

All Saints' Day

Middle School · Parent Edition

For the parent: Read each part aloud and work through the questions together. Your answers are printed in blue italics, so no preparation is needed. Your child uses the Student Edition.

Step 1 Understand the Collect

Most collects follow a five-part pattern: the **address** (the One to whom we pray), the **reason** (what God has done or promised), the **petition** (what we ask), the **purpose** (what we hope will result), and the **ending** (the closing that names the Trinity).

Almighty and everlasting God, You knit together Your faithful people of all times and places into one holy communion, the mystical body of Your Son, Jesus Christ. Grant us so to follow Your blessed saints in all virtuous and godly living that, together with them, we may come to the unspeakable joys You have prepared for those who love You; through Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

1. Mark each part of the collect. Are any parts missing?

***Answer:** Address: "Almighty and everlasting God." Reason: "You knit together Your faithful people of all times and places into one holy communion, the mystical body of Your Son, Jesus Christ." Petition: "Grant us so to follow Your blessed saints in all virtuous and godly living." Purpose: "that, together with them, we may come to the unspeakable joys You have prepared for those who love You." Ending: "through Jesus Christ..." All five are present.*

2. "Of all times and places." Who belongs to this one communion?

***Answer:** Every believer in every age and place, on earth and in heaven. We are joined with all who have died in the faith.*

3. The collect asks us to "follow" the saints. Follow them in what? Why does that not mean earning heaven?

***Answer:** In their faith and godly living, as examples. The joys are ones God has "prepared," a gift, and the saints themselves were saved by grace.*

Step 2 Understand the Gospel

Read the Gospel on your own.

Matthew 5:1-12

1 Seeing the crowds, he went up on the mountain, and when he sat down, his disciples came to him. **2** And he opened his mouth and taught them, saying:

3 "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. **4** Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted. **5** Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth. **6** Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied. **7** Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy. **8** Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God. **9** Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God. **10** Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

11 "Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. **12** Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you."

1. The Beatitudes describe people who are poor, mourning, meek, and persecuted. Why call them "blessed"?

***Answer:** Blessing is God's gift, not a description of comfortable circumstances. Those who have nothing in themselves receive the kingdom from Him.*

2. What does "poor in spirit" (v. 3) mean?

Answer: *Knowing that we have nothing to bring to God. The kingdom belongs to those who come to Him empty-handed.*

3. Who fits every Beatitude perfectly?

Answer: *Jesus Himself: meek, merciful, pure in heart, a peacemaker, and persecuted. We are blessed in Him.*

4. Why does Jesus tell persecuted people to "rejoice" (vv. 11-12)?

Answer: *Their reward is great in heaven, and they stand in the company of the prophets. Suffering for Christ marks them as His.*

Step 3 Find the Collect in the Gospel

1. Find at least two places where the collect's words appear in the Gospel. Explain each one.

Answer: *"The unspeakable joys You have prepared" matches "Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven" (v. 12) and "theirs is the kingdom of heaven" (vv. 3, 10). "Follow Your blessed saints in all virtuous and godly living" matches the merciful, the pure in heart, and the peacemakers (vv. 7-9). "Faithful people of all times" matches "so they persecuted the prophets who were before you" (v. 12). Any two, well explained, are enough.*

2. Today's first reading says of the saints, "They have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb" (Revelation 7:14). What does that teach about how saints are made holy?

Answer: *Not by their own goodness, but by Christ's blood. Robes washed in blood come out white: that is the Gospel.*

Step 4 The Small Catechism

The Third Article. I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy Christian church, **the communion of saints**, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen. **What does this mean?** I believe that I cannot by my own reason or strength believe in Jesus Christ, my Lord, or come to Him; but the Holy Spirit has called me by the Gospel, enlightened me with His gifts, sanctified and kept me in the true faith. In the same way He calls, gathers, enlightens, and sanctifies the whole Christian church on earth, and keeps it with Jesus Christ in the one true faith. In this Christian church He daily and richly forgives all my sins and the sins of all believers. On the Last Day He will raise me and all the dead, and give eternal life to me and all believers in Christ. This is most certainly true.

Cross-reference. "Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith." (Hebrews 12:1-2)

1. What does "the communion of saints" mean?

Answer: *The fellowship of all believers, the whole Church, who share the same Christ and the same holy gifts.*

2. Luther says the Holy Spirit "calls, gathers, enlightens, and sanctifies the whole Christian church." What does that say about who the saints are?

Answer: *Saints are made by the Holy Spirit, not self-made. To be "sanctified" is to be made holy by Him.*

3. Hebrews calls the saints "a cloud of witnesses." According to verse 2, where should we look?

Answer: *To Jesus, "the founder and perfecter of our faith." The saints point us to Him.*

Parent note: the question they may ask. "Are saints special people we pray to?"

Scripture calls all believers saints; Paul writes "to all the saints" in Philippi (Philippians 1:1). We thank God for faithful Christians who have died and imitate their faith (Hebrews 13:7), but we pray to God alone, through Christ, our one mediator (1 Timothy 2:5). The Augsburg Confession teaches the same (Article XXI).

Step 5 Wrap It All Up

1. Write a short collect of your own for this day. Use all five parts.

Answer: *Answers will vary. Example: "Almighty God, You have made us one with all Your saints in heaven and on earth. Keep us faithful as they were faithful, that we may rejoice with them before Your throne; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen."*

Pray today's collect together. Then answer:

2. What does Jesus do for you as one of His saints?

Answer: *He washes me clean with His blood, makes me part of His family with all believers, and will bring me to the joys of heaven with them.*