

My Beloved Ones,

Having celebrated the coming of the Holy Spirit, we now prepare for a Feast which honors all those Saints whose hearts and minds were filled with the inspiration the Apostles experienced on Pentecost.

This Sunday's Feast of All Saints is unique because our Church acknowledges not only those saints whose lives we are blessed to know, but especially those saints who are unknown to us.

Throughout the earthly existence of the Church there have been many who, when persecuted for the sake of Christ, chose to bear the crown of martyrdom, in the expectation that, as St. Paul says in his Epistle for this Sunday, "*...they might rise again to a better life*" (*Hebrews 11:35*)

St. Paul goes on to state that the tortures were not only physical, but emotional and psychological as well. Even those who lived in isolation to avoid persecution, 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 would have difficulty imagining just what these Saints sacrificed in the name of Christ, but I ask that we take note of an important thing St. Paul says. Those who opposed the Church considered the Christians dangerous, and unworthy to live in 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.

The temporary powers did their best to ensure that the names of the early Christians would be forgotten. We know that they failed to extinguish the Word of God, but even so, there are countless other holy individuals who, whether they suffered the death of a martyr, or peaceful death, are not named. There are also those whom God has not decided to become beacons of His Glory throughout the world; instead, He helps them 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.

It is for this reason that the Church in her wisdom, has elected to make the Sunday after Pentecost the day during which we commemorate all the Saints. I fervently pray that every one of us calls upon not only our Patron Saint, but that unknown saint, to intercede on our behalf. I wish all of us, but especially those who celebrate their Name Day on this Feast, Χρόνια Πολλά!

+ALEXIOS

Metropolitan of Atlanta

