

Our Pilgrimage with the Saints

Kristopher W. Seaman

And so, with the company of Angels and Saints,
we sing the hymn of your praise,
as without end we acclaim:

Each Sunday, just before singing the “Holy, Holy, Holy,” the words in the Preface note that we pray with the angels and saints. These words prior to the Hosanna vary depending on the Preface of the Eucharistic Prayer, but each Preface notes that our prayers are said in union with heavenly voices.

That we pray with the angels and saints has been part of the Church’s teachings for centuries. The Church on earth is connected to, or in union with, its members who are in heaven—the angels and saints. This means that every Sunday when we come together to worship and glorify God, we gather with the angels and saints around the Scriptures and the Eucharist.

The Church recognizes the saints as the holy ones (the word *saint* comes from the Latin word for *holy*). As exemplars of what it means to dedicate one’s life to God, the saints model for us what it means to worship and glorify God. When we pray with the saints, then, we are praying with those who have arrived at what we hope is our final destination.

The second aspect of praying with the saints is that of pilgrimage. From the days of the early Church, Christians have journeyed to Jerusalem to follow the path of Christ’s Passion, Death, and Resurrection, as well as to the places where the saints have lived. But a pilgrimage does not need to be to a distant place. We are on a pilgrimage, too, when we follow God’s invitation to grow deeper in faith. While we are in our homes preparing to participate in Mass, we are beginning a liturgical pilgrimage.

Pilgrimages can take on a penitential aspect, as portrayed in Chaucer’s *Canterbury Tales*, a fourteenth-century story of pilgrims journeying to the shrine of St. Thomas Becket. Those on a pilgrimage with this penitential aspect seek to deepen their life in Christ according to the saints, while recognizing how their lives often fall short of God’s will and compassion. We see this in Eucharistic Prayer I when it states:

To us, also, your servants, who, though sinners, / hope in
your abundant mercies, / graciously grant some share /
and fellowship with your holy Apostles and Martyrs. . . .

The liturgy is our regular pilgrimage site or place where we recognize that we fall short, that we have not reached the sanctity of the angels and saints, though God repeatedly invites



The Holy Spirit is the gift of God himself to transform us in his divine love.

us to a holy life. Yet the liturgy also is a time when we glimpse and participate in our final home around the heavenly banquet table.

Eucharistic Prayer I alludes to this when it states:

In humble prayer we ask you, almighty God: / command
that these gifts be borne / by the hands of your holy
Angel / to your altar on high / in the sight of your divine
majesty, / so that all of us, who through this participa-
tion at the altar / receive the most holy Body and Blood
of your Son, / may be filled with every grace and heavenly
blessing.

Thus, liturgy is a pilgrimage during which we pray with the angels and saints as we live in the hope that one day, we too might be as they are.

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