



The Sunday of All Saints

Last Sunday we celebrated the Descent of the Holy Spirit and the establishment of Christ's Church on earth, while today we celebrate the fruits of this grace-filled Church – today is the Sunday of All Saints, who provide us with an extra-ordinary example of how to live on earth correctly, in order to attain the Kingdom of Heaven. Let us look, dear brethren, at how these saints lived and how they reached paradise.

All the saints who are commemorated today followed the way of Christ, and all of them – in their own time and in their own circumstances of life – fulfilled God's commandment of love for God and one's brethren. And often their times were quite difficult, sometimes even more difficult than ours, and often the circumstances of their lives were spiritually more dangerous and physically worse than ours. And yet they went on, they struggled ... and so they reached the Kingdom of Heaven, where they are now triumphant.

Look at the walls of the church and you will see them: martyrs, confessors, righteous men, fools for Christ, the educated, the simple, the rich, the poor, prelates, monks, laymen... Look at how many stars are shining on the Lord's spiritual firmament. This is the heavenly Church. It is universal, and it is constantly being reinforced from the earthly Church, where all of us are members, dear brethren. There is a place for everyone there. This is what today's reading from the Epistle teaches us: *"Wherefore, seeing such a cloud of witnesses surrounding us, let us lay aside every weight and the sin that besets us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus, the Author of our faith."*

Just think, dear brethren: all these saints were people like ourselves. And all of them were different people, just as we are different. And their paths were different. But they all had three characteristics in common. These characteristics are defined for us in today's Gospel. They are requisite for everyone, which means for us too, and it is impossible to bypass them. They are as follows: *"Whosoever, therefore, shall confess Me before men, him will I confess also before My Father than is in heaven."* This is the first characteristic. Do you realize, dear brethren, how important it is for us, modern people? It is as though the whole world around us is asking us, pressuring us: "Are you a Christian, or are you one of us, of the world?" And we cannot leave this question without an answer. Thus with our words, our actions, our thoughts and our feelings we must reply loudly and firmly: "Yes, I am a Christian!"

And here is the second characteristic: *"Whosoever loves his father or mother more than Me, is not worthy of Me."* Even now the Lord demands this absolute love from us. To love Him above everyone and above everything. And when we acquire such love for Him, only then will we be able to truly love our friends, and our neighbors, and even our enemies.

And, finally, the third characteristic: “*Whosoever does not take his cross and does not follow Me, is not worthy of Me.*” This is easy to understand: every person has sorrows and tribulations in his life. And they are very individual, each person having his own, and they make up each person’s own cross to bear. It is very difficult, very hard, but such is our life and such is God’s will concerning us...

Let us thank God even for this cross of ours. We cannot attain salvation without it. That is the reason the Lord gives it to us. The good Lord wants all of us to be saved, and to be joined together in one eternal triumph with all the saints whom we glorify today.

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