

Human beings have accumulated in their coffers gold and silver, clothes more sumptuous than useful, diamonds and other objects that are evidence of war and tyranny; then a foolish arrogance hardens their hearts; for their brothers in distress, no pity. What utter blindness! ... Attend not to the law of the strong but to the law of the Creator. Help nature to the best of your ability, honour the freedom of creation, protect your species from dishonour, come to its aid in sickness, rescue it from poverty Seek to distinguish yourself from others only in your generosity. Be like gods to the poor, imitating God's mercy. Humanity has nothing so much in common with God as the ability to do good.

Saint Gregory the Theologian



26 June is the Sunday of All Saints

Matins Gospel: Matthew 28:16-20

Epistle: Hebrews 11:33-40; 12:1-2

Gospel: Matthew 10:32-33; 37-38; 19:27-30

Resurrectional Apolytikion:

From on high didst Thou descend, O Compassionate One; to burial of three days hast Thou submitted that Thou mightest free us from our passions. O our Life and Resurrection, Lord, glory be to Thee.

Seasonal Kontakion:

As the first-fruits of our nature to the Planter of created things, the world presenteth the God-bearing martyred Saints in offering unto Thee, O Lord. Through their earnest entreaties, keep Thy Church in deep peace and divine tranquillity, through the pure Theotokos, O Thou Who art greatly merciful.

Readings and saints for this week:

Monday, 27 June: Romans 2:28-29; 3:1-18; Matthew 6:31-34; 7:9-11
Start of the Apostles' Fast; Samson the Hospitable; Joanna the Myrrbearer

Tuesday, 28 June: Romans 4:4-12; Matthew 7:15-21
Relics of Unmercenaries Cyril & John; Pappias the Martyr

Wednesday, 29 June: John 21:14-25; 2 Corinthians 11:21-33; 12:1-9; Matthew 16:13-19
Apostles Peter & Paul

Thursday, 30 June: 1 Corinthians 4:9-16; Matthew 9:36, 10:1-8
Synaxis of the 12 Apostles; Michael the New Martyr of Athens

Friday, 1 July: 1 Corinthians 12:27-31; 13:1-8; Matthew 10:1, 5-8
Unmercenaries Cosmas & Damian; New Martyr Constantine of Cyprus

Saturday, 2 July: Hebrews 9:1-7; Luke 1:39-49, 56
Robe of the Theotokos; Juvenal, Pat. of Jerusalem



Evangelion

A Bulletin of Orthodox Christian Faith

26 June 2016

You Will Receive a Hundredfold

As we celebrate the Sunday of All Saints today, we hear Jesus Christ both challenging His disciples and assuring them of the reward that awaits those who have left all to follow Him, and who have remained faithful to Him despite hardship and persecution. He tells us that those who “love father or mother more than me are not worthy of me” and that those who have left “houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or children or lands, for my name's sake, will receive a hundredfold, and inherit eternal life.”

These are challenging words. We can certainly see them acted out dramatically in the lives of many of the saints, who literally left their families, and sometimes even their countries, for the sake of the Gospel. But we may wonder how they apply to us. Are we not also called to holiness?

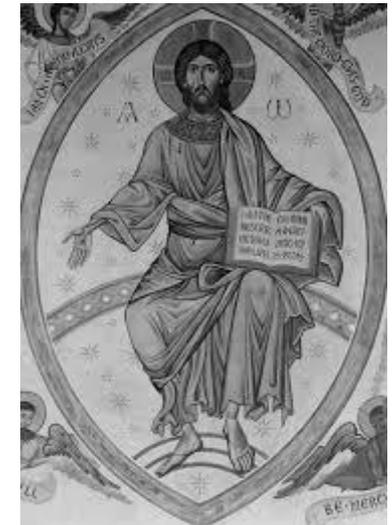
It seems that the answer lies with what is in our hearts. Christ does not say that we should not love our families, nor are all called to leave their families and their lands. But He does say that if we love these things more than Him, then we are not worthy of Him.

