

and lack of spirituality. But for him, for her, who believes, the heavens are opened, and from thence pours forth into the darkness of this world and into the darkness of our own heart, a soft, blessed glow of light, love and life. And the soul that is cherished thereby, has already now "walks above" among the saints of God, and with the smile of joy on his face, he sees the approach of the hour when, having finished his earthly course, he, too, shall enter upon the fulness of that glory.

The early Christians realized this, and therefore, clothed in white garments, they carried out their dead who had fallen asleep in Jesus amid songs of joy. We, at a greater distance from the Mount of Olives, follow other customs, only, let it never be with less fixedness of hope in the heart in behalf of our beloved ones who have fallen asleep.

### "WITH ALL SAINTS."

In your most pious frame of mind, and urgent longing of soul to be near unto God you may not claim the Lord your God for yourself alone. This is a sinful abuse which is readily committed by passionate devotion. In the "Our Father" a plural is used, where we, when left to our own impulse, would readily use a singular. It does not say: "My Father," but "Our Father," who art in heaven, and the plural "us" is used in the Lord's prayer to the end. This does not mean that we may not use the singular in our devotions. In

the "Eli, Eli, Lama Sabachthani" Jesus quoted Psalm 22 and of itself there could be no plural used whenever the Son of God practiced fellowship with the Father. Jesus as such stood entirely alone, in holy isolation. And though it may not be in that exalted and peculiar sense, in which it was the case with Jesus, yet with us also conditions arise and experiences of soul, which isolate us, and of which at least we do not know that we have them in common with others. Then it is a personal condition, from which we call upon God, and it is natural that we use the singular and say: "My God" and "my Father."

This, however, should not be the rule, it should not be the common tenor of our prayer. Of itself this is not so when we pray together. But it must not be so in our quiet, solitary and personal prayer. In case of common need, even when we pray alone, we feel instinctively that this is not permissible. In times of shipwreck this has spontaneously shown itself. If among the more than one thousand miners who perished at Courrieres, there were those in that dreadful subteranean hell who knew how to pray, it probably was not thought otherwise. And when recently Vesuvius vomited fire and sulphur, they who were devout did not remain at home to pray each by himself, but all gathered together for prayer in the churches.

Such is the case with all men before God, in the common need of sin and misery. This common need may assume a special form in each individual case. Sin may bear a special character

and the misery of life may make itself known in a particular way to each of us. This, however, does not take away the fact that all sin and misery flows from one common source, that it makes us sharers of a common lot, and that it should move us unitedly to call upon God for redemption and deliverance.

If such is the case with our supplication from the midst of danger, it is the same with respect to our thanksgiving for grace received and with our prayer for safe-keeping by this grace. Every one's salvation and deliverance is from Bethlehem and Golgotha and the opened grave. One and the selfsame Satan seeks to work harm into the grace of all, and the safe-keeping of all by the grace of God proceeds from the inworking in our hearts of the same Holy Spirit and from the same glorious government of Christ as our King. If thus in sin and misery we share a common lot with all mankind, in the sphere of grace we share a common lot with all those whom the Father has given to Christ. Our spiritual attitude in holy things therefore neither can nor should be any other save that we know and feel that we approach God "with all saints" and that with all the saints together we stand before our God.

Consider that the Apostle says: "With all saints" (Eph. 3:18). Some godly people well know fellowship with the godly in their own town, but they forget that the godly and the saints are not the same, and this they leave out of account. This does not say that it is not good and excel-

lent to be daily in spiritual touch with such in one's town, in order to strengthen the faith and in behalf of mutual edification. Only, common fellowship with the godly is altogether different from the sense of sharing a common lot "with all saints." With "the saints" the Scripture does not speak of subjective, personal piety, but of objective sanctification through and in Christ. "The saints" are the redeemed, they who have been drawn unto eternal life. Not your choice, but the choice of God here counts. Not a fellowship with those whom you think are godly, but sharers in a common lot with those who have been effectively called of God.

Thus the circle of the saints is not narrow, not provisional, not local, but it is a multitude which no one can number, in all parts of the world, here and up yonder, from the days of Paradise until now, and from now on to all eternity. As we sing in the Te Deum: "The holy church throughout all the world doth acknowledge thee."

