

FIFTEENTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME. 2026

Since the day of Pentecost, the Holy Spirit has caused Christians to sow the seed of God's word. As the Lord Jesus illustrates in His Parable of the Sower and the Seed, the seed of God's word does not bear fruit in everyone who hears it. Some soil is better than other soil, in the sense that some hearts are willing to be taught and some are not. Some soil gets irrigated and some does not, insofar as some people actively cooperate with God's word and some refuse to. In those who are not willing to be taught and refuse to cooperate, God's word will not bear fruit for Eternal Life. In those who are willing to be taught and agree to cooperate, God's Word will bear the fruit of true holiness. Such people will become true and everlastingly happy members of the Communion of Saints.

The invisible Communion of Saints and the visible, institutional Church are not identical, though they are closely related. The Communion of Saints is invisible, but the Sacred Scriptures and Sacred Sacraments that plant the seed of God's word are not invisible. The gate through which people can enter the Communion of Saints is the visible Church on earth, with her Scriptures and Sacraments. In the end, of course, there will not be any distinction at all between the visible, institutional Church and the Communion of Saints. In the end, everyone will know which people really have been taught by and cooperated with the word of God. In that sense, the ancient Christian saying is true: *Extra Ecclesiam Nulla Salus* - Outside the Church there is no Salvation. In the end, Salvation is only through being taught by and cooperating with the word of God. In the end, we will all be able to see who has truly been filled with the Holy Spirit, and who has truly been incorporated into the Mystical Body of Christ.

For now, however, we see only the institutional Church on earth, entrusted with the Scriptures and Sacraments that turn those people who are teachable and cooperative into members of the invisible and immortal Communion of Saints. This visible and institutional Church, governed by the Bishops in union with the Bishop of Rome, and led in teaching and worship by Pastors in communion with those Bishops, is what we usually mean when we say "the Church." This is not exactly wrong, but it isn't precisely correct either. The visible and institutional Church is only a fragment of the true Church, the invisible Communion of Saints. The visible Church points to and testifies to the Communion of Saints. At her best, the visible Church actually resembles the Communion of Saints in holiness. Through sacred Scripture and divine worship, the visible Church plants the seed that grows into the Communion of Saints. Nevertheless, it is the invisible Communion of Saints that is the true Body of Christ. It is the Communion of Saints that only grows and never declines, because no one who has truly been joined to that mighty and immortal body, spiritually the very Body of Christ, ever falls away from it. It is only the Communion of Saints that never changes, for it is spiritually the very Body of Christ, and Jesus Christ is the same, yesterday, today, and forever.

In the truest sense, the Catholic, or universal Church, is the Communion of Saints. That true Catholic Church is on earth, but is not an earthly thing. It, the Communion of Saints, is really Heaven on earth, in which the dead and the living are present to each other, we honoring those who have gone before us in Faith, and they praying for us. Where is the Communion of Saints? Wherever Jesus and His Spirit are, there is the Communion of Saints. It is nowhere in particular, and everywhere at once. Consider yourself. Are you in your head, your fingers, your biceps, your gut, or your toes? You are not in any of them in particular, and are in all of them at

once. East and West, North and South, the Mystical Body of Christ, the true Church, the Communion of Saints, lives wherever Jesus Christ and His Spirit are active.

The Communion of Saints is invisible, but the instruments that enable the teachable and cooperative to become members of the Communion of Saints are visible - and audible too. Where the Sacred Scriptures are proclaimed and taught is where we need to be. Where the divine worship of the Holy Sacraments is celebrated is where we need to be. Where a true bishop, or a minister ordained and dispatched by him, is gathered with his people to hear the Scriptures and celebrate the Sacraments is where we need to be. The visible, institutional Church is not unimportant, far from it. The visible, institutional Church, with her Scriptures and divine worship, is essential.

The divine worship we call Baptism, that makes the field of a soul ready to receive the saving seed of God's word, is essential. The visible rite of Baptism is effective because of the invisible Spirit of Jesus Christ. However worthy or unworthy, the visible minister does not truly baptize. The power that claims the field of a soul for the sowing of God's word is not the minister's power, but Jesus Christ's. Whether the visible rite of Baptism is performed according the old Roman Ritual, the new Roman Ritual, the usages of the the Greek Orthodox Church, or the Anglican Book of Common Prayer, the invisible Spirit of Jesus Christ washes away the power of evil, and the invisible Communion of Saints hastens to welcome and help a new candidate member, so to speak. There is much work yet to be done; but the field is ready for planting, and the Communion of Saints will help in the work that follows.

In every visible rite of divine worship, the invisible Communion of Saints participates and is present. When we pray the Psalms in the Liturgy of the Hours, the Saints who prayed them on earth before us are praying them now with us, joining Heaven to earth. When we offer the visible Eucharistic Sacrifice of Praise and Thanksgiving, the invisible Communion of Saints offers Praise and Thanksgiving with us. When we eat the divine Bread and drink the mystical Wine of that Sacrifice, the invisible Communion of Saints eats and drinks with us, joining the perfect worship of Heaven to the highest worship of earth. When we see the visible bishop, or even a priest ordained by him, presiding at divine worship, invisibly present are those members of the Communion of Saints who have faithfully performed the ministry of sowing God's word and fishing people for Eternal Life.

Even beyond the visible sacred rites of the earthly Church, the invisible Communion of Saints, the great heavenly Church, is present. When we offer a prayer at a saint's tomb, we are really stopping by the porch of Heaven, saying hello, and looking forward to the day when we will walk through the door and finally come home, to where the Saints forever rejoice in the life of God. Even when we pray alone in our bedrooms, we are not alone, for Jesus Christ is surely present, and where He is, there also are His holy ones, the Communion of Saints

To conclude, we members of the visible Church on earth, called to fight for the Lord's word, are only the outpost of the countless and invincible army of the saved, God's elect, the Communion of Saints. Sometimes we probably look pretty pathetic, a small and poorly disciplined militia, doomed to defeat. But we are not doomed to defeat. Neither we nor any human adversaries can see the army all around us, the Communion of Saints with the Lord of Hosts at its head. The demons see, and tremble. Not seeing their presence, may we nonetheless rejoice in the great cloud witnesses that cheers us on toward Faith's goal, our Salvation.

