

23/06/2019

Sermon of His Eminence Archbishop Elpidophoros of America on Sunday of All Saints, June 23, 2019



SUNDAY OF ALL SAINTS

Sermon of His Eminence Archbishop Elpidophoros of America
Holy Trinity Archdiocesan Cathedral, New York
(June 23, 2019)

Beloved brothers and sisters in Christ, beloved children in the Lord!

Today our Church honors the feast of All Saints, a continuation from yesterday's Leave-Taking of Pentecost, which marks coming full circle in our long liturgical journey. It commenced with Triodion, continued into Pentekostarion, and encompassed the entirety of God's revelation to the world, establishing the Church through Jesus Christ, the Firstborn of all creation, which today is the Church of the Firstborn, "as sealed in the archetype on high"[\[1\]](#) in the Holy Spirit.

It is not by chance then that from the Vespers, together with the Kontakion of All Saints we chant as well the Kontakion and the Apolytikion of Pentecost:

The Kontakion:

When the Most High descended and confused the languages of men, He divided the nations, but when He apportioned the tongues of fire, He called all to unity, and with one voice we glorify the All-Holy Spirit!

The Apolytikion:

Blessed are You, O Christ our God, Who has shown forth the fishermen as men most wise, by sending upon them the Holy Spirit, and through them, has caught the world as in a net: O You Who love mankind, glory to You!

Today, then, begins a new liturgical cycle of our Church, one in which we must make every effort to live the witness of all the Saints of our Church, which stretches across ceaseless centuries since the Day of Pentecost, and which draws a straight line of our faith from the time of the Holy Apostles and the Holy Martyrs – men and women. I emphasize that our faith is not an individual consideration, but a shared and lived experience, the witness of our Saints, as we confess in the Creed, the Symbol of our Faith: *“In One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church.”*

And above all others, we especially invoke the presence of the Most Holy Theotokos, We remember all our ancestors –forefathers and foremothers, the patriarchs of Israel and the prophets, the apostles and the preachers, the evangelists and the martyrs, the confessors and the ascetics, and *“every righteous spirit perfected in the faith.”* To them we cry aloud: *“Rejoice glorious Apostles, Prophets, Martyrs and Hierarchs! Rejoice company of the Saints and Righteous, honorable chorus of Women, and intercede with Christ for the sake of the world!”*[\[2\]](#)

Starting from the Reading of the Prophets of the Vespers and coming to the Epistle and Gospel Readings of today’s most praiseworthy Sunday, we must say that in all things the ageless witness of God’s Saints is chief, united with the Prophets, Apostles, and Martyrs, because the God of all our Saints is one and the same. He is the One who condescended to reveal our spiritual receptivity and ability so that we might enter again into His Kingdom. Thus in the Epistle Reading we heard about the certainty of the faith of the Prophets, to whom the pre-Incarnate Word of God the Father spoke, revealing to Moses and the Prophets the promise of his Incarnation. At the same time, we have the witness of the Apostle Paul, that “He was enthroned at the Right Hand of God.” And again in the Reading of the Holy Gospel we hear about the *“Regeneration, or Rebirth,” “when the Son of Man will sit down on the Throne of His glory,”* – this was immediately offered at the moment of Pentecost, the moment of the Holy Spirit, when spiritually we confess and we see

the Lord of Glory guiding the Saints, the Firstborn of the Church.

Therefore, the Church sets before us All our Saints in order for us to remember that at the conclusion of the Holy Gospel: *"But many who are first shall be last and the last first,"* that we always have a spirit of genuine humility and fraternal engagement, such that we recognize the destructive passions and possess the right standard of faith by which we yield and submit the passion of the Cross that perfects our faith in Jesus Christ. Thus from today to the middle of September in the Church we shall hear the Gospel Readings from the Gospel of the Evangelist Matthew that sets out the central theme of the Kingdom of God, of which all the Saints of our Church have tasted!

The Saints, my beloved brothers and sisters, are those who traversed this world like Christ, following His steps and fulfilling His commandments. They overcame death and lived the resurrection through ascetic practice and even tears, through love and compassion, and at times through their confession and martyrdom.

The Saints are the men, women and children who through the ages until our own times have listened to the Holy Gospel and lived it! They are the ones who love their neighbor, exactly as Christ taught His Disciples.

In this way, the saints are able to console us in times of trouble. They are able to lead us through darkness into light. They are able to teach us not only to wear the cross of Christ as jewelry, but to bear the cross of Christ as His faithful disciples.

And when we follow Him, he leads us to the heavenly banquet, which is this Divine Liturgy that we are celebrating today as one Church. Yesterday, we celebrated my enthronement among you. But today, we celebrate the ultimate enthronement – of Christ at the right hand of the Father. Today, we remember His second and glorious coming.

This service is very special because the whole Church is present with us around the holy chalice. For the first time, as your new Archbishop, I am celebrating this sacrament of Eucharist with my fellow bishops of the Holy Eparchial Synod, with the pious clergy of this blessed Archdiocese, and with all of you as precious members of the sacred Body of Christ.

But those of us who are celebrating the liturgy this morning are not the only ones present. Numerous people are represented at this hour. With us are all of the parishes and communities throughout the country, all of the ministries and departments of our Archdiocese, all our sister Orthodox Churches. They are all

participating and sharing with us in the same communion.

So, my beloved brothers and sisters, we are called to follow the saints – if not to martyrdom, at least from our own position and place in society. Each of us has been privileged to be baptized and be called by our name, a Christian name, the name of one of the saints, who pray to God for us and our loved ones.

The saints embrace all of creation with their love and prayer. Like the Holy Spirit that we celebrated at Pentecost, the saints are the assurance and conviction, the promise and pledge of the continuous presence of God in our hearts and in our lives. We can rejoice because there are countless saints – a cloud of witnesses” (Hebrews 12:1) – who lived before us and who still live among us.

Today, all of us are called to make a promise to God in return for His promise of the comfort of His Spirit and the communion of His saints. Let us, therefore, pledge to live and behave in the way that the saints lived: with all our heart and all our mind, with all our will and all our strength.

If we do this, if we undertake this commitment, then His strength will complement our weakness, His grace will be sufficient for our shortcomings. For “all things are possible through Christ who strengthens and sustains us.” (Philippians 4:13)

Let each of us be the glory and light of Christ in our world – even if we are just a small candle, a small flame. Let each of us work to make the world less dark, less frightening, less unwelcoming. Let each of us proclaim the good news that “God so loved the world that He gave His only son.” (John 3:16) Let each of us remind our neighbors that God has never left the world, but always lives in the world through His saints. And let us live in such a way that others will know – by our love and by our joy – that we are His disciples.

In this way, we – and along with us, the whole world – will experience the promise of our Lord before His glorious ascension: “And look, I am with you all the days of your life, even unto the end of the ages.” (Matthew 28:20)

Amen!

[\[1\]](#) Oikos before the Synaxarion: “Those who were martyred throughout all the earth, and were translated unto Heaven; they imitated the Passion of Christ, and so shed their own passions; today they are gathered here in this place, manifest as the Church of the Firstborn, as sealed in the archetype on high, and they cry out to

Christ: 'You are my God! Preserve me through the Theotokos, O Most Merciful!'"

[2] Resurrectional Verse of the Vespers.

- Source: [Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America](#)