



# Friends of God and Prophets: A Feminist Theological Reading of the Communion of Saints

*Elizabeth A. Johnson*

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How can we develop "habits of the heart" cherish community and nourish the struggle for justice? One way is by practicing the communion of saints. However, not only has devotion to the saints suffered an extraordinary decline wherever Western secular culture has gained a foothold, but, surprisingly, the communion of saints is one of the least developed symbols in all theology. This dearth of a well-developed, integrated approach in theology contrasts with the lively interest in saints in other disciplines such as social history and psychology. In *Friends of God and Prophets*, Elizabeth Johnson provides such a theology of the communion of saints, utilizing, ironically, women's practices of memory -- "ironically" because the official list of saints is largely dominated by men, and "women's history of holiness has been neither remembered nor truthfully told". In the first part of the book, Johnson dialogues with history, gleaning clues from the past for an understanding of the communion of saints that is both faithful to tradition and promising of liberation. In the second, she offers a systematic interpretation of the symbol, connecting insights from history with insights arising from women's practices today, linking both with radical hope in God. In this way, the communion of saints can become a practical doctrine for the entire church: a source of strength in the work to create a transformed society of mutuality and compassionate respect, both among human beings and between human beings and the Earth.

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