

# THE CATHOLIC CHURCH

## CATHOLIC ANECDOTES

### CHAPTER XI.

## NINTH ARTICLE OF THE CREED.

### *The Holy Catholic Church, the Communion of Saints*

## I. - THE HOLY CATHOLIC CHURCH.

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141. *Respect of Alexander the Great for the High Priest.* -

The pastors of the Church are the representatives of God; they are entitled, therefore, to our most profound respect. The famous Alexander the Great, king of Macedonia, who died 324 years before Christ, may teach us a good lesson in this respect. He was a pagan, and thought of nothing but the conquest of the entire world. After having taken a great number of cities, he marched, at length, on Jerusalem. The High Priest Onias, in his great disquietude, turned his eyes to heaven, and endeavoured to propitiate the Lord by fervent prayers. God admonished him in a dream to be of good heart, and told him to clothe himself in his pontifical robes, then to put himself at the head of his people, and appear before this renowned conqueror. He obeyed, and went to meet Alexander as far as the hill of Sapha, whence there was a view of the City and the Temple. Every one expected that the haughty conqueror would destroy

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Jerusalem, and condemn the High Priest to die ignominiously. But, so soon as Alexander perceived that solemn procession, so soon as he distinguished the pontiff, invested in his sacerdotal ornaments, advancing majestically at the head of his people, he approached him, bowed down to the ground before the Hebrew name of **GOD** engraved on the front of his diadem, and saluted him respectfully. All were seized with astonishment, and Parmenion, one of the favourite companions of the king, asked him why he had adored the High Priest of the Jews. "It was not him I adored," answered Alexander, "but the God whose minister he is." Onias then conducted to the temple of Solomon (the temple rebuilt on the site of Solomon's great structure) the king of Macedonia, who made an offering there, and retired full of respect for the worship and the priest of the God of Israel.

- JOSEPHUS, *History of the Jews*, XI., 8.

142. *Zeal of St. Aphraates for the Church.* -

The Church is our mother, dear children, and if we have for her the love which children owe their mother, we will not suffer her to be insulted or outraged in our presence. So it was always with the best and worthiest of men, St. Anthony, St. Acepimas, St. Aphraates, and many others. The last named of these, St. Aphraates, had lived many years alone in his cell, when he learned that Valens, emperor of Constantinople, who had the misfortune of being an Arian, was grievously persecuting the Catholics around 370 A.D. He not only expelled them from their churches in the cities, but pursued them even to the country districts, and to

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the most remote solitudes, where they concealed themselves, hoping to worship God in peace. St. Aphraates then quitted his retreat and went amongst the Catholics to encourage them. The emperor having remarked his long beard and his venerable appearance, asked him where he was going. "I am going," answered the solitary, "to offer up the Holy Sacrifice for the safety of the empire." "But would it not be better," said the emperor, "to offer it up in your cell, after the manner of solitaries?" "You are right, prince, I should do better to pray in my cell, if you only permitted me to do so; and I did so as long as the flock of Christ was secure in the fold; but now that it is driven thence, and in danger of being devoured by the wolf of heresy, I have had to leave my cell and come forth to its assistance. You have yourself set fire to the house of God, and it is the duty of all good Catholics to hasten to extinguish the flames." You may well believe, children, that this discourse was not adapted to please Valens; nevertheless he did not dare lay hands on St. Aphraates, who continued to serve the Church and encourage the Catholic and true Christians till the end of the persecution.

- RODRIGUEZ, *Christian Perfection*, V., 3.

