



My Beloved Ones,

Having celebrated the coming of the Holy Spirit, we now observe a Feast which honors all those Saints whose hearts and minds were filled with the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. This Sunday's Feast of All Saints is unique because our Church acknowledges those saints whose lives and stories are unknown to us.

Throughout the earthly existence of the Church there are those who heard Christ's warning from this Sunday's Gospel: *"...whoever does not take up the cross and follow me is not worthy of me"* (Matthew 10:38). Therefore, as St. Paul says, they *"...were tortured, refusing to accept release, in order to obtain a better resurrection"* (Hebrews 11:35). However, the torments St. Paul describes were not only physical, but emotional and spiritual as well.

Even those in isolation still led difficult and lonely lives. *"...They went about in skins of sheep and goats, destitute, afflicted, ill-treated— of whom the world was not*

worthy—wandering over deserts and mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth" (Hebrews 11:37-38). Many of us cannot imagine what these Saints sacrificed, but we should remember that those who opposed the Church considered the Christians dangerous to the world. St. Paul, however, reverses the material understanding: instead of these saints being unworthy of the world, we understand that it is the Saints, of whom this broken and sinful existence is unworthy. He understood the truth of our Lord's Wisdom: *"But many who are first will be last, and the last will be first"* (Matthew 19:30).

We know that the rulers of this world failed to extinguish the Word of God, but there are countless holy individuals—whether they suffered the death of a martyr, or whether they found a peaceful transition to eternal life—who are not named in Holy Tradition. There are also those who have not been glorified throughout the Orthodox world; instead, God helps these Saints to live out their faith in quiet ways. However, simply because their names are not proclaimed, does not mean they are any less worthy of honor.

Therefore, it is for this reason that the Church in her wisdom, has chosen to make the Sunday after Pentecost the day we commemorate all the Saints, those known, and unknown. I fervently pray that every one of us calls upon, not only our Patron Saint, but that unknown saint, to intercede to God on our behalf. As we honor their memories, let us think of how we can follow their example: not to look for worldly glory, which passes away, but instead to quietly serve God & our neighbor, as we cultivate a loving, peaceful, and meek spirit. We may not be called to witness our faith like some of our most well-known Saints & Martyrs, but maybe we are called to live in imitation of those whose names are only known to our Triune God.

I wish all of us, but especially those who celebrate their Name Day on this Feast, Χρόνια Πολλά!

+ALEXIOS

Metropolitan of Atlanta