



## The Feast of All Saints of Russia

Today, on the second Sunday after Pentecost, we continue to explore the meaning of sanctity as set forth through the examples provided to us by the Church. The Church guides us in the celebration of the memory of the saints who are the closest to us in culture, and often in time. The numerous holy persons and persons, honored and glorified, warriors and children, hermits and martyrs, men, women, and children—they are our ancestors and neighbors, parents and children, past and present. Sanctity in the holy Church of Christ did not end in some long-ago-remote, but has always permeated, and is set as a standard for our own lives here and now. Sanctity did not end with the Apostles, or the Fathers, or even the New Martyrs of Russia, but remains fresh in the lives of the saints here in North America, some of whom may prove to us memorable personally. And these also remember. For example, the life of Saint John of San Francisco shows that sanctity is not in some other far-off land or distant time, but in doing our own lives and following Christ (John 13:15).





In the Gospel reading for the memory of the saints, we hear about the strange household or qualities that make people blessed in the eyes of God (Matt. 5: 1-12). They are the blessed qualities that show forth through the lives of saints, but have seemed they are in the eyes of the secular world? Christ says: "Blessed are the poor in spirit" (1).

But it is the rich and the arrogant that the world values: "Blessed are those who mourn" (4), but the world says we are to even think about death, to forget that this earthly life has a purpose and an end. "Blessed are the meek" (5), but it is the meek that get ahead in the secular world, and it is through humility that earthly kingdoms are established. "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness" (8), but the world looks on a hunger and thirst for very different things. "Blessed are the merciful" (9), but secular schools teach the doctrine of the survival of the fittest. "Blessed are the pure in heart" (10), but purity is thought to be in the world's view. "Blessed are the peacemakers" (10), but the secular definition of peacemaking is to start a progressive war. "Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake" (10), but the world persecutes righteousness and leaves no place for it as a teacher along the path of "social progress." "Blessed are those who are persecuted for Christ's sake" (11), but the path of the persecutor is ancient Rome, they were the leaders of the people. In ancient Rome, they were the true persecutors. And in Russia, those who continued to "rightly reason" for all-forgotten hundreds of thousands of clergy and millions of the faithful. We must remember the law requires us to not continue in the world's view, where the world seems to be our friend. "Who can save their souls by losing them?" Therefore, wherever you are in the Church of the world, make blessed all names of God" (20: 4).

The kingdom of Christ is not of this world (John 18:36). It is in this world, but it is not of this world. This distinction is very important for us. We must not view the Kingdom of God as some sort of a fantasy happening somewhere in the future or some far away place. On the contrary, His work with God does begin in this earthly life, and "Behold, the kingdom of God is in the midst of you" (Luke 17:21). And those who follow Christ go to paradise in anticipation of the resurrection of the world to His with Christ. Similarly, those who reject Christ and His Kingdom in the life, go to paradise of His without God in anticipation of the eternal work of God's Church. Those who choose to live according to the world, rather than according to the law of Christ, get their choice inscribed in their hearts, even as those who choose Christ get His law inscribed in theirs (John 9:10).

We must not think that it is possible to get the best of both kingdoms or to live according to our passions in this life and hope to inherit eternal life with God. "Who would have Christ with his father?" (2 Cor. 6:15). The call of Christ must be answered without any reservation, or it is not answered at all. In the Gospel reading for this Sunday (Matt. 6:18-21), we hear of the way that the holy apostles answered this call: "Immediately they left their nets and followed Him" (20). We see no hesitation, no looking back, no calculations—just an overwhelming readiness to be with the Lord.

Of course, the particular circumstances of this calling may be very different from ours. Not everyone—indeed those at work—is called to immediately leave their nets. The holy Spirit work everyone on a path toward beneficial or false or bad. And if at times it is necessary for us to leave our nets, then we must respond accordingly. But at all times Christ calls us to leave behind the nets of our passions, the attachments that we create in our minds that keep us from answering His call, and to follow Him in the simplicity of our hearts. And we are complete ready to follow Christ in the lives of all saints, and in the lives of the saints of Russia.



When Christ called the Russian saints to proclaim His Gospel and bring the good news to those in darkness, they answered His call. When Christ called them to teach the children, heal the sick, minister to the poor and the needy, and comfort the grieving—they answered His call. When the pagans attacked the faith and killed the faithful, they stood firm in the face of martyrdom. But at all times and under all circumstances they followed Christ in the likeness of their master and in the simplicity of their hearts.

In celebrating the Feast of All Russian Saints, we do not keep an anniversary or a memorial. Rather, it is a call to us to follow Christ in our lives in the same way as the saints followed Him in theirs. Any example from the past is meaningful only in as much as it is applied in the present. Only in this way our requests for heavenly intercession from the Russian saints can become genuine and devoid of hypocritical pretense.

All saints of Russia, pray to God for us.

to be worthy heirs of your ministry.

Help us follow Christ as you have followed Him.

Help us accept His calling and enjoy the same and happiness of His work.

so that with you we also may glorify God Who is wonderful in His saints.



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Here you can find the Russian Standard Version of the Bible in word.