

## Fifth Sunday after Epiphany

### APOSTLES' CREED – THE THIRD ARTICLE

The Creed calls the “holy Christian Church” a “communion of saints.” Both expressions, taken together, are identical. But in the past the expression “communion of saints” was not there. This phrase has been poorly and unwisely translated into the German as a *communion* of saints. If it is to be rendered plainly, it must be expressed quite differently in a German way. In the same way, the word *ecclesia* properly means in German “a gathering.” But we are used to seeing it translated as the word Church, by which the simple do not understand a gathered multitude but the consecrated house or building. This is true even though the house ought not to be called a Church, just because the multitude gathers there. For we who gather there make and choose for ourselves a particular place and give a name to the house according to the gathering.

So the word Church really means nothing other than a common gathering, and is not really German, but Greek (as is also the word *ecclesia*). For in their own language the Greeks call it *kyria*, as in Latin it is called *curia*. Therefore, in real German, in our mother tongue, it ought to be called “a Christian congregation or gathering” or, best of all and most clearly, “holy Christendom.”

So also the word *communio*, which is added, ought not to be translated “communion,” but “congregation.” It is nothing else than an interpretation or explanation by which someone meant to show what the Christian Church is. Our people understood neither Latin nor German. They have translated this word “communion of saints,” although no German dialect says this or understands it this way. But to speak correct German, it ought to be “a congregation of saints”; that is, a congregation made up purely of saints, or, to speak yet more plainly, “a holy congregation.” I say this in order that the words “communion of saints” may be understood. The expression has become so established by custom that it cannot be cast aside easily, and it is treated almost as heresy if someone attempts to change a word.

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