143. *Honours Rendered to a Priest.* -

There are none more worthy of our respect than the bishops and the priests, who are the ministers of Christ on earth. History presents numerous facts which may instruct us on this head. For example, St. Sulpicius Severus relates that St. Martin, bishop of Tours, being at

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Treves, at the court of the Emperor Maximus, preserved always the noble independence due to his episcopal dignity. Although the prince was not a very good Christian, he could not help regarding Martin with profound veneration. One day the Emperor invited Martin to dine, with the priest who was Martin's companion; both were placed in seats of honour. During the repast, the imperial cup-bearer came, according to custom, to present the cup to the emperor; the latter, who desired to receive it from the hands of St. Martin, made a sign that it should be brought first to that worthy prelate. After St. Martin had drank from it, instead of presenting it to Maximus, as the latter expected, he offered it to his neighbour, the priest, whose dignity appeared to him superior to that of an earthly prince. Strange to say, not only was the emperor not offended, but he himself admired this conduct, and all present were equally edified by it. Assuredly, my friends, a sycophant, a courtier, would not have acted in such a manner.

- SAINT SULPICIUS SEVERUS, *Life of St. Martin*, Chapter XXIII.

144. *A Wicked Woman of Sirmich.* -

It has sometimes happened, my young friends, that God chose to punish, even in this life, want of respect for the pastors of His Church. I have found one example of this kind in the life of St. Ambrose, Archbishop of Milan. The circumstance was as follows: The bishop of Sirmich, capital of Illyria, in the Balkans, having died, the Arians did their utmost to replace him by a wretched priest of their sect. As soon as St. Ambrose was made

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acquainted with the state of affairs, he hastened to assist the imperilled church. He had to encounter not only the heretics, but the Empress Justina, by whom they were openly favoured. What does the holy archbishop do? He boldly enters the Cathedral, seats himself on the throne prepared for the bishop, and there remains, notwithstanding the clamorous shouts and scandalous efforts of his enemies. No one dared ascend the steps to offer him violence, and it was only a wicked woman who had the audacity to pull him by his clothes.

"Daughter," said the Saint mildly, "how dare you lay your hands on a priest of the Lord? Are you not afraid that God may strike you in His anger?" Alas! these prophetic words were not long without their fulfilment; the unhappy woman died suddenly that very night, and the sight of her funeral next day struck terror to the hearts of the enemies of religion. The Arians retired in confusion, and the Catholics were left at liberty to elect a bishop to the see so courageously defended by St. Ambrose.

- SAINT PAULINUS, *Life of St. Ambrose*, No. 11.

145. *History of the Jew Benjamin.* -

You know, my dear friends, that out of the Church there is no salvation; so, those who were not so happy as to be born Catholics, ought to do like the Jew of whom I am about to tell you. The Emperor Heraclius, returning from a journey to Jerusalem, passed by Naplousa, the ancient Sichem, and went to ask the hospitality of a very wealthy Jew, named Benjamin, by

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whom he was sumptuously entertained. Whilst they were at table, there arrived some Christians from the city, who complained bitterly of the bad treatment of all kinds which they had received at the hands of this Benjamin, whom they described as the most implacable and merciless enemy of the Christian name. In his Ignorance, Benjamin had indulged in criminal harrassments of his innocent Christian tenants. Being interrogated by the emperor, Benjamin did not deny the fact, but declared that, according to the principles of his religion, he thought himself obliged, in conscience, to persecute the disciples of Jesus Christ, as his forefathers had of old persecuted their Founder himself in Jerusalem. The emperor immediately pronounced judgement; but he did it with a wisdom worthy of Solomon. He allowed Benjamin some time in order to obtain instruction in the fundamental truths of the Christian religion, whose members he believed himself bound to persecute. A pious and enlightened Christian, who had himself been converted from Judaism many years before, was charged to initiate him in the truths of faith. God blessed his undertaking; Benjamin opened his eyes to the truth, had himself baptized, became a fervent Christian, and remained always faithful to the grace which had been so providentially vouchsafed to him.

- SCHMID et BELET, *Cat. Hist.*, I., 443.

146. *How Will You be Buried?* -

Let us beware, my young friends, of allowing ourselves to be seduced by heretics or bad Christians, who say - "Where is the use of troubling one's self about religion? all religions are good." Even as there is but one God, so

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can there be only one true religion. I have read in the Lives of the Fathers of the Desert a somewhat curious story, which I am going to tell you. A worthy solitary, who was very old, but not over well instructed, frequented indifferently the Catholic and the heretical places of worship ; he received Holy Communion now from an Arian bishop, now from a schismatic bishop, and again from a Catholic priest, caring little which it might be. One night as he slept peacefully in his cell, God permitted that an angel appeared to him and asked him this question: "How do you wish to be buried when you are dead? Is it as the holy solitaires of Egypt, or as the Jews, or yet as the schismatics? Think of it well, and in three weeks I shall return to ask you the same question." The old man no sooner awoke than he hurried off to relate his vision to another solitary, in whom he had great confidence. The latter, much scandalized, said to him: "Why, father, where do you go to Communion?" "Wherever I happen to be; I never inquire which place it is". "That is precisely the affair you have to consider; you have relations with heretics, and, therefore, no one knows whether or no you are a good Catholic. Do not again receive Communion at the hands of the heretics or schismatics, and when the angel

returns, tell him you wish to be buried in holy ground, like St. Paul the Hermit, St. Anthony of Egypt, and the other solitaries of Egypt." Let us profit by this lesson, my young friends, and have no communication with persons who pretend to

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reason on religion yet who reason so falsely.

- JOHN MOSCH, *Spiritual Meadows (Le Pre Spirituel)*, No. 178.

147. *Advisers in the Matter of Religion.* -

There is nothing so contemptible as changing religion for money or some other temporal advantages. I have read in *Christian Anecdotes* a story on that subject. The Caliph Moutasem, having taken by storm a small town of Asia, put all the citizens and soldiers to the sword, except the principal townsmen and officers, who were, by his orders, conducted to Baghdad. When he reached there himself, he caused them to be bound, shackles put on their feet, and then they were cast into a loathsome dungeon. There, they never saw the light of day, and knew each other only by their voice. Their only nourishment was a little bread and water, their bed the ground, and some filthy rags their covering. When they were supposed to be entirely prostrated by suffering and long imprisonment, the caliph sent to them the most learned of his doctors, to induce them to renounce their religion. These persons feigned to come of their own accord, pretending before the prisoners that they had asked permission to go in with clothes and provisions to them. But the courageous Christians rejected with horror the proposals they made them. "Christians," said these fanatical followers of Islam known as Mahometans, "such pride but ill befits your condition. Ah! if you did but know the advantages we have to offer. Say, do you all not love your wives, your children, your friends, your country? Well! you have but one means of recovering all these; it is

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to make use of a little dissimulation, and comply somewhat with the wishes of our beloved caliph. He counts as nothing the conquest of cities in comparison with that of souls. If you embrace the law of Mohammed, as he desires, he will load you with favours, and you shall be free to return to your own country. There you shall be at liberty to choose whatever religion you may think the best." "And you," replied the prisoners, "who hold such language to us, would you do that, if you were in our place?" "Undoubtedly we would," cried all the wretched tempters in a breath. "Well! we shall do no such thing; we should be ashamed to take counsel, with regard to our religion, from those who value their own so little." And they sent them away with contempt and indignation. And did they not serve them right, my young friends? There, you see, was courage and fidelity!

- REYRE, *Christian Anecdotes (Anec. Chret.)*, 79.

148. *St. Stanislaus in a Protestant Temple.* -

Beware of frequenting the temples or assemblies of heretics, lest evil should befall you. Imitate in this respect the scrupulous caution of St. Stanislaus Kotska. When he had renounced all earthly hopes, he quitted Vienna, in the disguise of a beggar, and bent his course towards Italy. During his toilsome journey, he met in a village, on the way, an open church, where he saw peasants praying. The holy youth, thinking it afforded him a good opportunity of hearing Mass and making his devotions, entered the church and began to pray like the others; he was not long

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there, however, till he saw, by the manner of celebrating the Divine office, that it was a Lutheran place of worship. He was deeply pained to see the holy mysteries profaned by heretical ministers, and to find himself unable to receive the Body of Our Lord that day in the Holy Communion. He wept bitterly, and complained so touchingly to God that he deserved to be consoled. Whilst he remained thus sad and despondent, he saw a troop of angels approaching him. One of them bore the Blessed Sacrament, and being come to Stanislaus, he placed the Sacred Host in his mouth, and the vision disappeared. It was thus that this pious youth was rewarded for his faith, and his horror of heretical assemblies.

- PERE D'ORLEANS, *Vie de Saint Stanislaus de Kotska. (Life of St Stanislaus Kotska)*

149. *What Protestants Think of Our Salvation* -

We have the happiness, children, of being in the true Church; Protestants themselves admit that a good Catholic may be saved in his religion. It was this that decided Henry IV of France to abjure his errors. An historian relates that this great king, having called before him a conference of the doctors of either church, and seeing that the Protestant ministers agreed with one accord that salvation was attainable in the Catholic religion, immediately addressed a Protestant dignitary as follows: "Now, sir, is it true that people can save their souls in the religion to which these gentlemen belong?" - "Certainly it is, Sire, provided that they live well in it." - "If that be so," said the monarch very judiciously, "prudence demands that

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I should be of their religion, not yours, seeing that, in theirs, I may save my soul, as even you admit; whereas, if I remain in yours, they maintain that I cannot be saved. Both prudence and good sense dictate that I should follow the surest way, and so I purpose doing." Some days after, this astute prince made his abjuration at Saint Denis. There is what may be called having both mind and heart.

- GUILLOIS, (*History of France*), II., 67.

150. *Glorious Retraction of Fenelon*. -

You may probably have heard of Fenelon, Archbishop of Cambrai. He was one of the most learned prelates in France; and was at the same time one of the most pious and submissive to the Church. In the year 1697 he had published a work entitled: "*Explanation of the Maxims of the Saints*," which work was condemned soon after by Pope Innocent XII. This sad news reached Cambrai on the 25th of March, 1699, the day of the Annunciation, just as the Archbishop was about to enter the pulpit. However deeply affected he might be by a decision which he did not expect, he only required a few moments' reflection to change the plan of the discourse he was about to deliver. He turned it on the perfect submission we are bound to pay to the authority of our superiors, on which he spoke with such touching fervour as to draw tears from his whole audience. On the 9th of April following he published a mandamus to this effect: "Our Holy Father the Pope has condemned a book entitled '*Explanation of the*

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*Maxims of the Saints*,' by a brief dated March 12th, 1699. We adhere to that brief, beloved brethren, simply, absolutely, and without the shadow of restriction. With our whole heart we exhort you to entire submission and unreserved docility, lest insensibly you alter the simplicity of devotion to the Holy See, whereof we shall, by the grace of God, give you an example to the last moment of our life. God forbid that aught should be ever said of us, if it were not that being a pastor we showed ourselves more docile than the last sheep of our flock, and set no bounds to our submission." In order to leave to his diocese a monument of his submission and docility, he caused an ostensory to be made for the Blessed Sacrament, borne by two Angels; one of them trampled under foot divers bad books, on one of which was read: *Explanation of the Maxims of the Saints*. Let us beware, after such a beautiful example, to do like so many of the ignorant and unthinking who pretend to dogmatize, blame and criticize, when the decisions of the church or her pastors do not fall in with their ideas.

- SCHMID et BELET, *Cat. Hist.*, I., 306.

151. *The Little Confessors of the Faith in 1791* -

We need not go very far in order to find heroic examples of fidelity to the true religion. We have had many of them in 1791, when France was for a moment abandoned to the horrors of schism during the French Revolution. As the Catholics almost everywhere refused to go to the churches where intruders, or "*Constitutional priests*"

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ministered, recourse was had to violence in order to force them. Wretches, paid by the usurping authorities, hastened with rods to the doors of the Catholic chapels. There they awaited, before and after the Office and the Mass, the worthiest of the congregation, those, especially, who testified the greatest attachment to the true faith, and they amused themselves with publicly maltreating them, to force them to go to the Constitutional

Church. Even children were not spared. Thus, I remember having read that the pupils of the Sisters of Charity, at Metz, were treated with the same cruelty, for having refused to hear the Mass of a schismatic priest. In vain did their tormentors threaten, and even beat them several times. "*Whip us, kill us, if you will,*" said these children of eight or ten years old, "*but never shall you change our religion.*" Such, my dear children, should be our constancy and fidelity. Jesus Christ really died for us; is it not just that we should suffer for Him, if opportunity offers?

- REYRE, *Anec. Chret.*, (*Christian Anecdotes*) 470.

152. *Are There Several True Churches?* -

There is but one only true Church; and that is so evident that no one possessed of even ordinary good sense can anywise doubt it. Here are two or three little stories on the subject. A Catholic priest and a Protestant minister were one day walking together; they chanced to meet a Jewish rabbi. "Hold," said the Protestant minister laughing, "we three are of so many different religions; now, which of us has the true one?" "I will tell you that," said the rabbi; "if the Messiah

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is not yet come, it is I; if the Messiah be come, it is this Catholic priest; but as for you, whether the Messiah be come or not, *you* are not in the right way."

"I do not like those who change their religion," said a Protestant prince of Germany to the renowned doctor, the Count de Stolberg, recently converted to the Catholic faith. "Nor I either," answered the doctor, "for if my ancestors had not changed, I should not have been obliged to return to Catholicity."

And that is very true, my young friends; a Protestant who becomes a Catholic does not change his religion; he does but return to the way which his forefathers were wrong in quitting. An excellent answer was made, on this subject, by a French ambassador, ill at Stockholm, the capital of Sweden, now a major centre of Lutheranism. Some one asked him whether, in case he died there, he would not be sorry to have his ashes mingle with those of heretics. "No," he replied, "I would only ask to have the earth dug a little deeper, and I should be amongst your ancestors who were Catholics like myself."

- SCHMID et BELET, *Cat., Hist.*, I., 303.

153. *The Debaters of Bale.* -

We sometimes see simple peasants, people wholly illiterate, who are much more courageous in practising their religion than persons who are wont to boast of their intelligence. In a hotel in Bale, Switzerland, there were assembled, on the 1st of January, 1847, a numerous company, who had met for the purpose of discussing questions religious and political. Whilst they were debating with great warmth, there came in a poor

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man indifferently clad, but endowed with much reason and good sense. Seeing such a numerous company, he was at first a little surprised; but soon recovering his presence of mind, he saluted the party according to a pious custom of his country, by saying in German - *Glory to Jesus Christ!* There was only one of all present who answered aloud *Amen!* The others, opening their eyes very wide, looked grave, and said nothing. Some even began to smile disdainfully. The master of the house, who was a Protestant, or rather, belonged to no religion, said aloud: "It is easy seen that he is not one of us." The peasant, nowise embarrassed, had his answer ready "I am willing to believe that, anyhow." - "And why are you willing to believe it, blockhead?" - "Because you gentlemen appear to me very much like Christians, who would crucify the Son of God again, if He were willing to die again. I don't want to insult any of you, gentlemen, but I tell you plainly, for all you talk so well, that I'd be ashamed to remain in such company." And so saying, our peasant walked away closing the door after him, and leaving the philosophic assembly no little disconcerted by such an apostrophe.

- SCHMID et BELET, *Cat. Hist.*, I., 427.

154. *The Reasoning of an American Indian.* -

Speaking of the truth, "out of the Church there is no salvation," I remember a very amusing story, related by Father de Smet, the famous American missionary.

"Amongst the Indians converted on the frontiers of Canada," said he, "is a certain Jean Baptiste,

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of whose family I am ignorant. This Jean Baptiste had been formerly a thief. On his conversion, the Black Robe, as the Jesuit missionary priests were called, enjoined him to make restitution of two dollars to a Calvinist minister in the neighbourhood. Our man presents himself at the minister's house, when the following dialogue ensues:

'Well, what do you want?' said the preacher.

- 'Me rob you. Black Robe say to me, "Jean Baptiste, you give back the money." '

- 'What money?'

