



## Communion in the Communion of Saints

Affirmed by the Second Council of Nicaea, the Council of Florence and the Council of Trent, the ninth article of the Apostles' Creed states that a spiritual union exists among the saints in heaven, the souls in purgatory and the faithful living on earth; this communion is described as "the living communion which exists between us and our brothers [and sisters] who are in the glory of heaven or who are yet being purified after their death..."

(Rev. Peter M.J. Stravinskas, Ph.D., S.T.L. Editor, OUR SUNDAY VISITOR'S CATHOLIC ENCYCLOPEDIA, Huntington, IN, ©1991, quoting Lumen Gentium of the Vatican II documents.)

As children we were taught that the communion of saints consists of the Church Triumphant, the saints in heaven; the Church Suffering, the poor souls in purgatory; and the Church Militant, those on earth still on their journey of faith through the paschal mystery of Jesus into which we were all baptized into God's family. Not only are we brothers and sisters in Christ, but we are responsible for each other's salvation. No wonder Our Lady spoke so often to Sister Mildred (Mary Ephrem) Neuzil to pray, pray, pray and do penance for the salvation of souls. "**Help me save those who will not save themselves.**" No wonder Jesus appeared to Sister, offering her a "copy" of His crown of thorns, asking her if she was still willing to suffer for souls. When she said "yes", He said, "**I will lay you on the altar of sacrifice.**" Thereafter, He "nailed" her to His cross! These were mystical experiences Sister shared with Jesus in her divine espousal with Him, much like an interior stigmata.


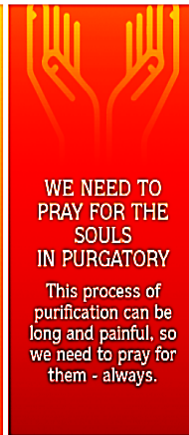
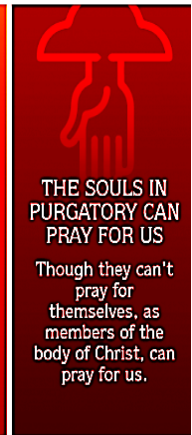
We should be as familiar with God, Jesus, Mary and Joseph, the holy souls and the saints as with our own families on earth. This was true for Sister Mildred as stated in the Forward of her diary, **OUR LADY OF AMERICA**. Since the 1940's, she had spoken often to Jesus, Mary and Joseph, Archangel Michael and Archangel Gabriel and did not consider it out of the ordinary; she thought all religious have these kinds of mystical experiences or "**supernatural happenings,**" as Father Paul Leibold called them. She thought them so ordinary that she did not speak to others about them, not even to her niece in the convent with her, nor her priest-nephew, nor to friends who knew her personally for many years. They learned about her visions years later. In some cases, within her community of the Sisters of the Precious Blood, she was forbidden to talk about them. Interestingly, one of the sisters spoke of entering her room one day to find Sister Mildred sitting amidst a host of angels. Besides her guardian angel, and because of her great mission, St. Michael had special charge over her to protect her from the attacks of satan who desperately wanted her to abandon this mission from heaven.

Scripture tells us that it is a holy and wholesome thing to pray for the dead. Those taken into glory do not need our prayers and sacrifices, but our prayers will benefit someone else who does. Those in purgatory cannot help themselves; they need us to

hasten their release from the fires of purification. They will surely return the favor if and when we need their prayers for ourselves. How often do we think of our loved ones who have died? During November, we can gain a plenary indulgence for a soul in purgatory each time we visit a cemetery and pray for the holy souls, go to confession within 20 days before or after the visit, receive Holy Communion each day we visit, and say one Our Father and the Creed for the intentions of the Holy Father. Housebound persons may pray a rosary or Chaplet of Divine Mercy before an image of Jesus or Mary along with the usual conditions. A plenary indulgence removes any remaining temporal punishment due that person's sins and frees the person to enter into God's glory to enjoy the beatific vision—God as He truly is!



