

CREATION & ESCHATOLOGY

- Topic: Eschatology—Communion of Saints
 Convener: Eugene Finnegan, Calumet College of St. Joseph
 Presenter: William H. Johnston, University of Dayton
 Presenter: Wilma von Jess, Independent Scholar

In the first presentation, William H. Johnston presented on “Invoking Saintly Intercession: A Dynamic of Love, a Symbolic Efficacy.” Using liturgical texts, Johnston emphasized that the communion of saints, i.e., the whole praying community not just the individual, asks for intercession. The litany of saints is a perfect example of asking that the saints might “pray for us.” Johnston explained how the intercession of the saints “works.” Now only our words but our actions invoke the saints, and their love, their merits intercede for us, because of the providence of God and the power of prayer.

The love of the saints intensifies. How is this possible if they have the beatific vision? Our individual salvation is not complete until all the elect come to fruition. The love of the saints intensifies by their interceding for us. How, then can our love intensify? Our love intensifies by the example of the saints, by gratitude for prayers answered, and for prayers whose answer is delayed; there is a kind of symbolic efficacy, as explained by Louis-Marie Chauvet in the fable of La Fontaine about the rich farmer and the hidden treasure. The effect is intensified love and a strengthening of bonds within the communion of saints.

The second presentation by Wilma von Jess was entitled “The Saints at the End Time According to Charles Arminjon: Priest, Teacher, and Preacher.” Unfortunately, she was not able to attend, but the convener read the paper that led to further discussion. Using the recent 2008 English translation of the late nineteenth century French preacher, Charles Arminjon, *Fin De Monde Present et Mysteries de la Vie Future* (1881), von Jess compared his concept of the end times with that of the late twentieth century works of Vatican II, to determine his relevance for us today.

Charles Arminjon certainly had a negative attitude towards Marxism, materialism, rationalism, and secularism. He asked us to think only, prepare only, seek only, and live only for heaven, because the living earth is evil, as he saw the end times in apocalyptic terms.

Vatican II’s *Lumen Gentium* and *Gaudium et Spes* present a more positive view of the world, asking us to engage and change this world to prepare for the *eschaton*. The living saints help us to change ourselves and the environment in which we live. While Arminjon’s attitude and perspective might be different, his use of patristic sources is quite impressive.

A discussion followed both papers with an emphasis on the difference between saints as intercessors and examples. The difference in eschatological theology between the late nineteenth century and late twentieth century was

also noted. Finally, the idea of intensification of love in heaven was explored alongside with the idea of the beatific vision. Most of the participants noted the experience of the communion of saints that comes from a well-developed or specific liturgical action that reminds us of our real connection as *communio sanctorum*.

EUGENE FINNEGAN
*Calumet College of St. Joseph,
Whiting, Indiana*