- 'Two dollars; me bad savage, take from you - me now good Christian; me have the water of baptism on my head; me child of the Great Spirit. Here, take the money.'

- 'That is well. Steal no more. Good day, Jean Baptiste.'

- '*Good day*, not enough; me want something else.'

- 'And what do you want?'

- 'Me want a receipt.'

- 'A receipt! what need is there of a receipt? Did the Black Robe tell you to ask it?'

- 'Black Robe say nothing; Jean Baptiste' (pointing at himself with his finger) 'want a receipt.'

- 'But what do you want with a receipt? You stole from me what you now give back; that is enough.'

- 'No, no, not enough: listen, you old, me young; you die first, me die after, you understand?'

- 'I do *not* understand; what do you mean?'

- 'Listen again; that will say much, that will say all. Me knock at the gate of heaven, the great chief, St. Peter, he open and he say,

"That you, Jean Baptiste? What you want?" - "My chief, me want to go in the lodge of the Great Spirit." -

"And your sins?" - "Black Robe, he forgive them all." - "But you rob the minister -

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did you give back that money? You show me your receipt."

Now you see how it is with poor Jean Baptiste, poor Indian with no receipt, he run all over hell to find you, because no salvation out of Black Robe's Church.' "

- *Daily Rewards (Recompenses hebdomadaires)*, No. CV., 29.

## II: THE COMMUNION OF SAINTS.

155. *Jeremiah in Heaven.* -

A consoling truth is that of the Communion of Saints. The Jews of the Old Law were happy in believing in it as we do. Of that the following is a proof: Nicanor, general of the armies of Demetrius, king of Syria, made war on Judas Maccabeus. Having learned that this gallant chief had entered the country of Samaria, he marched to meet him with an army much superior in numbers to that of the Jews. Judas did not allow himself to be discouraged, and instead of putting trust in the valour of his soldiers, he placed it all in God. The night previous to the combat he had a celestial vision. It seemed to him, that he saw the heavens open; there he distinguished the high priest, Onias, lately dead, praying for his people, and extending his hands over him as if to protect him. There soon appeared at his side another old man exceeding venerable and radiant with glory. Onias pointed him out to Judas Maccabeus, saying, "See you that prophet? It is Jeremiah, the true friend of God's people; he prays for you all, and for the Holy City; fear not, therefore!"

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So Jeremiah, taking a golden sword, gave it to Judas Maccabeus, saying: "Take this holy sword; it is the gift of God; with it you shall overcome the enemies of my people Israel." On his awaking, Judas failed not to

relate this encouraging vision to his little army. They hasten to meet the enemy, praying as they go, they fight with supernatural courage, and obtain a splendid victory. Nicanor fled, leaving 35,000 slain on the field of battle. Let us do like Judas Maccabeus, my friends, and our patrons and protectors in heaven will assist us with their prayers.

- *II. Book of Maccabees*, Chap. XV.

156. *St. Peter Delivered from Prison.* -

Do you know, my young friends, what a precious advantage is the Communion of Saints? Often, at the moment when we least think it, there are good souls praying for us without our knowing it, asking of God the graces most necessary for each according to their position. Thus it is that in the night prayer we pray; for travellers, prisoners, the sick and the dying. Speaking of prisoners, hear what occurred to St. Peter, prince of the Apostles. Herod Agrippa, king of Judea, had him put in prison at Jerusalem and proposed to deliver him to the Jews at the festival of the Pasch for his execution. Meanwhile, the Church ceased not to pray for him; all the faithful of the city were interested in his fate, and St. Peter knew nothing of it. But he was not long left in ignorance, for the very night preceding the day on which Herod was to have him put to death, an angel suddenly appeared in his

