

Church Militant, Church Expectant, Church Triumphant

I speak to you in the Name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen

What do Remembrance Day, All Souls' Day, and All Saints' Day have in common? Aside from the fact they are all celebrated at the beginning of November—they all remind us of the Faithful Departed—Nov 1st—All Saint's Day, Nov 2nd—All Souls Day, Nov 11th—Remembrance Day.

Gloomy thinking, you say? Not a bit! If you truly believe in the Easter Resurrection of Christ, then these 3 special days are a Practical Expression of our belief that Christ, by his Death and Resurrection, has given to us the Resurrection to Life Eternal. You and I say that in the Creed every Sunday—"I believe in the Resurrection of the Dead, and the Life Everlasting."

Let me explain by telling you about the three parts of the church: The Church Militant, the Church Expectant, and the Church Triumphant! (Repeat) Those three phrases are an older way of talking about the three parts of the Church—but then I'm an older priest, so you would expect me to talk in an older way, right?

The 1st part of the church is "**The Church Militant**": The Church Militant is the Church right here on earth. The Catechism tells us that we are fighting against the "world, the flesh, and the devil." We Christians are expected to be militant against injustice in this world, political corruption, racism, poverty, hunger, unemployment, homelessness, sickness, and all kinds of worldly evil. We are supposed to be the Church Militant, fighting against evil caused by humans. Our task is to build the Kingdom of God right here, and to bring all nations and all people into it, so that all may share equally in the bounty of Christ's love. To the extent that evil powers in this world are trying to pervert or prevent that happening, we are supposed to be militant against those evil powers. That is a task that we do together, as the people of the Church. We on earth are the Church Militant.

Sometimes, the evil gets so big and so monstrous, that we are forced to gather into armies to fight against evil. Several times in the past century, we have done just that—and men and women have fought, and some have died in World Wars to defeat that evil. On Remembrance Day, we remember them—both the living and the dead—and thank God for their lives and their sacrifices in the fight to stop evil. The wreath carried in this morning commemorates their fight against the evil of this world—but that wreath is also a reminder to us that we still have a lot to do. One evil was defeated, but there are lots more out there. The Church Militant isn't in danger of running out of work to do.

The 2nd part of the church is "**The Church Expectant**". I'll bet not too many people know what that is—but you all should—because sooner or later everyone here will be in the Church Expectant. The Church Expectant is the Church in Paradise, the Church of the Faithful Departed. Remember we all say in the creed: "I believe in the Resurrection of the

Dead, and the Life Everlasting”? When we leave this world, because of the blood of Christ, we all move into the Church Expectant, our continuing life in Paradise.

Note, I said Paradise, not Heaven, because Paradise comes first. Let me explain.

Our Christian Life is like a journey. We are born spiritually at our Baptism, and day after day, year after year, we are expected to Journey onward as we learn to Walk with Christ. Our spiritual life should be like a journey as we progress step by step closer to God our Father. The trouble is that we sometimes take a detour off the path or sit down in the ditch and twiddle our spiritual thumbs, and don't Walk with Christ like we are supposed to do. Or, using a different example, our spiritual life should be like Growth—growing through spiritual childhood, spiritual adolescence, into spiritual adulthood, heading finally towards spiritual maturity. At least that is what God intended—but some of us get stuck and stop growing spiritually. Are you one of those who is still stuck in your spiritual childhood, or are you rebelling against God in your spiritual adolescence? Unless you are careful, you can get stuck, and stop growing in Christ.

Now, because we are all mortal, our bodies will wear out, and some day our bodies will die. BUT, when we die, unless we are a great Saint, we rarely will have reached spiritual maturity. So, we who are living in the new life in Christ, move into the next stage of our life, where we continue our spiritual growth, finish our spiritual journey. In church lingo, that's called: Paradise, or the Church Expectant.

Remember those wonderful words that Jesus said to the Thief on the cross? He said: “Today you will be with me in Paradise.” Jesus didn't say Heaven, because even though the Good Thief was being given the Gift of Eternal Life, he still had to complete his spiritual growth, before he could enter Heaven. That applies to all of us—when we die, we move on to be with the Lord—moving into Paradise—where we complete our spiritual growth until we are ready to enter Heaven. Paradise is called the Church Expectant.

Now the Church Expectant is full of sadness and hope and joy. Those in the Church Expectant are both sad because of their sin yet filled with Hope and Joy because of the Near Presence of Jesus. Paradise is the state of Final Cleansing, the completion of our Journey in the Lord, the final part of our Walk with Christ, reaching towards the Maturity of Heaven—the last step until we become Saints of God.

We here in the Church Militant continue to pray for the Faithful Departed in the Church Expectant. We cannot see or know them because they have gone beyond this earthly sphere—yet, through Christ, we can continue to pray for them, as they also continue to pray for us. We are united with each other in prayer and adoration and love of the Living God. On All Soul's Day, Nov 2nd, the Church reminds us to pray for our loved ones, to offer the Holy Sacrifice of the Eucharist for them, to surround them with our prayers in the love of Jesus. That is what is meant in the Creed by: “I believe in the Communion of Saints.” In Christ, we in the Church Militant are united with the Faithful Departed in the Church Expectant, and together we join in Prayer and Adoration and Worship.

The 3rd and final part of the Church is called the **Church Triumphant**. By now you will have guessed what that is—it is the Church in Heaven, filled with those who have Completed their Course, Finished their Walk with Christ, Matured in their Growth in Christ, and are United with God the Father in Heaven. We call them, the Saints. To become a Saint is the Destiny of every Christian—it is why we were created by the Father, redeemed by the Son, and sanctified by the Holy Spirit. Throughout the year, we celebrate Festival Days for those Saint whose names we know—but on All Saints' Day, we thank God for the lives of all those men and women who down through the ages have lived holy lives and are now Saints with Him in Heaven. To put it another way, they are Graduates of the Church Militant—they made it—they have run the race, finished their course, and kept the Faith—now there is laid up for them “a crown of Glory.” They are the Saints, and there are millions and millions of them, assembled in a great crowd, singing and praising God for ever, and enjoying Him who is their Creator and Redeemer.

The Church Militant, the Church Expectant, the Church Triumphant—all 3 parts of the Church, doing the work of God, and adoring and Praising Him forever. Today, here in this church, we the Church Militant on earth, join with them to Worship the Lord. Here at this Eucharist, the Church Expectant and the Church Triumphant are joined with us—more closely than at any other time. We here are surrounded by the Saints as together we offer the Holy Sacrifice of the Eucharist. They are the Saints and the Faithful Departed who this morning, join with us at the Altar—and though we cannot see them, they can see God, and know and love Him forever. All Saints' Day, All Souls' Day, Remembrance Day—3 wonderful Festivals that inspire us. The Church Militant here on earth; the Church Expectant in Paradise, and the Church Triumphant in Heaven. Thanks be to God for the wonderful Gift of Life Eternal into which He has called us, and which we celebrate today.

In the Name of the Father, and the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen