

## HOMILY FOR ALL SAINTS

14.6.2020

Today, Heaven and earth celebrate the innumerable Saints of the Church of Christ, with glory and praise. This Feast honors all of the Saints who rejoice in God, from all parts of the world and in every age. Many of them we know by name, and we honor them throughout the year. However, there are many more that are unknown, and this is why the Church has set aside the Sunday after Pentecost to honor all Saints, so that they may also be venerated by all. The choice of this particular day is also significant, because it is with the Grace of the Holy Spirit that the Saints were sanctified.

According to the Synaxarion, these sanctified ones include: the Nine Orders of Angels; the Lord's Forefathers, Patriarchs and Prophets from the Old Testament; the Holy Apostles; the Martyrs; the Hierarchs; Hieromartyrs; Confessors; Ascetics; along with all the Righteous, be they men, women, or children. This includes the countless ones whose names are known only to God. Additionally, we honor the Blessed Virgin Mary. This day is also established to encourage us to follow the path of the Saints as much as we are able, to struggle with zeal towards holiness.

This can be a scary thing to think about, because we think of our sins and doubt. They think about the great saints like St. Nicholas and others famous for their miracles. What is important to remember is that we are not called to be miracle workers. Sanctity is the turning away from Satan and his works. The honor these great Saints receive from God, including the gift of miracle working, is the fruit of their spiritual labors. In this way, they are able to help us.

We must be clear on what God is telling us when He says, *"You shall be holy, for I the Lord your God am holy"* (Leviticus 20: 7; 1 Peter 1:16). He is calling us to turn away from the devil and sin, and to live according to the will of God with faith, love, and devotion. It is not for us to say that we will become Saints by our own power. Only God is Holy, and whoever is in communion with God and is united with Him will share in this holiness. *"I am the LORD who sanctifies you"* (Leviticus 20:8). One can speak eloquently about Christ, give alms, donate generously to the Church, attend every Divine Liturgy, receive Holy Communion, and even perform miracles; but if a person does this for their own glory and declares themselves a saint, then to God they are nothing. They are no better than the Pharisees if they take credit, and do not glorify God. The Lord said, *"Many will say to Me in that day, 'Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in your name, cast out demons in your name, and done many wonders in your name?' And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from me, you who practice lawlessness'"* (Matthew 7:22-23). Woe to the person who, upon hearing the praise of men, thinks that they have become a saint! The truly sanctified person believes that they are just lowly sinners. Let us remember the Great Apostle of the Gentiles St. Paul, who in the last days of his life wrote, *"Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief"* (1 Timothy 1:15). We also recall the words of St. Porphyrios, a Saint of our times, responding to the praise of others with the declaration that he was nothing more than "an old tin can" (useless and worthless).

My brothers and sisters, this is exactly what we need, the realization that we are sinners. This is our reality, because no one in the world is without sin. This is also true of the Saints we remember today. Some of them had very sinful lives, and were known for their corruption. The difference here is that they were cleansed by repentance. They turned against the passions, and were healed by the Sacred Mysteries of the Church. Enlightened by the Holy Spirit, they struggled and reached deification, resulting in their glorification as Saints. Understanding this, we can see that all of us

can reach for holiness, no matter where we come from or what situation we find ourselves in. The Grace of God is a gift, and it is in this gift that we can experience sanctification. God's Word assures us: *"For this is the will of God, your sanctification"* (1 Thessalonians 4:3). This is why our Holy Church exists, so that with the Sacred Mysteries, teaching, and pastoral care it provides, God gives us the means to become Saints. This is His will, and we also need to want this great gift. This is why God's Word urges us again: *"Pursue peace with all people, and holiness, without which no one will see the Lord"* (Hebrews 12:14).

May we be inspired by the Saints we celebrate today, and with their intercession, follow in their footsteps. Amen.