

FCRC NKKA SAINTS PETER AND PAUL ORTHODOX CHURCH

A Parish of the Orthodox Church in America
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Glory to Jesus Christ! Glory to Him Forever!

June 15, 2014	Sunday of All Saints	Divine Liturgy	9:30 am
June 16	Monday	Beginning of Saints Peter and Paul Fast (Apostles' Fast)	
June 21	Saturday	Great Vespers	4:00 pm
June 22	Sunday of All Saints of America	Divine Liturgy	9:30 am

Saints of the Day: Holy Prophet Amos (8th C BC). Saint Jonah, Metropolitan of Moscow and Wonderworker of All Russia (+1461). Saint Michael, First Metropolitan of Kiev and All Rus' (+992). Venerable Gregory and Cassian, Abbots of Avnezh (+1392). Disciple Stephen (1st C). Martyr Dulos of Cilicia (+c.305-311). Martyrs Vitus, Modestus, and Crescentia the Nursemaid at Lucania (+c.303). Venerable Ortesios (+ 380). Saint Dulos the Passion-bearer, of Egypt. Saint Jerome of Stridonium (+420). Blessed Augustine, Bishop of Hippo (+430). Translation of the relics of Saint Theodore the Sykeote, Bishop of Anasiupolis (9th c). Blessed Lazarus, Prince of Serbia (+1389). Saint Ephraim, Patriarch of Serbia (+1400). Saint Simeon, Archbishop of Novgorod (+1421). Saints Nerses and Grausa. Saint Theodorites. Virgin Martyrs Leonis, Libye, and Eutropia, and their mother, who suffered in Palmyra of Syria (305). Saint Michael, first Metropolitan of Kiev (992). Venerable Abraham, Abbot of Auvergne (477). Apostles Fortunatus, Achaicus, and Stephen. Venerable Joseph, Monk, of Bethlehem. Saint Cedronus, Patriarch of Alexandria (107). Martyr Hesychius the Soldier of Dorostolum and two others in Moesia (302). All New Martyrs of Serbia. Saint Trillo, Abbot of Llandrillo..

Please remember in your prayers: Suffering Christians of Egypt, Syria, the Middle East and Ukraine. Bishop BOULOS Yazigi, Bishop YOHANNA Ibrahim, of Aleppo. Archimandrites Athanasy, Nectarios, Pachomy. Archpriests Alvian, John, Jason, John, Vincent. Priests Sergius, Jacobus, Leonid, Vasil, Vasil. Deacons Mark, Demetrios, Philip. Meriam, Mother Raphaela, Dimitri, Nina, Daniel, Catherine, Helen, Anna, Peter, Helen, Michael, Stephanie, Zara, Nolan, Emelie, Connie, Michael, Ed, Nettie, Maria, Michael, John, James, Nancy, Susan, Daniel, Aaron, Mark, Jennifer, Nina, Nadine, Michael, Anna, Gregory, Marianna, Mykola, Helen, Isaiah, Jamie, Albert, Kevin, Robert, Robert, Andrew, David, Warren, Vincent, Diane, Abigail.

God Grant Many Years! Prayers for the health of our fathers, grandfathers, uncles, brothers and godfathers were offered today at Liturgy and Moleben at the request of Father John Udics.

God Grant Many Years! Prayers for the health of Priest John Southern, Fred Wilkinson, Al F Kaba, Michael Stehnach and Matushka Sheila Shinn were offered today at Liturgy and Moleben at the request of Father John Udics.

Memory Eternal. Prayers for the repose of fathers, grandfathers, uncles, brothers and godfathers were offered today at Liturgy and Litiya at the request of Father John Udics.

Memory Eternal. Prayers for the repose of Edward Pelko were offered today at Liturgy and Litiya at the request of family.

Memory Eternal. Prayers for the repose of Mary Konet Udics were offered today at Liturgy and Litiya at the request of her son, Father John Udics.

Memory Eternal. Prayers for the repose of Justina Staley, Elizabeth Spytko and John and Ethel Gala were offered today at Liturgy and Litiya at the request of the "Memory Eternal Requiem Service Fund."

ALL SAINTS SUNDAY

Sermon by Igumen Philip (Speranza)

Today, the first Sunday after Pentecost, we celebrate the Sunday of All Saints. Why today? In order to see for ourselves that the Pentecost experience of the Church is neither lost in the distant past nor irrelevant to the immediate present but, rather, is as vital as ever. You see, we live in an age of "do-it-yourself" pseudo-spirituality. We're told by gurus of various sorts that we can decide for ourselves what's right and what's wrong, what's good and what's evil, and that we can create our own "spiritual reality." At root, of course, it's the same old dreary lie told our first parents in Genesis 3:5, "and you will be like God, knowing good and evil." But the lie appeals to us because it plays to our vanity, our ego, our pride. Who needs God, if we can turn ourselves into pillars of perfection! But if we look honestly and deeply at those whom we recognize as saints of God, we see plainly that they could, as the Apostle says in Philippians 2:12, effectively and successfully "work out [their] salvation in fear and trembling" only because they took the Lord Jesus seriously when, in John 15:5 when He said bluntly, "without Me you can do nothing;" and only because they recognized their need to do what in Luke 24:49 He tells all of us to do: be "endued [clothed, wrapped in] power from on high." The saints became saints only in and by the power of the life-giving Holy Spirit.

