ECCLESIA UNA IN TRIBUS STATIBUS

The Three States of the Church

The Church Militant, the Church Suffering and the Church Triumphant: one Body of Christ on earth, in Purgatory and in Heaven, united in the Communion of Saints.

"I believe in the Holy Catholic Church, the Communion of Saints." — The Apostles' Creed



Andrea di Bonaiuto, The Way of Salvation (Church Militant and Triumphant), c. 1365. Spanish Chapel, Santa Maria Novella, Florence.

There is only one Church, the Mystical Body of Christ, of which He is the Head. But her members are found in three states: still struggling on earth, being purified after death, or already reigning in glory.

These three are not three Churches, but one family bound together by charity in **the Communion of Saints**, which we profess in the Apostles' Creed. Every good work, prayer and sacrifice of one member can help the others, as in a body "if one member suffer any thing, all the members suffer with it" (1 Cor 12:26).

The Church Militant

Ecclesia Militans · On earth

All the baptised faithful on earth who profess the true Faith, share the same sacraments, and are united under the Roman Pontiff, Vicar of Christ.

Called "militant" because her members are still fighting the good fight against the world, the flesh and the devil, armed with prayer, the sacraments and the virtues, until death decides each soul's eternity.

THEIR STATE Pilgrims, still able to merit and to fall
THEIR TASK Faith, hope, charity; works of mercy
LITURGY Every Mass offered for the living

"Labour as a good soldier of Christ Jesus." — 2 Tim 2:3

The Church Suffering

Ecclesia Patiens · In Purgatory

The holy souls who died in God's grace and friendship but still owe temporal punishment for their sins, or bear venial sins and imperfections not yet purified.

They are certain of salvation, but cannot help themselves: they can no longer merit. They suffer the pain of loss — delay of the sight of God — and the pain of sense, while loving God and resigned to His will.

THEIR STATE Saved, but not yet purified
OUR DUTY Masses, prayers, alms, indulgences
LITURGY All Souls, 2 November; November as their month

"It is a holy and wholesome thought to pray for the dead." — 2 Mac 12:46

The Church Triumphant

Ecclesia Triumphans · In Heaven

The Blessed Virgin Mary, the angels and all the saints who have won the crown of victory and see God face to face in the Beatific Vision.

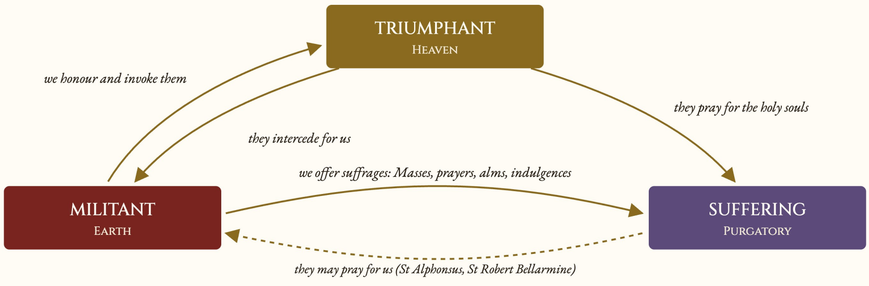
Their combat is over and their joy is complete. Not only canonised saints but every soul in Heaven belongs here. They love us, intercede for us before God, and await the resurrection of their bodies.

THEIR STATE Glorified, confirmed in grace
OUR DUTY Honour, imitate and invoke them
LITURGY All Saints, 1 November; every saint's feast

"After this I saw a great multitude, which no man could number." — Apoc 7:9

The Communion of Saints

An exchange of spiritual goods among the members of the one Body



The Four Marks of the True Church

By these the Church Militant can be recognised on earth (Nicene Creed)

One

One faith, one sacrifice and sacraments, one government under the Pope.

Holy

Her Founder, doctrine, sacraments and countless saints are holy.

Catholic

Universal: for all nations and all times, teaching all truth.

Apostolic

Founded on the Apostles; her bishops descend from them in unbroken line.

The Teaching and the Learning Church

Within the Church Militant, Christ established a hierarchy. The *Ecclesia docens* (teaching Church) is the Pope and the bishops in union with him, assisted by priests. The *Ecclesia discens* (learning Church) is the faithful, who receive the doctrine handed down from the Apostles.

Outside the Church, No Salvation

The Church is the ark of salvation, as taught by the Fathers and the Council of Florence. Pius IX taught that those invincibly ignorant of the true religion, who keep the natural law and are ready to obey God, may by divine grace attain eternal life — but never apart from the Church, the one Body of Christ.