What Jesus Christ is calling us to is the right ordering of that which we love. If He is at the centre of our lives, then we will be able to love

all that He gives us, but in a way that gives glory to God. And, if we nurture our relationship with Him, then He will give us the wisdom to choose wisely so that our everyday lives may also become a path to holiness. For holiness is to be found not only in doing dramatic things for God, but in doing everyday ordinary things with a pure heart.

If the Lord has left us ignorant of the ordering of many things in this world, then it means it is not necessary for us to know: we cannot compass all creation with our minds. But the Creator Himself of heaven and earth and every created thing gives us to know Him in the Holy Spirit.

Saint Silouan the Athonite



The Holy Apostles Peter and Paul

On Wednesday, the Church commemorates the Holy, Glorious and All-Praised Leaders of the Apostles Peter and Paul. This feast is preceded by the Apostles' Fast, which begins on the Monday after the Sunday of All Saints.

During His earthly life, Jesus Christ chose Apostles to carry on His work and to lead and guard the new Christian community. Saint Peter was the leader of this band of Apostles. He



First in prominence among the Apostles, and teachers to the Universe, intercede to the Master of all for peace in the world and for our souls great mercy.

Apolytikion for the Apostles Peter & Paul

was an impetuous fisherman who, despite misunderstanding and denying Christ, had nevertheless played a key role in acknowledging who Jesus Christ was and was given the task by the Risen Christ to "feed my sheep." After the Resurrection, he preached the Gospel in Judea, Antioch, parts of Asia, and finally in Rome where he was martyred.

Saint Paul had not known Christ during His earthly ministry and had actively persecuted His followers. However, he had such a dramatic encounter with the Risen Christ on the road to Damascus that his whole life turned around and he became one of the most outstanding missionaries of the Church. In the Acts of the Apostles, we read about how he travelled widely throughout the empire, preaching the Gospel especially to the Gentiles.

Both saints were actively involved in spreading the faith and in teaching the early Church, and both were martyred in Rome. By commemorating them together the Church reminds us of how God uses very different people to work together to build up the Church.



And what are the "Lives of the Saints"? They are nothing else but a certain kind of continuation of the "Acts of the Apostles."

In them is found the same Gospel, the same life, the same truth, the same righteousness, the same love, the same faith, the same eternity, the same "power from on high," the same God and Lord.

For "the Lord Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and for ever" (Heb. 13:8): the same for all people of all times, distributing the same gifts and the same Divine energies to all who believe in Him.

This continuation of all life-creating Divine energies in the Church of Christ from ages to ages and from generation to generation indeed constitutes living Holy Tradition.

Saint Justin Popovich

☚ The Sunday of All Saints ☛

Today, on the first Sunday after Pentecost, we celebrate the Sunday of All Saints. The services for today are the final services in the "Pentecostarion," the book which contains the liturgical texts from Pascha until today. The Sunday of All Saints is therefore in many ways the culmination of our Easter faith, and it flows naturally from the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost, which we celebrated last week.

In today's feast we recognize all those who have struggled to live lives of holiness, including those whom we would otherwise forget. We are all called to holiness, for we are called to share in God's own life. We are called to take our struggle for salvation seriously and the saints are those who provide us with an example in this, and who help us by their prayers.

However, true holiness is not simply making a great effort to conform to some ideal. Rather, it is about allowing the Risen Christ to live in us, and to allow the Holy Spirit to transform us and to restore in us God's Image which has become distorted by our sin.

The holiness of the saints is therefore the consequence and the proof of the Resurrection of Jesus Christ. It is also the visible testimony to the transforming power of the Holy Spirit, for the Holy Spirit enlightens us and makes it possible for us to attain the destiny that God has prepared for us.

'But I say to you,' the Lord says, 'love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, pray for those who persecute you.' Why did he command these things? So that he might free you from hatred, sadness, anger and grudges, and might grant you the greatest possession of all, perfect love, which is impossible to possess except by the one you loves all equally in imitation of God.

Saint Maximus Confessor



Your Church, O Christ our God, clothed itself in the blood of Your martyrs from throughout the world, as though it were a robe of linen and purple; through them, she cries out to You, "Send down upon Your people compassion, grant peace to Your commonwealth, and to our souls, great mercy."

Apolytikion of All Saints