

Homily For The Sunday of All Saints 2015

In The Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Glory Be To Jesus Christ! Glory Forever!

It has been a week since our celebration of the Great Feast of Pentecost, where we once again experienced, the Power, Operation and Descent of the Most Holy Spirit. It was a beautiful day here at the Church, a very prayerful and spiritually uplifting Liturgy. As we sang last week during the Liturgy and will do so again this morning, and until next Holy Saturday, “We have seen the True Light, we have received the Heavenly Spirit, We have found the True Faith!! This is the beauty of this Great Feast, and every Liturgy and Sacrament of the Church, that we experience the Gift of the Holy Spirit in our Lives. The Holy Spirit makes us who we are. In the words of the Vespers hymn for Pentecost, *“The Holy Spirit gives all things: makes prophecies flow, perfects priests, taught the unlettered wisdom, revealed fishermen to be theologians, and welds together the whole institution of the Church.*

In this hymn, I especially like the part where it says that the Holy Spirit welds together the whole institution of the Church. This is a beautiful image, The Holy Spirit makes us one. This is what I love so much about our parish, that we are one body, we are of one mind and heart. We love one another, and we would do

anything for one another and we are a family, not just in word but in truth. And yes like any family we don't always agree, we may get annoyed with one another, but we are always there for one another. I have often heard people who have joined our parish, over the years say that in a very short time, they have felt as if they were always a member of the parish, and that they have found their home. It is interesting that I have felt this way many times in my life, be it at Seminary or at my home parish of Holy Trinity in Danbury, or at the Little Church I attended at College, that I felt at home, as if I always belonged there. This brothers and sisters in Christ is how the Holy Spirit works. This is why on Pascha and Christmas when we all without exception come to Holy Confession and Communion and are so very spiritually focused that there is so much joy and peace and happiness in our lives. This is what happens when we open our hearts and minds and allow the Holy Spirit to take over us and lead us on the level path to the Kingdom of Heaven.

Today on this first Sunday after Pentecost, the Church wants you and I to understand in no uncertain terms, that the ultimate goal of the Christian life is the acquisition of the Holy Spirit. This is what you and I should be striving for above all else. And when we do, amazing things can and do happen. Today, is known in the Church as the Sunday of All Saints. Today the Church honors, those men and

women, both known and unknown who opened their minds, hearts, souls and bodies to the Holy Spirit. And by doing so, they were able to bear witness, to demonstrate the Truth of the Gospel of Christ, by their example of leading holy lives. Today's Epistle reading really says it all, it describes the amazing feats that these faithful men and women of the Church were able to accomplish. St. Paul in His letter to the Hebrews, with great excitement tells us that they:

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 flight the armies of the aliens. They were stoned, they were sawn in two, were tempted, were slain with the sword. They wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins, being destitute, afflicted, tormented.

Weren't the words of St. Paul so very beautiful and powerful? Isn't it amazing how these brave men and women, who were filled with the Holy Spirit, fearlessly preached the Gospel, and were granted to perform miracles? And how many people, I wonder seeing their example left their pagan ways and embraced Jesus Christ? We know 3000 people were converted on Pentecost alone after hearing The Apostle Peter's amazing, Grace-filled sermon.

The temptation, however on this feast day, is to falsely conclude that saints are a thing of the past. Yes today, we call to mind the memory of the Saints who have come before us.. However it is not the intention of the Church today, that we

merely stroll down memory lane and marvel at the deeds of some distant saints, who seem more like superheros of the past. The Church, in remembering them today, is urging you and I to follow in their footsteps and become living saints of the Church of today. When I elevate the Lamb, the Host, before placing it in the Chalice, I say Let us Be Attentive, Holy Things are for the Holy! I am speaking about you and I. The Church is calling on you and I to be saints, which literally means one who is holy.

I know what you are thinking now, if you are still paying attention. Who me? Yeah right? Never happen? And here's what breaks my heart as a priest, I know that some of you are actually thinking, I don't want to be a saint. I am content to be just a nice person, not too bad, but forget about this sanctity stuff. If I were a saint, I would have to go to church more. I'd have to give up some things I really like to do. If the truth be told, I'd rather be doing , Fill in the Blank than coming to Church. Church is boring. Really, does how St. Paul describes the feats of the saints sound boring? I think not.

If you think this way you are not along. Satan is doing a great job of running interference with the Holy Spirit. He is the Great Liar, he is the divider.

Now while you and I may not want to be a Saint, the Church NEEDS us to be Saints. We live in a very difficult world, so much pain and suffering. So many Christians are being persecuted in the middle East, they are dying for the faith. You know about the brave Coptic Christians who were recently executed. There is a very, very subtle and not so subtle persecution taking place. A holy war, one where there are far too few soldiers to fight. This Holy war is fought and won, by its soldiers living in a Holy Way, being so filled with the Holy Spirit, and So filled with light that the darkness of evil is chased away. Today, more than ever, we need saints. We need more Saints in this Church. There is so much spiritual work to do. God is calling us in this little Church to be agents of peace and a source of strength and comfort to the weak. Your fellow parishioners who are struggling need your spiritual strength to support them. They need you to be here in Liturgy every Sunday and on Feast days to pray for them. There is real power in corporate prayer. When you are not here you are missed, our power supply is weaker without you.

I am asking each and every one of you and myself included, on this Day of All Saints, to look to the example of the Saints of the Church, and re-prioritize our lives. Let us invite the Holy Spirit to come and live within our hearts and souls, and help us to A) want to be saints and B) live a more faithful Christian life, so

that we can become the next generation of Saints. While we may never be officially canonized as Saints, all our Lord asks is that we strive with all of our strength to strive to be saints, to work in that direction, staying close to the Church, the Gathering Place of The Holy Spirit.

O Holy Saints of the Church we honor your memory today and ask your holy prayers that we one day join your ranks, leading ourselves and those God entrusts to our care into the Kingdom of Heaven.

Christ is in our Midst! He is and ever shall be!!!