The descent of the Holy Spirit upon the Apostles in Jerusalem on that first Pentecost was the fulfillment of the Lord's promise in John 16:13 to send another Comforter to His disciples, "the Spirit of truth" Who would "guide you into all truth." But that's a promise the Lord makes, not just to those first disciples, but to every

disciple in every age and nation...including you and me. This Holy Spirit is still doing His precious work of salvation in the world, and will continue to do so up to the end of the world. The good news is that we each have already received Him in the Mystery of Holy Chrismation. But we received Him as a small seed, a seed which by our surrendered and on-going cooperation with Him grows into a large strong tree, a tree that bears what in Galatians 5:22-23 the Apostle calls "the fruit of the Spirit: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, gentleness, self-control." And not incidentally, it's by cooperating with the Holy Spirit to produce such fruits of righteousness in our lives that we bear our most effective witness to others of the reality, power and wonder of the work of God. After all, anybody can talk a good game; but how many who speak of wholeness and spiritual health and joy and all the rest of that good stuff actually show it in their own lives? The Day of All Saints celebrates the continuance of what began last Sunday; it celebrates and keeps us focused on the work of the Holy Spirit within the saints and within us.

And let's be clear: while becoming a saint is a life-long process, it's not optional. As the Apostle reminds us in Romans 1:7 and 1 Corinthians 1:2, our purpose and our divinely-appointed destiny as children of God is not to be OK or average or reasonably nice. We are "called to be saints." Again, 2 Peter 2:4 tells us that we've become inheritors of all God's gracious promises for only one purpose: "that through these you may be partakers of the divine nature." And that's why, in Hebrews 12:14, the Apostle urges us to "pursue peace with all people, and holiness, without which no one will see the Lord." Either we, day by day, battle to become saints, or we become the food on which demons feast for all eternity.

But let's also be clear that what's essential in this process is our faith in God; the extent of our willingness to trust God with our lives, with our very selves. What turns "Joe Average" into a saint? It's not a seminary education; it's not necessarily a vocation to priesthood or monastic life; it's not withdrawing from the world into some sacred hidey-hole; and it's not by gritting our teeth and trying really hard to change ourselves by ourselves. It's a willingness to surrender one's self totally into the hand of Christ, to seek His will in all things and to be completely obedient to Him in all things, all day every day. The "what" of that process the Apostle tells us in Galatians 2:20, that "it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me." And we learn the "how" from what he says immediately before and immediately after that statement: that "I have been crucified with Christ" and that "the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by faith in the Son of God." Completely letting go of my own will, my own plans, my own agenda, control of my own life and my own future, putting to death my own self-will, and trusting the risen Jesus with each and every bit of my life, is what it means to "live by faith in [by trusting totally and completely] the Son of God."

That, after all, is what Jesus Himself did. Jesus Christ preached and showed by example God's sacrificial love for all. His death on the Cross was the best sermon ever delivered, because He not only preached but also proved that divine love can change the world. But even for Him, that wasn't easy. In Luke 22:42 we learn that in the garden, the night before His Passion, Jesus prayed, "Father, if it is Your will, take this cup away from Me. Nevertheless, not My will, but Yours, be done." He knew full well that by His obedience to the Father's will He'd end up being, as it says in Philippians 2:8, "obedient unto death, even the death of the cross;" and in His human nature Jesus was not at all digging that prospect. But He chose, freely and deliberately, to do it anyway; to trust the Father, no matter what.

And if we're really His followers we must, as it says in 1 John 2:6, "walk just as He walked." Living by faith in the Son of God is never easy; but it is, ultimately, the only way to stand against and to defeat the hostility of evil in our lives and in our world, because it's the only way the Holy Spirit has a clear channel through which to pump His power into us. Note how, in Hebrews 11:33-35, the Apostle says that it was by faith that the saints of old "subdued kingdoms, worked righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, became valiant in battle, turned to fight the armies of the aliens. Women received their dead raised to life again. Others were tortured, not accepting deliverance, that they might obtain a better resurrection..." And in the 2,000 years since these words were first penned, this has been the Christian story over and over again. Violent persecution of Christianity had taken and continues to take the lives of countless followers of Jesus, even to this very hour. But the faith of Jesus Christ and the Church of Jesus Christ not only does not perish, but continues to produce saints.

And what the saints of old and the martyrs in all ages have accomplished, we too can accomplish--if we will have it so. That's why, in Hebrews 12:1-2, the Apostle encourages us to fight against sin and evil within ourselves, in order to receive salvation together with the saints. "Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus, the Author and finisher of our faith." In other words, if they could do it, so can we.

And we need to. We, as 21st-century Christians in North America, really do face the same difficulties as the Christians during the time of Roman persecution or Soviet persecution. We're not overtly or physically persecuted for our beliefs (or at least not yet); but our faith is under attack every day both from the outside world and from within ourselves. We know when the world is attacking us (like an employer in England allowing Muslim women to wear the hijab but firing a Christian woman for wearing a simple gold cross around her neck). But we ourselves attack our own faith every time we willingly overturn God's moral order for life and/or try to forget about rather than repent of our sins; when we hold on to some opinion-poll "truth" rather than recognize and live by the truth of the Gospel; when we keep our mouth shut exactly at the times when and where we should boldly speak out the truth of God.

Look: to become a saint does not take great intelligence or great learning. It does take great commitment to Jesus Christ, great courage in the face of the world's opposition, great reliance upon the almighty power of the Holy Spirit, and great love for God and for every other person in this world. Do you or I have what it takes to become a saint? Do you or I even want to? Upon our answer depends our eternal destiny.