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prison, tapped him on the shoulder to awake him, and said: "Arise quickly," (and his chains fell off of themselves), "take your girdle, put on your shoes, and your garments, and follow me." In a few minutes the holy Apostle was ready, and followed the angel, not knowing what he was about. He thought himself in a dream. They passed through the middle of the guard, through the iron gate, which opened of itself, and soon found themselves in the street, without any one having seen them. St. Peter then came to himself; the angel left him, and he succeeded in making his way to the house of Mary, mother of John Mark, where several of the faithful were at the moment assembled praying for him. It being in the middle of the night, the servant who came to the door prudently inquired "Who is there?" - "It is I, Simon Peter." No sooner had she recognized St. Peter's voice, than she ran in haste to tell those within, without even thinking of opening the door. They treated her as a fool. Every one said: "It cannot be Simon Peter; it was his angel guardian that spoke." Nevertheless, on opening the door they found that it was no other than the holy Apostle himself, and they gave thanks to God who had heard the prayers of the faithful. Such, my young friends, is the Communion of Saints.

- *Acts of the Apostles*, Chap. XII.

157. *St. Nicholas an Intercessor Before His Death.* -

Every one knows St. Nicholas; he is the patron of children, and yours, too, my little friends.

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If you knew how powerful he is, you would address yourselves to him in all confidence. Whilst he was yet bishop of Myra, in Turkey, in Asia Minor, his reputation for sanctity was so great that prayers were sometimes offered to him as though he were already dead.

I remember reading of three lords of Constantinople, who being falsely accused before the Emperor, were thrown into prison and condemned to death. The sentence was to be executed next day, and you may suppose the unhappy men had but little inclination to sleep. Seeing that there was no chance whatever of their innocence being established, they had recourse to prayer. They had often heard of the bishop of Myra; every one said that he was a Saint; they all three threw themselves on their knees and besought him to assist them. Scarcely had they commenced to pray when God permitted that the Emperor, who was fast asleep in his palace, had a dream. He saw a venerable old man, robed as a bishop, who addressed him sternly and said: "Prince, are you certain that the judgement pronounced on three of your ministers is just? Beware!" and the vision disappeared. Next day the Emperor was careful not to have the prisoners executed; he reviewed the process of their trial, and failed not to perceive that they had been condemned unjustly. He caused them to be immediately liberated, after relating to them the dream he had had. The poor officers speedily discovered that their prayers had been heard by St. Nicholas, and that it was he himself

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who had appeared to the Emperor. Is not this, my dear children, another proof of the Communion of Saints, and the kind interest they take in those who pray to them?

- *Life of St. Nicholas.*

158. *The Mysterious Voice of Theodoret.* -

The prayers which the saints offer for us, often even without our knowing it, preserve us sometimes from great misfortunes; they put the demon to flight, as he has himself declared. "One night as I was falling asleep," relates Theodoret, bishop of Cyr, in Syria, who lived in the fifth century, "I suddenly heard an unknown voice speaking to me in Syriac. It said to me very distinctly: 'Why have you taken it in head to fight against my servant Marcion the Sophist?' (This was a famous heretic and heresiarch whose errors were then making much progress.) 'Why do you make war on him? what harm has he done you. Beware, I warn you, for if you cease not to hate and persecute him, you shall see what I can do, and learn by experience that it had been better for you to have remained quiet. Know that I would have long since torn you to pieces, were it not for the assistance of James and a troop of martyrs!' When this mysterious voice had ceased to speak, I asked one of my friends who slept in the same chamber, if he had heard anything. 'I did not lose a word of it,' said he, 'but I feared to make any noise, supposing that you were asleep.' Our servants and all the people of the house had likewise heard the words. We dressed ourselves in haste, and searched everywhere around in order to assure

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ourselves that there was no one concealed about the house; we found no one. I then understood that it was the devil who had spoken. I further understood that the St. James of whom he spoke was he whose old mantle I had preserved, (St James of Nisibis), and placed every night under my bolster. Finally, the troop of martyrs who were praying for me, were assuredly those of whom I kept some relics suspended in a small vial near my bed." This interesting story may teach us, children, to place confidence in the saints, and to venerate their precious relics with devotion.

- THEODORET, *Religious History*, Chap. XXI.