1ST SUNDAY OF MATTHEW
ALL SAINTS

GOSPEL: *MATTHEW 10:32–33, 37–38; 19:27–30*

"Therefore whoever confesses Me before men, him I will also confess before My Father who is in heaven. But whoever denies Me before men, him I will also deny before My Father who is in heaven."

"He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me. And he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me. And he who does not take his cross and follow after Me is not worthy of Me."

Then Peter answered and said to Him, "See, we have left all and followed You. Therefore what shall we have?" So Jesus said to them, "Assuredly I say to you that in the regeneration, when the Son of Man sits on the throne of His glory, you who have followed Me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. And everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or wife or children or lands, for My name's sake, shall receive a hundredfold, and inherit eternal life. But many who are first will be last, and the last first."

FOR YOUR INFORMATION *(for further information and resources visit **www.family.goarch.org**)*

Today's Gospel reading finds Jesus Christ listing certain criteria for His followers. He very plainly speaks about where the focus of our life is to be—on Him. As much as we love our families, friends, and the possessions we hold dear, our number one priority remains our resolute, uncontested love for God and His Church. Nothing must outrank God in our lives. Jesus helps us by telling of the rewards that await us if we are faithful to Him.

As Jesus Christ speaks of the requirements of discipleship, the Orthodox Church commemorates the Sunday of All Saints, which always falls the week after Pentecost Sunday. Today we celebrate the memories of the countless men, women, and children who led anonymous Christ-like lives and are now sharing in the blessings of paradise. It is a blessed reminder that ALL of us are called to be Saints and that we ALL have that potential by the grace received at our baptism to be counted among them. How can we possibly do this? We must look to the faithfulness and commitment to Christ of the saints of the Church of each generation and by emulating their examples.

FOR CONSIDERATION

- What is happening in this Gospel lesson?
- According to Jesus Christ, who is most deserving of our love? What does Jesus Christ mean when He says to take up our cross and follow Him? Must we leave our family, friends, and homeland in order to share in Christ's Cross and inherit eternal life?
- What does this mean for our lives?

TO DO TOGETHER

- Know Your Roots—Take time as a family to understand the saint or feast day for which your home parish is named. Learning about the life of the saint or the feast day for which your church is named will add extra meaning when that special time is celebrated in your community. Ask you pries or others (parish council members, longtime parishioners, etc.) how the parish received its name.
- Who Will Deny Me—Discuss as a family what it means to deny Christ. How can we deny Him through our actions even if we profess to be Christians? Look at the example of Peter, who denied Christ three times but then went on to be one of our greatest saints. Make a list

of changes that you want to make as a family to stay faithful to Him, and then check them off as you fulfill each item.

- Praying with Our Saints—As a family research the hymns associated with the patron saint of your family members. Incorporate these into your personal prayer time and take time to understand what they mean. When praying you can just read the hymn, but why not learn as a family to chant each hymn? Check with you church's priest, psalti, or choir director for assistance.

FINAL THOUGHT

*High atop a monastery on Holy Mt. Athos there lived an abbot whose monastery suffered from constant gossiping and quarreling among the brother monks. A good and faithful servant of the Lord, the abbot was greatly troubled by this dilemma and sought to bring an end to this strife. To bring resolution to this increasingly divisive situation, he entrusted his spiritually ailing community to the care of one of the elders, bid farewell to the monks and ventured off on a journey to a thriving monastery, the health of which was attributed to the leadership of its wise and discerning abbot. Upon approaching the humble cell of the brotherhood's luminary abbot, the troubled abbot prayed fervently that the meeting would render some sign of answer to bring back to his distraught community. Sitting for some time, the distraught abbot explained to the spiritual father, in great detail, the nature of the discord plaguing his flock. Listening patiently and intently the latter responded thus, "Your situation sounds grave, but with much sadness I am afraid that I must confess to you that I have no advice or guidance to give to you. However, there is one thing that I think you should know. At your monastery there lives a saint among the monks." Astonished by this revelation, the abbot returned immediately to his flock and reported these words. In no time a strange thing happened. Not knowing who among them might be a saint, the brothers began to look at one another in a new and more loving manner. They began to be kind to one another in a way the abbot never thought possible and, although the saint in question was never revealed, a miracle did happen: harmony and love were restored to the life of that Christian community. —**Author Unknown***

A CLOSING PRAYER

*Your Church, O Christ our God, clothed itself in the blood of Your martyrs from throughout the world, as though it were a robe of linen and purple; through them, she cries out to You, "Send down upon Your people compassion, grant peace to Your commonwealth, and to our souls, great mercy." —**Apolytikion for the Sunday of All Saints***

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