1st SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

All Saints

Today we commemorate all the saints who are throughout the world. We commemorate all those who shone, east and west, north and south, as well as those who will become saints. Holiness is not limited to a time or to a certain number of people but rather it spreads like light that disperses the darkness. The saints do not belong to a long-lost time that has passed. They are present now in our era and they will also be present after us. There is no limit to sanctity, so we commemorate them all in order to know that we are not limited by the feasts of saints whom we know and the dates of whose feasts we know and so celebrate at certain times. Rather, we commemorate all the saints as a result of giving glory to God, who gave us the grace of holiness.

This is an opinion that we must adopt and a teaching that we must follow in order to know that we are also called to holiness. Did we not receive this grace at baptism?! as the Apostle Paul teaches about those whom he remembers in today’s epistle, how they suffered, asking us to patiently struggle. This is what is asked of us, to be patient in our struggle, to be patient in or sufferings and our temptations. When we are patient, we will inevitably be victorious, because God, who arranged for us to undertake this struggle, is with us, struggling with us, sanctifying us, and ministering to us, so that we might be victorious and He might be pleased with our struggle.

In this way He looked upon the struggles of Saint Anthony in the desert. After being exhausted from toil and worn down and wounded by many blows from the devil, Anthony asked the Lord, “Where were you? I called upon you often, and you did not come to me?” He said to him, “O Anthony, I was with you, rejoicing in your struggle and now I will appear to you in order to confirm to you that you are in a righteous struggle and on the true path.”

Do not ask for a miracle immediately. God is with you, so be patient in your struggle. When He sees your patience, He will help you even more and will reveal victory to you. Let us struggle in patience and let us be persistent.

When someone becomes accustomed to loose living and distances himself from the Lord, it is hard for him later to follow this path, just like with sports. If you have trained every day from your youth, then in adulthood and old age you will persist, because you have become used to this regimen. But if you come to train after seventy years of relaxation and immobility, then you will not move at all. So struggle while you are young in order to arrive at victory starting now. Then you will become accustomed to being victorious and evil will not overcome you. Do not be careless and do not allow yourself to submit to the temptations that come your way, lest you become negligent and in your negligence you will not be victorious. But in your struggling and your patience in the suffering, difficulty, and temptation,  that you go through, you will be victorious and your reward will stick to Christ and in this way you will become holy.

We come here each week, we sit here in this Holy Place surrounded by the saints of the Church. Do we know who they are and why they adorn the walls of our church ? How many of us know the life of the saint we are named after and how many us pray to that saint each day? This is an important part of our Orthodox Spirituality.

But it is not just these old time saints that died long ago. What about modern saints? St. Herman of Alaska, St. Alexis of Wilksbery, St. Peter the Alute, and the other saints of North America that did so much to help establish the Church here in America.

Take some time today to mediate on the saint whose name you bear. Think about that person and what they have done and ask them in your prayers to watch over you and walk with you. Ask them to pray for you for you have been placed under their protection. Amen.