

St. Mary the Virgin

Of all the Saints, the most honoured is St. Mary, the Mother of God. The Gospel according to St. Luke is quite clear, Our Lady, as we delight to call her, is of all women the most blessed. She, above all people, is most favoured by God who chose her to be the mother of His only-begotten Son Jesus.

Just as Our Lady is the Saint most highly honoured by God, so it is right and fitting that she should be the most highly honoured by Christ's Church. We are told, if not commanded, that "all generations shall call me blessed". Of all the means of honouring Our Lady, and indeed all the Saints, open to Christians, by far the most fitting is to ask her to pray for us. Asking her to pray for is not to take anything away from Christ's glory, but to magnify it by doing His will and honouring His Mother. The first recorded example of people asking her prayers is in the Gospel according to St. John: the story of the marriage at Cana in Galilee. St. Luke's Gospel shows us that it is indeed God's will that Our Lady will pray for us, and that her prayers will not go unheeded. The prophet Simeon says to Our Lady that "a sword shall pierce through thine own soul; that thoughts out of many hearts may be revealed".

Our Lady's prayer for us is that of a mother for her children. When Our Lord was dying on the cross, almost His last act was to commit "the disciple whom He loved" to her maternal care. The beloved disciple's recorded response was to make a place in his home for her. The beloved disciple, who is not named, stands for all Christians, and so it was we who are committed to her care. It should also be the response of all faithful followers of Christ to make a place for His mother in their hearts.

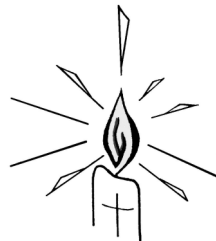
Probably the best known prayer to Our Lady which is easy to memorize is the 'Hail Mary'.

Conclusion

Praying for others is a demonstration of our love for each other, and of our faith in God. It is just as important, though, to ask other Christians, including the Saints, to pray for us.

Hail Mary,
full of grace,
the Lord is with thee.
Blessed art thou among women,
and blessed is the fruit
of thy womb Jesus.
Holy Mary,
Mother of God,
pray for us sinners now
and at the hour of our death.
Amen.

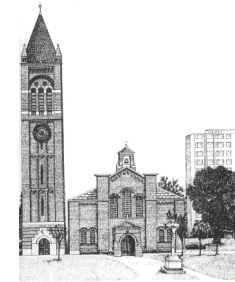
*This leaflet was largely the work of
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Holy Trinity Church



What we do in Church and Why!



Asking the Prayers of the Saints

Who are the Saints?

The word SAINT means 'holy one', and so the saints are God's holy people. In this broadest sense, all members of the Church are, potentially at least, 'saints'. St. Paul uses the word in this way in his letters, but it wasn't long before the word came to have a more specific meaning.

Very early in the life of the Church it came to be recognised that certain individuals lived more obviously 'holy' lives. Chief among them were those who had died for the Faith - the martyrs, and supremely, Blessed Mary, Mother of the Lord Jesus. As time passed the Church began to realise that holiness only sometimes went hand-in-hand with martyrdom. More often than not holiness was apparent in other, less dramatic ways. Often, though, it was only recognized after the Saint's death.

"I believe in the Communion of Saints"

We say these words from the Nicene Creed during the Eucharist; they remind us that the Church is much bigger than our own congregation, or even the entire 'Church Militant' here on Earth. They remind us that the larger part of the Church exists on the other side of the grave.

The whole of the Church, living and departed, is united in the one eternal Eucharist. We are united to Christ by Baptism and by eating His Body and Blood in the Eucharist, and so we are intimately united to each other. '

Church Triumphant

The Church Triumphant is the Church in 'heaven'. The souls of all those Christians who are enjoying, to the full, the Heavenly Banquet. The Book of Revelation, although it should not be taken as literally descriptive, paints a picture of the glory of heaven and the fulfilment of the Saints. It also reminds us that the Saints in heaven continue to offer prayer to God.

Praying for ourselves and others

Praying for the needs of other people, and for ourselves, is one of the four basic ways of praying. It is called SUPPLICATION.



We pray for ourselves, in the belief that whatever we ask in the name of Christ, God will give us. We must always remember, though, that God already knows our needs, and will provide them without waiting to be asked.

Praying for others, in particular, is one of the ways in which we demonstrate our care for them. We also ask other people to pray for us. Prayer for each other is the basic expression of Christian love. God wants us to pray in this way, not because He will only give us what we need if we ask for it, but because prayer is good for us! It helps us to be aware of God's love for us; it helps us to be aware of the needs of others, and teaches us to love them; and above all it keeps us aware of our total dependence upon Him.

Asking the prayers of the Saints

The practice of asking the Saints to pray for us was, for many years, frowned upon as something alien to the spirit of the Church of England, and somehow wrong. Thankfully, in recent years its value has been rediscovered, and the practice is becoming more widely understood and used.

Why we ask the Saints to pray for us

just as we believe that the prayers of a 'holy' living Christian will help us, so will the prayers of one who is even more alive! If the prayers of we, who are far from being 'holy' and far from the throne of Grace, can work miracles, how much more will the prayers of the Saints!