Hence, "with all saints" means fellowship with all those who have been and will be redeemed by the blood of Christ in your immediate surroundings, in your whole land, in your church, in other churches, in other lands, both in the present, in the past and in the future. It is the whole "body of Christ" with all its members, not one excepted. With the patriarchs and prophets, the apostles and martyrs from of old, with your redeemed relatives and family members and acquaintances, who have gone before into eternity, with those who

still continue with you, with those who grow up from among the children of the church, and those who are still hidden in the seed of the church, or who are brought into the church from without. No one whom God has included, may we exclude. And that this refers not merely to your salvation, but also to your fellowship with the Triune God, and to your being near unto God, clearly appears from what the apostle writes so enthusiastically, that "with all saints" ye may be able to comprehend what is the breadth, and length, and depth and height in the mystery of the grace of God.

This exposition of the sense of your sacred fellowship is deeply significant with respect to practical ends. When you accustom yourself to reduce the multitude, which no one can number, to the few Christian people whom you personally know as members of your own church, your sacred horizon becomes very small and narrow. Then the people of God slink away to a few hundreds, and all the rest of the world appears to you like lost masses. If, on the other hand, you think of the wide circle of all God's saints, those at hand and those afar off, of the present and of the past, of those on earth and of those in heaven, and of those who are yet to be born, then all the saints of the old Covenant at once come nearer, then there is life in fellowship with apostles and martyrs, then there is an innumerable multitude of brothers and sisters above, and from the rising generation and from those that will come after

them, we look for a continuous increase of the body of Christ.

Then discouragement and depression give place to a feeling of triumph and of endless glory. Your case then stands no more alone and by itself, but thousands have shared it with you, and still other thousands have been far worse conditioned than you, who nevertheless have entered upon eternal life. You experience also the glorious effect of the magnitude of the work of grace. You do not belong to an insignificant, forgotten society, but to a multitude without end, a vast company which no one can number, which now already stands before God, or is on the way to the Fatherhouse, or presently is to be born from the almightiness of God. Then God and the work of his grace assume proportions of infinite greatness to the eye of the soul. Everything little and circumscribed falls away, and the pilgrim journey is continued, not with sighings and with complaints, but jubilantly in the salvation of God and even here with the standing of the feet in the gate of the heavenly Jerusalem.

And this is the frame of mind that prepares you for the secret walk with God, and causes you to be near unto God. As long as it is only a personal dealing with God, as though you together with a few other Christian souls sought a hiding place with God, the majesty of the work of grace is lost to you, and with it the majesty of his Divine Being. The straits of your own soul's condition and of the outward needs limit also the length and breadth, the height and depth of the

majestic doings of God. Thus your own insignificance is readily transferred to the Eternal. But when you feel that you are a living member of the whole living body of Christ, that you are one of the multitude that can not be numbered, that you are related to all the saints above, to all God's saints in the whole earth, and to all the saints among the children, and among your children's children, then the pinnings of the sacred tent are put out widely, your outlook is enlarged, your love is extended to thousands upon thousands, your faith is deepened and your hope begins to glisten with all the radiancy of glorious victory.

The heart of our God is so wide of conception, that nothing estranges you farther from this Fatherheart than your own narrow-heartedness. In the *Te Deum* it is sung:

"The glorious company of the apostles praise thee,

The noble army of martyrs praise thee."

Sometimes the desire comes upon one that he might have lived in the days of Isaiah, and that he might have companied with St. John, and might have witnessed the heroism of martyrs in the face of death. And then one thinks that all this is lost in an unapproachable past. Then, live in the sense of communion "with all saints," and they all will come nearer to you. They all are your brothers, with whom you are included in the one body of Christ. And the nearer you come to this company of God's saints above, the nearer

you will feel yourself in the presence of God, who hath included you "with all saints" in the self-same bundle of life.

**"THE GRACE OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST,  
AND THE LOVE OF GOD, AND THE  
FELLOWSHIP OF THE HOLY GHOST  
BE WITH YOU ALL."**

The apostle from whose hand the richest epistolary legacy has come to us, was in the habit of opening and closing his epistles with a blessing. The one he used in opening was almost always: "Grace be with you and peace from God our Father and from the Lord Jesus Christ." And the prayer with which he closed mostly read: "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all." It was truly exceptional, when at the close of his second epistle to the Corinthians he so far departed from his usual way, that he expanded his prayer, and said: "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Ghost be with you all." This closing prayer is particularly noteworthy, because the church of Christ almost everywhere has used it as the apostolic benediction at the close of public worship. Millions upon millions of times these sacred words, so rich of content and so tender of purport, have been repeated, after the departure of Paul, and it is for a large part now that congregations of believers return home from the place of worship under the impression of these words.