free choice of the person and God has given is free choice.

(It is a pious tradition that the Holy Souls will help to wake us up in the morning. I recall a cartoon in ‘Cracks in the cloister’ when a drowsy monk is crawling late into Matins and an acerbic brother says: ‘If I were you, Brother, I’d forget the Holy Souls and get an alarm clock!’)