## 3 THINGS YOU MAY NOT KNOW ABOUT PURGATORY

 <p><b>IT MAKES US IMAGES OF CHRIST</b></p> <p>It isn't a punishment. Rather, it's a state of purification to make us "perfect images of Christ".</p>	 <p><b>WE NEED TO PRAY FOR THE SOULS IN PURGATORY</b></p> <p>This process of purification can be long and painful, so we need to pray for them - always.</p>	 <p><b>THE SOULS IN PURGATORY CAN PRAY FOR US</b></p> <p>Though they can't pray for themselves, as members of the body of Christ, can pray for us.</p>
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In May 1958, Sister Mildred Neuzil entered the Our Lady of Nativity Cloister within the active order of the Sisters of the Precious Blood located in New Riegel, Ohio. On

MOTHER BRUNNER

June 26, 1958

This morning, all of a sudden, the thought of our first Sisters came to my mind. I was thinking of how holy they must have been, and a great love and reverence filled my heart. At that moment a voice said to me:

"You see their crown. In you they will be glorified."

Later in the day, during the afternoon meditation hour, Mother Brunner suddenly appeared towards the left of the kneeling bench. She was dressed in her black habit with the small cross hanging from her neck. She was smiling, and although her face was very white, it was radiant. The whiteness of her face seemed to be the result of the radiance that emanated from it. At least, so it appeared to me. Then I saw many Sisters in black surrounding her. They turned towards her, bowing slightly in an attitude of respect and love, smiling to her as they did so. That evening, they called upon me, and oh, the happiness I saw on their faces. It filled me with great joy. I know, too, at that moment how greatly they loved me, and this added to my happiness.

Then Mother Brunner spoke to me:

"You see my beloved daughter, my glory and my crown. It is not necessary that I be glorified on earth. It is enough that I am glorified in you, my daughter."

"Tell my children that they must be more fervent in living a life of imitation and sacrifice for the glory of the Precious Blood, to which they have dedicated their lives. This, not only Our Lord requires of them, but I also require it of them if they wish to be truly my daughters."

"Long have I prayed both on earth and in heaven that God would mark the Community, that through me, so humble an instrument He brought into being, with a very special mission and grace."

"My desires have been realized in you, cherished daughter. Truly, you are after my own heart."

"These, my daughters, who dwell with me in the Bosom of God, rejoice with me and give praise to the Most High for the glory that will come to the Most Precious Blood of Jesus Christ through you, beloved and privileged daughter."

"Continue in your way of love and suffering, for I, your spiritual mother, with your holy Sisters who are with me, will watch over you and the Community destined by God, through you, to fulfill a great and noble mission."

"The mother is honored in the daughter. It is thus I am honored in you. And they, the elder members of the religious family to which God has called you, will not fail to watch over their little sister upon earth."

"Their intercession, too, is unceasing for the members of that Community so dear to my heart and theirs."

"Precious daughter, I place the mantle of my spirit upon you. Spread it over the Community that all may be penetrated with my spirit. It must be so, because it must prepare itself for the abundance of graces God is about to shower upon it. Thus it must make itself more worthy of His goodness."

June 26, 1958, just one month later, while Sister was reflecting on how holy those sisters who first came to New Riegel from Switzerland must have been, she heard these words: **"You are their crown. In you they will be glorified."** Later that day, during the meditation hour, Mother Brunner, the foundress of the Sisters of the Precious Blood in Castle Lowenberg, Switzerland, appeared wearing the black habit, with a cross hanging from her neck. She was smiling and her face was white and radiant. She was surrounded by many sisters in black who looked on Mother smiling, then bowed in respect, before turning and smiling on Sister Mildred. Then Mother Brunner said to Sister Mildred:

**"You are my beloved daughter, my glory and my crown. It is not necessary that I be glorified on earth. It is enough that I am glorified in you, my daughter. Tell my children that they must be more**

fervent in living a life of immolation and sacrifice for the glory of the Precious Blood, to which they have dedicated their lives. This, not only Our Lord requires of them, but I also require it of them if they wish to be truly my daughters. Long have I prayed both on earth and in heaven that God would mark the Community, that through me, so humble an instrument He brought into being, with a very special mission and grace. My desires have been realized in you, cherished daughter. Truly, you are after my own heart. These, my daughters, who dwell with me in the Bosom of God, rejoice with me and give praise to the Most High for the glory that will come to the Most Precious Blood of Jesus Christ through you, beloved and privileged daughter. Continue in your way of love and suffering for I, your spiritual mother, with your holy Sisters who are with me, will watch over you and the Community destined by God, through you, to fulfill a great and noble mission.

The mother is honored in the daughter. It is thus I am honored in you. And they, the elder members of the religious family to which God has called you, will not fail to watch over their little sister on earth. Their intercession, too, is unceasing for the members of that community so dear to my heart and theirs. Precious daughter, I place the mantle of my spirit upon you. Spread it over the community that all may be penetrated with my spirit. It must be so, for it must prepare itself for the abundance of graces God is about to shower upon it. Thus it must make itself more worthy of His goodness.

Maria Anna Probst was born October 1, 1764. Her parents were poor so at age 12, Maria went to work for a seamstress. Later, she worked as a maid at the estate of Nicholas Brunner of Beibelburg. At age 27, the son, John Brunner, asked for her hand in marriage and together they had six children. Frau Brunner was known in the area as the "Pious Mother." When she could not go to church, she gave alms to a poor person to go and give it in her place. She was very devoted to the Eucharist and to Our Lady, Help of Christians. After twenty years of marriage, her husband became very ill and died. She herself became gravely ill, but she credits Mary, Help of Christians, for her cure. One son entered the Society of Jesus and a daughter became a Sister of the Visitation. Maria Anna Brunner had a dream, like Sister Mildred Neuzil, to live a solitary life of contemplative prayer. When her children were grown, she went to Castle Lowenberg, Switzerland, where her son Nicholas, now Father Francis de Sales, ran a boys' school.



She settled into a small room near the chapel. Having made a pilgrimage to Rome with Father, spending nine months visiting shrines and holy places and hearing the eloquent sermons of Gaspar del Buffalo on the Precious Blood, her heart was on fire. On her return, she gathered other women to join her at Castle Lowenberg in solitude and adoration of the Precious Blood. On January 15, 1836, after a week of intense suffering, she died, but her sisters continued in her spirit and grew in numbers. This was the beginning of the Congregation of the Sisters of the Precious Blood. In 1843, Mother Brunner's priest-son who had left the Jesuits to become a Precious Blood priest, left Loewenberg for the United States. Slowly, he brought some of Mother's sisters

over to his new parish settlements in Ohio. New Riegel is considered the cradle of the community. The Sisters of the Precious Blood had their first Motherhouse in Maria Stein, Ohio, but later moved it to Dayton, Ohio. When Mother's remains were brought from Switzerland to Ohio and her body exhumed, her hands, folded in prayer, remained intact. They were put in a reliquary which contained a wax replica of Mother, clothed in the black habit the sisters were wearing at the time. This began the designation of "Praying Hands" to portray Mother Brunner. While Mother was alive, the sisters wore the ordinary garb of the day; they made no evangelical vows but lived together with a commitment to lives of solitude and adoration of the Precious Blood of Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament. For that reason, perpetual adoration has been an earmark of the Sisters of the Precious Blood.

**Reference:(Sister Joyce Lehman, C.P.P.S., A MOTHER'S LEGACY A Brief Account of the Life and Work of Maria Anna Brunner, 1999.)**

We have been pondering both the appearance and the words of Mother Brunner to Sister Mildred Neuzil who, in 1978, was separated from the Sisters of the Precious Blood which Mother Brunner had founded. It seems that some in the active order had no appreciation for a life of solitude and contemplation and worked actively or unknowingly toward the demise of Sister Mildred's cloister. Was it providential that Sister Mildred died exiled into solitude and suffering, which deeply mirrored the spirit of Mother Brunner and configured Sister to the sufferings of Jesus for the salvation of souls? Sister Mildred's life ended much like Mother Brunner's began, without a religious habit and having to re-consecrate herself to God in private vow. Mother Brunner called Sister Mildred her precious and privileged daughter and identified herself as Sister's spiritual mother? How are we to understand Mother Brunner's appearance and words to Sister Mildred in relation to the actions of her other daughters in the active order towards Sister Mildred? Surely the following words of Our Lady to Sister Mildred echo those the humble maid of Lowenberg Castle--Mother Brunner--would say to Sister if she were alive today.

**"Beloved daughter, you are not being accepted because you are a small one. But in the end, all will come as I desire. Those who oppose you will receive light to understand.... So, have patience, dear one, it will happen as I have said and those who have opposed me will become my most ardent and courageous supporters."**  
(Sister Mildred Neuzil, Diary, OUR LADY OF AMERICA, page 37).

In the spirit of Mother Brunner's "praying hands," let us pray for the poor souls in purgatory the rest of this month that is dedicated to them with The Litany of the Holy Souls in Purgatory that can be printed from the link below.

<https://mycatholicprayers.com/prayers/litany-for-the-holy-souls-in-purgatory/>

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